Before it’s too late… by Manohar Khushalani

SMORGASBORD

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Contemporary approach to fossilized folk theatre

CULTURE COCKTAIL

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There is a great stress in newspapers and magazines on urban and contemporary theatre trends. Very little attention is given to folk forms of performances. It is only during the republic day parade that we are able to watch some folk theatre dance forms with a distant and uninvolved eye — as if something esoteric and alien is seen by us that belong to some distant past or in performances only in the back of beyond. This is an index of how big a chasm exists between the rural and urban India.

Actually Folk theatre is far more vibrant and contemporary than some people imagine. Even the art of theatre is truly of the folk. It is beyond the artificial touch of contemporary urban scene and it is still genuinely forms of art which are truly theatres and needs no reflection only in social plays. This is far from truth. Look at the tribal theatre of the Bhoga called the Nandikeya. It is a form that covers an amazing variety of themes based on socio-economic issues and contemporary political events.

The sad part of the folk form is that it is dying out because of the invasion of

Tangaigalla folk dance.

Nevertheless — even though the plays are acutely relevant and often have outstanding have matched their resources and made there salaries in the very land they moved away upon a time. Even now there are some contemporary representations, which are exploring the potentiality of using folk theatre for educating villagers about social issues. Since they easily relate to folk forms.

At least one such institution — Nirjanpal Academy of Andhra Pradesh has used their popular art forms to address various social problems of the society. Literacy campaigns and several issues such as adult education, environment, child labour, population control, women abuse and the problems of dowry have been skillfully dealt with the medium of folk dance and theatre.

The academy has conducted several workshops and performances for Andhra Pradesh AIDS Control Society and others.

It has also taken up training of youth in the skills on the nuances of Folk theatre. They are taught to compose a script, select different parts and finally to communicate, using the medium of folk theatre, on their programme for social development at the grassroots. It is easy to develop without much

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