

Trip to the village

Two days later the workshop participants got in two buses early in the morning to go to Digambarpur, a little village in the Sunderbans, in the Bengali forest, where J.S. started the activity more than 20 years ago.

After almost 5 hours in bus plus 20 more minutes in rickshaws we arrived to a beautiful place surrounded by all the different shades of green imaginable. The excitement was greater than our tiredness. We walked for about 2 km when we saw a group of people from afar and as we got closer we realized that they were waiting for us. At the entrance of the Mukta Mancha they received us with a song, giving a little bunch of flowers and painting the “bindi” on our foreheads. This welcome brought out our first tears.

They gave us some time to recover ourselves from the journey (and the emotion) and then we had the opportunity to take a look around the place.

In the kitchen, eight women were making chapattis for us. The J.S. team with Sima herself served us a lovely lunch.

Later the Brazilian team played some songs and we all sang together and then we started to walk to the stage that was around 500 meters away. It was a circle drawn on the ground and marked by bamboo sticks in the usual J.S. style.

The main team of J.S. performed the forum play “Shonar Meye” (The Gold Girl), which talks about the situations of women before, during and after marriage.

Afterwards, the participants of the workshop showed the forum plays that we created during our time there. The interventions of the spectators were limited to two for each play due to the short time we had to be there.

Six plays were shown, the oppressions worked were the violence of gender, racial discrimination, the workers abuse, the authority abuse, and the oppressive relationships within the family.

The participation was active and spontaneous even though the plays were in different languages. One of the most important reasons that I believe it helped, was the richness of symbolism gained during the workshop. Symbolism that, unfortunately, we are not very used to see in the European forum theatre.

In this village of experienced spectators, sometimes it seemed unnecessary to include the role of the joker. In one occasion, for instance, a woman shouted: “ Stop!” before the model had finished. Sima told me later that the attitude of that woman was very meaningful, precisely because she is a widow and widows are rejected by Indian society. I believe this is one of the results of the constant intervention of J.S. in the villages, returning self-confidence to people, opening places where they can discuss, relate with each other, find their own voices and finally act politically.

We were all singing and dancing together, when the time to say good-bye suddenly came.

We all shared the last hugs.

An old woman couldn't stop saying: “thank you” while she was hugging me intensely for a long time. Even though I don't know her name and I don't even know if I will ever see her again, I clearly know that it was a very powerful moment in my life that I will surely never forget. I thank her and through her the villagers of Digambarpur. I celebrate their struggle, strength and power, their constancy and all the love they gave to every single one of us.

And finally, all my gratitude to Jana Sanskriti for giving us the opportunity to have shared that unforgettable experience.