

Speech delivered by Augusto Boal in Kolkata

There are days when we wake up in the morning feeling happy because the sun is shining, trees are green and the sky is blue. Work of Nature.

There are days when we wake up in the morning feeling happy because we have created something new; we have been capable of transforming Nature. Those are the days of harvest when we reap the fruits of our labour. We have worked hard to make it happen and have understood that, to be citizens, it is not enough to live in society: we have to transform it. That is the work of human beings.

There are days, like today, when something we have long dreamt of, but has never existed, comes into being for the first time, announcing the Future: something is born to celebrate Life. This is one of those wonderful days. We are commemorating the birth of the Indian Federation of Theatre of the Oppressed

For the first time in the world, twelve thousand valiant women and men are gathered together on a beautiful sunny morning, having traveled hundreds of miles through the night – on buses, boats, carts, trains or even on foot – to celebrate a heroic and historical deed which is a work not of Nature, but of Humankind: they have come here to proclaim their condition of Artists – we are human beings, so we are Artists. They have come here to assume the power of theatre, which is the first human language.

Here, in this public place, there are dozens of popular organizations, thousands of individuals who represent more than one million human beings from sixteen states of India. Men and women who have discovered that the future is created today by each of our acts, each of our choices. The future is the product of our hands' travail, of our power, not the result of chance or hazard. They have discovered that the Theatre of the Oppressed is a useful tool to study the past and, in the present, to build our future, rather than waiting for it. Men and women who have decided to use theatre to transform this society into another that will bring us happiness and not suffering, joy and not servitude.

Theatre of the Oppressed gives us the right to speak our minds, and, using the power of Art, to invent solutions to our problems. Through theatre we discover that we are more capable than what we thought, able to free ourselves from our oppressions.

Jana Sanskriti, as Sanjoy Ganguly says, was founded twenty years ago as a small theatre group in a small community of West Bengal, and is now a movement that is expanding all over this enormous country. Here, in this public square, is the proof of that – twelve thousands proofs in front of our eyes. Jana Sanskriti is an example for all of us in our own countries.

Thank you, Julián, for having insisted that I should come to this meeting. Weeks ago you wrote me and said: "Father, prepare your heart!" And my heart beats strong, for sure, but it is prepared to see what I am seeing: this multitude of persons conscious of what they have done and are doing, aware of what they want to do and will do.

Thank you Sanjoy and Sima Ganguly, thank you all and each one of you who have made this national movement of Jana Sanskriti, all of you Indians and foreigners who are here to tell us that it is possible to transform the world, to make it a habitable place where we can all live together. The Center of Theatre of the Oppressed of Rio de Janeiro, which, since the Festival of 1993 dialogues with Jana Sanskriti, came here to embrace you and to be present at the party which is for all of us. Thank you.