Nostalgia Street by Manohar Khushalani



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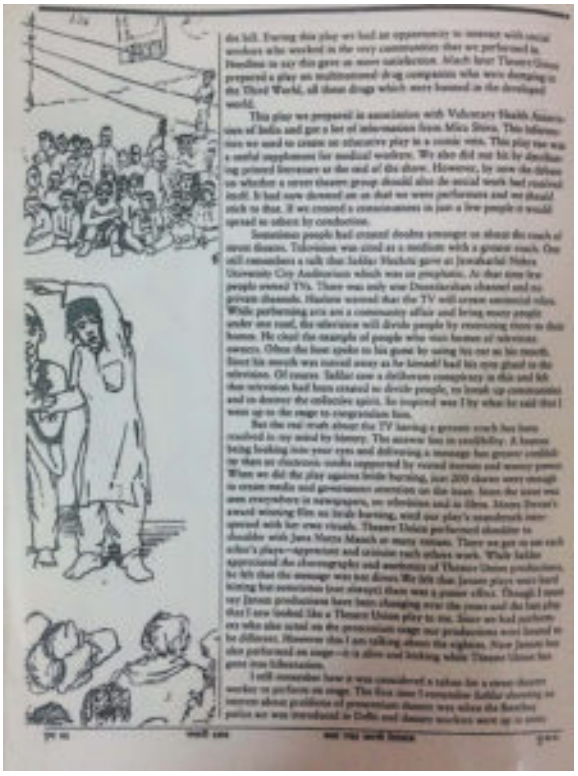

against it. Said Hashmi in a manner specially organised against it, "this was the first step towards government censorship of theatre". I was particularly agitated about it since I felt that the police was disrupted in audiences the success of theatre. Little did I realise at that time, that in effect, given the usual inefficiency of the official machinery, getting a police license, invoking though it may be, was just another formality to be complied. Also, street theatre, which had the maximum potential of a political certain was outside the purview of a performance license since these performance were not in an auditorium. Yet Hashmi spoke most entirely followed by M.K. Raina who had a fine in both the brain.

Street theatre does not mean just taking up any issue, assembling a bunch of enthusiasts, and converging on the last street corner and cross section. It may take months to write a wokkad natak scripts. Workshop Theatre took three months to translate Badal Sircar's Bhoma and six months to further evolve the play! An issue may arise from a slum. It may be with bearing, or a drunkard husband, or a middle class dowry problem. It is chosen by a general consensus, workshop sessions are organised and a script is evolved keeping in mind the target audience. Few people know that Badal Sircar's Jalous has been performed in Pakistan as well. Street theatre has attracted a few people because of the romanticism involved in the whole exercise. Since they are often exposed, the police which never likes references to its own brutalities, often tries to stop the performance. Sometimes even the audience gets pulled up because of the personal, one to one relationship that this medium tries to establish. When the police tried to stop a performance of Jalous by Praying at Connaught Place's central park, more than a decade ago, the audience intervened on behalf of the performers and handed with the police. Similarly, during the Emergency, when the police stopped a street performance in Garden Park, Calcutta, the common people responded by turning up in thousands to watch the same performance the next day. The romanticism, however, wears off after some time. Only a few who are genuinely committed stick to the movement. "If ever you do street theatre, forget that you will be happy, forget that you will be famous, forget that you will be rich," wants Badal Sircar. However, Safdar Hashmi's unfortunate martyrdom has changed all that. People have become more conscious of a performer's right to perform. But street theatre which appeared to be on the decline is bound to rise up again and fight the menaces of social evils. Be it with glaze like Janam's unforgettable Aurat or Theatre Union's similarly memorable Toba Tek Singh. □

