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## **EVALUATING THE ROLE OF STREET THEATRE FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION**

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### **Abstract:**

Street theater evolved in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a tool to emancipate the working class and reinforce revolution against the established power. Its journey began in India during the time of anti-colonial struggle, essentially by the left-wing theater activists. Although street theater, as a form, bears close alliance with the folk theater, it's more of a social communication process with a participatory approach, than a simple art form. This paper attempts to analyze the role and potential of street theater as a community development tool that aims at bringing a social

transformation. A brief case study of Jana Natya Manch or JANAM – inspired by the philosophy of Indian People’s Theater Association and the pioneer of modern Indian street theater - is presented in the study to explore the impact of street plays in comparison to conventional proscenium theater and its further prospect.

**Keywords** – street theater, Indian People’s Theater Association, Jana Natya Manch, JANAM. Social communication, proscenium theater, folk theater, anti-colonial struggle, community development tool

**Word count** – 5,726

A country that is the home to nearly one third of the world’s poorest people (Nelson, 2013) and still struggling to meet the world average education rate to ensure literacy for all (UNESCO, 2013), after 66 years of its independence, can hardly dream of using print media or technological advancements for communicating with the mass. But stories of communities need to be told loud and clear, facts that affect them (or can) need to be discussed in open forum, knowledge need to be shared and communication should be given key importance for inclusive social development. Street theater, as a distinctive form of performing art, facilitates the process of social change by using the visual form, expressive representation, easy reception and makes way for participatory communication. The term ‘street theater’ has been defined in various ways by the scholars and artists, as they look at the form in different perspectives. While Simon Murray and John Keefe (2007) looked at street plays from the view of street entertainment, as a part of the theories of performance arts and physical theater, combining the elements of “circus skills, installations, performance arts (and) illusions”, Jan Cohen-Cruz (1998) defined theater on the street as an expression of revolutionary political and nationalist movement that not only entertain its audiences, but has a deep-rooted role to play in social change. Safdar Hashmi – the founder of Jana Natya Manch and theater activist – too viewed street theater as a tool to spread political ideology, especially to propagate communism and “draw the masses of people into the anti-colonial struggle” (Deshpande, 2007). Politics and street plays, however, have had a long amity since as long as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was during the time of Industrial Revolution in the Europe that the laborers and party workers began writing and acting on plays on the street. In the next century, during the period of Suffragette Movement in London, women started actively

participating and producing in street plays. What started as a mean to express political views and opinions, gradually adapted as a tool for educating the rural masses during Russian Revolution. When the World War II broke out, theater on the street started speaking for anti-war movement and the attitude for promulgating liberal socio-political transformation continued and reached further in different parts of America and England, where street plays were produced for women liberation, racial discrimination, students' movement and against Vietnam war. India, too, was not far behind from experimenting with playing on street uninhibitedly for the masses. Although a number of art forms have been there since ages as folk theater in remote areas, primarily for entertainment, it was in the period of struggle for independence when street theater took a definite shape for promoting patriotism and triggering the spurt for nationalism. Indian People's Theater Association (IPTA) pioneered the beginning organized street theater in India in 1943, for the purpose of disseminating their views on liberalism and educating the masses about imperialism and its effects. The history of street theater movement began in India with IPTA which later spread in the nook and corners of the country irrespective of boundaries and cultural barriers. Issues concerning women, health and education of children, communism and economic liberation have been central to the issues of street plays. Groups like Jana Natya Manch, Pravah, Alarippu, Action India, Swatantra Theater and Bihar Art Theater are prominently carrying out street plays in different states to scream aloud about issues that are timely and question the protocols that are restrictive to emancipation (Kang, 2002). Theater of the street, which started as a tool to awake Indians to fight for their upliftment, has not only been able to retain its effectiveness as a popular mass medium amidst the competition from electronics media but also widened its area of activity from the remote villages to metro cities. From social activists and NGOs to students' unions, artists and even corporate professionals – street theater today has become one of the most preferred mediums to disseminate messages for the social communicators.

### **Street Theater – A Tool for Social Communication:**

Although street theater has had a close alliance with indigenous folk theaters of India on the surface, for instance – *Terukkuttu* in Tamilnadu and *Veedhi Natakam* in Andhra Pradesh can be translated directly as folk street theaters as mentioned by John D. H. Downing (2011), the form isn't primarily meant for entertainment of the masses like the latter. In a practical sense of the

term, street theater is a form of group drama that is played in outdoor, mainly on the street, in college or university campus, railway station, market or in slums, where the group of artists can interact with a broad section of audiences directly, in the purpose of not merely entertain but to trigger activism. While the street plays are subject to meet certain aesthetical parameters just as other forms of popular theater, it's primarily driven by the intent of disseminating messages of development, social emancipation and political reform, often as part of a broader social and nationalist movement. Use of colloquial languages that are incorporated with songs, dance and folk arts, minimum use of props or costume and no theatrical set-up are the key aesthetical features of street plays. The attempt is made to keep the form clear of any hyperbole and flush, but the tone set to electric with experimental approach. According to Downing, other than the classical arts and drama, Indian street theater has been inspired to a great extent by the works of Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal, Utpal Dutt and Badal Sircar. The feature that has made the form popular in past few times is its mobility. Unlike traditional theaters, the artists need not to wait in the hall for their audiences to come, neither does the audience of street plays need to stand in queue for ticket. In street theater, theater comes to the audience, and not vice-versa. The plays on street are primarily community based, short in length and allow the scope of conversation with the audience after it gets over, unlike the traditional mode of communication that either uses a medium between the communicator and the receiver or do away with the scope for feedback. In this connection John P. McHale (2004) refers to a connection between street and guerrilla theater and argue for its effectiveness for advocacy communication;

*“Nonconventional communicative forms such as street theater are available to advocates. One advocate, Joan, who frequently participated in such theater, contended that the form was very effective for communicating advocacy messages:*

*“I think it is extremely effective. For instance, with street theater, we call it guerrilla theater, because we use it as a guerrilla tactic. We would not forewarn before announcements of our performances. What is a guerrilla tactic? You don't announce it. Because anyone who wanted to stop that action would be able to. Another thing with doing theater as guerrilla theater is that it maximizes disruption of the wall. We all go around with these walls around us and its very easy to block something out. But if we have a very strong kick to it and something as unexpected as*

*seeing theater or poetry being performed in a public place opens people, you don't expect that. It can have a greater impact on breaking through people's walls."* (McHale, 2004, p. 91)

Although street theater often was born as a need for revolting against the unjust political condition and break away from the tyranny, it doesn't necessarily lose its relevance even when the repression is gone, as denoted by Kanika Batra (2010). Jana Natya Manch in India or Ajoka in Pakistan are such examples. Their drama on the streets continued to attract audiences and didn't lose impact even when the political condition at home was alleviated. By referring to the journal *Theater and Drama Review* Batra asserted that, as a form of 'social theater' the street theater in Asia predominantly raises discussion and opinion for education for all, building awareness and social reform.

*"Social theater, according to the contributors, includes, but is not confined to, working class, feminist-oriented and university affiliated theater groups working in urban metropolitan locations in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and other parts of South-Asia."* (Batra, 2010, p. 71)

### **Theater for the Oppressed – A Conceptual Framework:**

From Latin America to Philippines, street theaters are used as a tool for raising popular opinion on health, employment and women rights, chiefly based on the theatrical form names 'Theater for the Oppressed' as developed by Augusto Boal, essentially influenced by the work of Paulo Freire. When in 1968 Freire outlined his theory – Pedagogy of the Oppressed – to critically question the conventional academic system and reverse the top-down approach of education into a participatory process, a new form of social education and development for the marginalized and by the marginalized took shape and received global recognition (Saxon & Vitzthum, 2012).

*"No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption"* (Freire, 1970, p. 54).

Upon insisting that true knowledge need not be infused into people, for they already exist in them, Freire believed that the world cannot be changed by depositing information into the oppressed, but only through dialogic exchange, critical thinking, love for humanity, praxis and

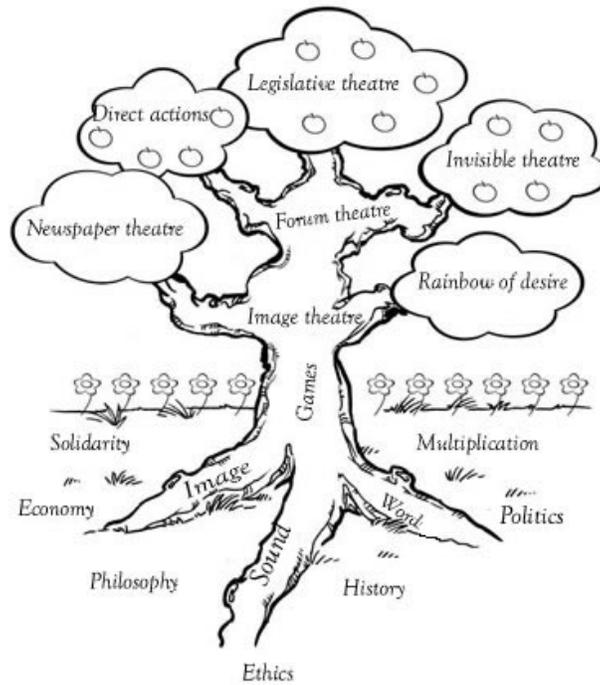
action. Influenced by Marxism and anti-colonialism, Freire believed education cannot be viewed outside the persuasion of political thinking. He asserted that in one way or another the way pupil are taught and also the subject of the teaching are not free from any political agenda. Therefore a basic understanding of the politics is crucial for both the teachers and the students. The aim of education, as Freire believed, is to aim for emancipating the oppressed and to do so, the oppressed themselves need to play an active role in their emancipation.

*“Libertarian action must recognize this dependence as a weak point and must attempt through reflection and action to transform it into independence. However, not even the best-intentioned leadership can bestow independence as a gift. The liberation of the oppressed is a liberation of women and men, not things. Accordingly, while no one liberates himself by his own efforts alone, neither is he liberated by others. Liberation, a human phenomenon, cannot be achieved by semihumans. Any attempt to treat people as semihumans only dehumanizes them.”* (Freire, 1970)

It's with an inspiration from his words, for the most part, Boal – a globally acknowledged theatrical practitioner and activist from Brazil – developed his widely influential theory – Theater for the Oppressed, which was first applied in Brazil, then in Europe and gradually in Asia. Like Freire, Boal too believed the people or audiences of his plays are not mere action-less spectators, but they are the entire ‘theater’ in themselves – the actor and the views embodied in one. He said, “The Theatre of the Oppressed is theatre in this most archaic application of the word. In this usage, all human beings are Actors (they act!) and Spectators (they observe!)”.

As per his theory, we - the people - by going through the experiences of seeing ourselves in different actions, are able to adjust and amend our own actions and of the world. Theater of the Oppressed flips the mode of one-way theatrical presentation and made popular theater a tool for social communication, by engaging the audiences in critical thinking, dialogic exchange and discovery for liberation. Among the number of tools and techniques the actors can use to elevate the audiences from oppression and instigate development through their dramas have changed through the years, but the key tools have remained consistent (Project, 2011). They are;

### Tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed



Source - <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php?nodeID=3>

In Image Theater, the participants mainly use non-verbal expression and mold their own and other participants' bodies into motionless physical images that can express something abstract or concrete issue or feeling. The central idea in Forum Theater is the actor who presents an issue of oppression and encourages the spectator to become "spect-actor" with an active voice and take action on that, to change the situation and promotes community exchange through plays. Legislative Theater is about a more law-centric approach to theatrical production i.e. based on free dialogic discourse between the actors and the "spect-actors" to encourage the latter to express their opinion about any legislature in question. Invisible Theater, as the name suggest, is a piece of drama that appears out of nowhere in the street, take the audience by surprise to attract their attention without prior notice and presented as a real event. Newspaper Theater is a theatrical production of newspaper articles or other non-dramatic pieces. Rainbow Theater employs both Image and Forum techniques as a therapy to push the audiences to focus on internalized issues that cause oppression (Wikipedia, 2013). Boal's view of theater based on the

idea that it is by exploring, showing and analyzing the issues of oppression, by encouraging the audiences to facilitate their own course of transformation, that the society can change for better.

### **Emergence of Indian street theater:**

It was during the 1940s, when a number of well-known theater directors and enthusiasts began think outside the traditional venues and brought theater closer to the common people. They went to the remote communities to perform without being under the spotlight. Theater practitioners like Bansi Kaul, M.K Raina and Prasanna were the leading names in the endeavor (Rubin, Pong, Chaturvedi, Majumdar, Tanokura, & Brisbane, 1998).

Unlike the conventional form of theater, street theater emerged with a set of different aesthetics and turned into a weapon of social transformation. It spoke about the common folks, for the common folks. The street theater reflected the turmoil of pre-independent India and portrayed the economic conditions of the time. As a unique art, Indian street theater soon became a popular form of communication with the masses. From the galore of entertainment for the elites, street theater moved beyond the use of orchestra and big stage and spoke of the burning communal, social, economical and political issues. Followed by the independence, street theater developed into a popular form of brief and intimate theatrical expression. The street theater movement of India began with a definite socio-political agenda and worked vehemently on issues of liberation and development. Utpal Dutt was one of the prominent directors who worked towards it.

Since the time of its inception and through the days of development, street theater used to attract large number of audiences, since the plays spoke their stories, in their language and charged no cost for being a part of the experience. One of the earliest street theater productions was 'Chargesheet', which was being played in the street of Calcutta for the audience of nearly a thousand workers and later performed at various parts of West Bengal (Anonymous, 2012).

The growing intensity of political unrest of the turbulent 1970s was also felt in the movement of street theater. A number of such productions were performed in the streets of India, by artist-activists. Badal Sircar, was one such important names of the time who discarded the mainstream theater and turned into open-air productions to communicate to his audiences directly and with wide intensity.

The movement took pace essentially with the growing popularity of Indian People's Theater Association (IPTA) and Jana Natya Manch (JANAM), the groups which utilized the mode of street theater to spread their messages across. As the plays developed into a form of popular communication, street theater proliferated into different parts of the nation. Groups like Nishant from Delhi, Lok Mela Manch and Samvedan from Gujarat etc. utilized the medium in advocating socio-political change.

### **Jana Natya Mancha – A Study:**

Looking in depth of the history of street theater in India, one cannot ignore the tryst of this form with communism. Marxist movement that began in the country, loosely in the 1930s, marked the transition of a part of folk theater into street plays – essentially to “raise consciousness and mobilize communities” (Downing, 2011). As a result, Indian People's Theater Association was formed in 1942, as a wing of Communist Party of India. Although initially operated as an indoor theater, IPTA started producing plays on the street, when the group and CPI were banned by the then ruling government. In 1951, when the group produced a play *Chargesheet* by the direction of Panu Pal, on the issue of communist leaders who were imprisoned without trial, set off India's experiments with street theater, according to the account of notable actor and theater personality Utpal Dutt (Downing, 2011). The period of Emergency saw a quietness in the street theater movement, which further revived in the 1980s with the beginning of a couple of new street theater groups – most remarkably, Jana Natya Manch or JANAM. Emerged in 1973, JANAM is originally a Delhi-based theater group, born “out of the founder members' involvement with the Students Federation of India, the student wing of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), as well as from an attempt to revive the Indian People's Theatre Association in Delhi” (Bhatia, 2012). Started with their first production *Mrityur Atit*, performed in Bengal during the time of Durga Puja, JANAM attained wide popularity among the masses as well as the intellectual milieu, not only for bringing verve into the toned down theater movement initiated by IPTA but also for making plays for the working class – not confined into the walls of metropolis. The article here aims to outline the journey of JANAM and its contribution in the Indian street theatre movement.

### **The Period of Emergence:**

Like its birthplace in Russia, which was later spread in the USA, Cuba, Sweden, Spain, Africa and all over the Latin America, street theater in India, too, was born in response of the political tension at home. IPTA was originally came in operation to raise public support for anti-colonial struggle, which – after independence – became more concentrated on bringing social and economical transformation for the citizens of new India. Though initially started as a proscenium theater, JANAM soon became famous for its short street skits with makeshift stages and ornamented with strong dialogues. Since the beginning, their plays have been viewed by millions of audiences, in more than 140 cities, villages and suburban areas (Dutta, 2011). Despite the wrath they received from the government for their anti-establishment stance, especially during the time of Emergency, JANAM survived and shined through the trouble majorly with the support they managed to achieve from their audiences, with powerful plays and protest songs. It was in this period, with the government's clamp down on large gathering for theatrical shows, the group began writing the stories themselves and producing short street plays – which later became quintessential to their public reputation (Bhatia, 2012). The group was formed with a set of ideology and a bunch of radical amateur communist theater amateurs, with no such monetary backbone. To survive, JANAM framed a policy to collect donations after each performances, from its audiences, instead of accepting monetary assistance from corporate, government or NGOs.

So far they have produced plays on industrialization, condition of the laborers, communism, price hike, unemployment, government policies, education, women rights, gender issues, trade union rights, globalization etc. *Hatyare, Samrath, Aurat, Raja ka Baja, Apaharan Bhaichare Ka, Halla Bol, Mat Banto Insaan Ko, Sangharsh Kareng Jitenge, Andhera Aaftaab Mangega, Jinhe Yakeen Nahin Tha, Aartanaad, Rahul Boxer, Nahin Qabul, Voh Bol Uthi and Yeh Dil Mange More Guruji* are some of the most popular plays produced by JANAM (Janam, 2011).

### **The Assassination of Safdar Hashmi:**

It was on January 1, 1989, when Safdar Hashmi – the founding member of JANAM and an active CPI (M) leader – was attacked during a play. The group was performing a play named *Halla Bol*, in Sahidabad, Delhi, when a troupe of political goons arrived at the place and assaulted Hashmi, who died next day in the hospital (TOI, 2003). With the demise of its most

radical voice, JANAM didn't lose its conviction, but it became more insistent instead. *Halla Bol*, the street play about workers' demands, which was Hashmi's last play and remained incomplete, was performed by the other actors of the group three days after the death of their leader, at the same place and for the same audience. Till then, every year on January 1, JANAM perform on the same spot, in remembrance of the attack on the group.

A distinguished figure in the theater movement and one of the pioneers of Theater for Development in India, Hashmi's death stirred a large part of the young theater enthusiasts and a consistent boom of street theater experiment was seen in the following years, as a result. To remember Hashmi's contribution in the early experiment days of street theater and in reverence, April 12 – his birthday – is now observed as National Street Theater Day.

### **The Phase of Development:**

After the demise of Hashmi in 1989, JANAM started producing both street and indoor theaters. Apart from the conventional ambit of theatrical production techniques, the group experiment with video projection, live music and other multimedia presentation to perform on stage. Although a leading name as the pioneering and most versatile street theater groups in India, JANAM also received its share of fame from the proscenium productions like *Moteram ka Satyagraha*, *Satyashodhak*, *Varun ke Bete*, *Hum Yahin Rahenge*, *Ek Aurat Hypatia Bhi Thi*. To acknowledge their contribution in the world of theater, JANAM has been invited by several festivals of national repute – such as Prithvi Festival and theater festival of the National School of Drama – for the 2004 proscenium play *Shambookvadh*, directed by Sudhanva Deshpande (Wikipedia, Jana Natya Manch, 2013). Not confining into the expression of rebellion, JANAM also experiments with creative aesthetics, with an undertone of social reform. In their indoor production *Char Rang*, based on Rabindra Nath Tagore's *Chaturanga*, for their own festival Sarkash, the team created an on-stage juxtaposition of modernity and literally essence of the novel. Other than the narrative that transcend between two eras, the production experimented with the use of puppets and canvas in the stage backdrop, that changed its form as the story progressed (Punjani, 2011)

However, their major works and interest has been centered on performing on the street, since the beginning of their struggle. The obvious contrast between proscenium production and street

plays were raised several times, on the question of creativity and aesthetical values, which Safdar Hashmi addressed during a Roundtable on Street Theater, on October 29, 1988, on the occasion of celebrating ten years of journey of JANAM;

*“Firstly, in our cities with one or two exceptions, there is no tradition of theater-going. The masses of our urban population have never been to a theater. Our theater, even the best of it, has remained mostly confined to a very select group of theater-goers.*

*The theater, on its part, has also not been addressing itself to the common, working people. If our urban theater had been a major cultural force – a living and popular art form reflecting the hopes, aspirations and struggle of the people – then perhaps our street theater too would have remained only a propaganda device, surfacing every now and then to focus attention on burning issues. But since our mainstream theater is by and large out of tune and touch with the majority of our people, the need remains for a fully developed people’s theater, a theater which is available to the masses... since conditions have continued to be unfavorable for a mass expansion of proscenium theater, they have been seriously seeking to develop street theater itself... This new street theater, though still in its infancy and struggling to discover itself, needs to be seen in the backdrop of its phenomenal expansion. During the last dozen years or so it has spread to almost all corners of India. Today there are hundreds of amateur groups writing their own plays or freely adapting or translating scripts from other regions and languages and giving an enormous number of performances. Jana Natya Manch alone has given 4,300 performances of 22 different plays, in 90 cities, during the last 10 years, seen by over two and a half million people. This body of theater, though by and large disregarded by the mainstream theater, has today become an inseparable part of the theatrical landscape of India. Especially in North India, after the sharp decline of the already weak proscenium theater in the past few years, street theater appears to have become, at least in terms of the number of performances and the size of its audiences, the major theatrical activity. In our opinion, today it is not possible to form a complete picture of contemporary Indian theater without including street theater.” (Deshpande, 2007)*

As mentioned on the official website of the group, few popular production of street plays of recent times are - *Yeh Dil Mange More Guruji* (on the rigidity of Hindutva to obliterate India’s

democratic framework and secularism), *Aakhri Juloos* (on the right to protest for all, against injustice), *Yeh Bhi Hinsa Hai* (on violence against women), *Honda ka Gunda* (on the condition of workers in Gurgaon), *Naarey Nahin To Naatak Nahin* (on industrial laborers), *Rehri-patri Nahin Hatenge* (on the issues of concern for hawkers' union), *Kafila Ab Chal Pada Hai* (on AIDWA) etc. (Janam, 2011)

The demise of Hashmi, not only a loss for JANAM but also for an important part of Indian street theater movement, is remembered through a number of initiatives of his group, such as the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Lecture series and an unique concept of mobile theater named Safar (a short term for Safdar Rangmanch) to make proscenium theater available to the working class. To create a pervasive to facilitate social change and inspire participatory communication between the activists and audiences, JANAM also organizes workshops, film screenings, seminars and exhibition etc.

### **The Theater of Protest and Political Alliance:**

*“By its very definition, street theater has to be ideologically deep rooted. And politically, it has to be Left wing.”* (Deshpande, 2007, p. 64)

Invariably as a political wing of the communist party, street theater was born at the first place. Upliftment of the working class, bringing them into the mainstream of democracy and shake up the establishment were the primary motives of street theater, more precisely JANAM. However, what started as a political activity, imbibed into the theatrical aesthetics, gained popularity among the masses and attained attraction of the educational sector and social welfare organizations within few years of its existence. As a result, it gained support from the right wing political parties as well, in few places. That however, didn't essentially influence the group to shift away from their ideology. The leading members of JANAM, for instance Habib Tanvir, are keener to promote street plays than large-scale production of proscenium theaters, which they believe doesn't conform to the ideologies that led to the formation of their journey of theater. Unlike Hashmi, who insisted on utilizing both the forms of theatrical productions, Tanvir outrightly considered street theater as a more powerful form than the proscenium plays. According to him, street theaters are not only easier to work on due to the affordable cost of production, but also sustain more faithfully than the other form because of the public goodwill it

receives. The proximity between the actors and the audiences and the colloquial structure of the plays are the fortes of such productions. The proscenium theater on the other hand is far more expensive and therefore depends more or less on the government aid or sponsorships. Such theaters are more targeted towards a specific section of the people, i.e. the theater enthusiasts, and doesn't go to the working class and oppressed, who according to Tanvir "need theater the most, but can't afford it" (Deshpande, 2007)

JANAM was born out of the compulsion of communist leaders to bring a socio-political change, and therefore, although their plays served plentiful infotainment for the masses in cities and subaltern areas, it has always been primarily about the politics. The journey of street theater in India was started with JANAM as a tool for anti-establishment that aimed to empower its people to take the center stage of social transformation through theater that is participatory and echoes their voice.

*"So street theater is a theater of protest, which must always be on the left. It has to be always anti-establishment. We have in our country by and large a right wing establishment – a capitalist regime. In varying degrees we have always had it right from inception. So right wing forces dominate the country in so far as governance is concerned. If you sell your theater to these forces, which also enjoy money power, being endowed with most of the national wealth, then you can't be doing theater of protest, which constitutes the very nature of street theater."* (Deshpande, 2007, p. 64)

However, "Left's lack of political vibrancy" in past few years also made the growth of JANAM a tad sluggish. According to Arjun Ghosh, the group requires the support of Left wing parties to perform in different locations. If the party has no or insignificant presence in the locality, that affect their scope of staging a performance. Due to the crumbling status of the party, a number of initiatives to form new theater troupes have failed and the political art form is undergoing an acute resource crunch. Ghosh further stated that, it was due to the support of the communist party that JANAM had been able to survive without corporate or government interference for so long and for the most part, their alliance with the party gave them the primary base of audiences (Gupta, 2012).

## **Conclusion – The Potential to Bring Change:**

Although the essence of street theater movement and journey of JANAM has always been Left-centric, central to their art movement is to bring a social change in the life of those who are downtrodden – the common mass. To attain that, it is imperative to combine “progressive community development” process and “popular education” together. As a process of popular theater, street plays aim to create a participatory process that is in tune of the “cultural forms” of the target audience. In comparison to the proscenium theater, street plays are where actors link their political and social values with professional and artistic interests. However, to utilize its potential to the optimum and make an impact in the society, the theatrical process should be mixed with long-term developmental planning (Prentki & Selman, 2000). For this, the street theater should know its community, identify the issues of concern, intertwine the communal expression with entertainment, invite audience participation and call for action.

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STREET THEATRE – AN INCLUSIVE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION Street theatre as an indigenous Indian form of communication is profoundly embedded in the Indian tradition. The history of the Street theatre dates back to the mid nineteenth century. It is known to appear in the 1940s though there is no proper indication of the date and time during which it has taken place.