

## **Romanticizing the optimism** **by Mariana Vilani**

“When I dream of an International movement of Theatre of the Oppressed, I feel that we are responsible to humanize the human being.” Sanjoy Ganguly

On the 22nd October 2006, a spectators rally was organized in Calcutta by Jana Sanskriti. They brought together more than 12,000 people, coming from far off villages throughout west Bengal to show their support, respect and gratitude to the first group to practice Theatre of the Oppressed in India, demanding that the means of artistic production are returned to the people and celebrating the birth of a new national organization that has chosen to use TO as a political key for social change.

The people that were present had traveled between 4 and 12 hours to be there, coming by boat, train, bus and foot, to participate in the march and then return home to their daily lives. The majority of them were women, showing the results of many years of Jana Sanskriti's hard work for women's liberation.

Between the 17th and the 21st of October, a workshop was organized by J.S, in which 46 people from 13 different countries participated. The participants were also all there to give support and solidarity during the march.

We (the participants) waited to join the end, with tears of emotion, applauses and songs. There were two lines of people, one behind the other. It was amazing to see that quantity of people passing in front of us.

At the end of the line, the group of foreigners joined the march led by Augusto Boal (who traveled especially to be part of this event), along with Sanjoy Ganguly, director of Jana Sanskriti and his wife, Sima Ganguly, the main actress of the group.

We marched through the streets of Calcutta, united in one voice: Long live Jana Sanskriti, Long live Forum Theatre, Long live the art of the people!

We walked for several hours under the sun till we got to a big field where the act took place.

There we met the mass of Jana Sanskriti's spectators and we sat together to hear the speeches of several delegates.

Augusto Boal gave an inspiring speech where he emphasized the historical moment that we were living, “when something that has never happen before, happens for the first time. That something that never existed is born... men and women who believe in creating a new society, come here to declare that what they have promised, what they want, what is needed, is possible... You came here to shout out loud, that is possible to create a new world where all of us can be happy, without oppression, where every human being can live in a human way “

Two delegates of the group of foreigners read a document in which we expressed our support and respect for their invaluable work.

The presence of the women was represented by one of the women teams of J.S singing a beautiful song and Sima Ganguly speech.

After more speeches of different delegates of J.S teams and politic organizations, the act was closing with Sanjoy speech and the group of foreigners singing a song on the stage.

I look into myself searching for the words that could express how deeply this experience has touched us, and still I cannot structure a whole sentence, although these words come along: People's art. Power. Discussion. Relation. Struggle. Possible. “Democratize the reality”.

”Humanize the humanity”.

Just one last thought about this: can you imagine a spectator rally like this one, in your own country?