

Ma Aak Nirvik Soinik by Koushik Kar

The Play

A mother is a woman. She gives birth to a new life, which is why she cannot take away a life. Maybe for this reason, there is no woman-martial group worldwide. Men fight and exhibit their strength and power and rule over the world. They willingly dedicate their youth to mass slaughtering and cherish the crude political gamble. The mother is the only loser in this whimsical primitive game as she has to empty her lap every time.

Anaturi is one such mother who tries to inflict in her only son, Kohen, the seed of the eternal virtue of love. It is her continuous fight to protect her son under the warmth of her safe apron strings from the ill-effects of war-loving King Bumbujang or against the shimmering of sharp weapons of the Souramati King. It is a war pledged against war.

Director Note

A warring world. Since the very dawn of creation, man has existed by applying only his strength and power. The entire world becomes afflicted towards establishing the rule of the most powerful and the mighteous. The state power is not only the sole origin of this exhibiting warring nature. This love for power & violence gets infected in every man, in every child. For of this millennium through the game of blood and war like Max Paine, Prince of Persia or Contra video games or to relish over the blood smeared screen and rejoice over killing, as in WWF Action TV shows. As the child grows up, his addiction to taste blood and violence also grows. This greed thrashes him into dirty politics in schools, colleges, which calls for inter country quarrels in the guise of narrow

patriotism and thus nationalism culminates into nasty terrorism. Here, in my play, there is the story of a mother who struggles all-out to keep her only war-loving son away from the deadly weapons and bloodshed and imbibes the value of eternal love. Mother is a woman and she alone can give birth to a child. When a life is lost in war, it is only a mother's lap that becomes void.

But at times, a mother needs to pick up arms in her hand to establish the virtue of love and mercy at the cost of giving up precious gem that is her only son. It is a war waged against war, a war to establish eternal love against crude violence. My play is dedicated to mothers world-wide who have lost their sons in war. A mother is actually 'a fearless warrior'.

The Director & Playwright

Koushik Kar has been a theatre personality with over 12 years of experience as an actor and director. He is known for being a keen planner, strategist and implementer ensuring successful management of operations in theatre. His time-centric approach is coupled with a flair for executing production. He has been the Founder-President of 'Kolkata Rangeela'. He essayed many important roles in major productions of *Yuganata*, *Rann*, *Minerva Sangskriti Charchakendra* and *Nirnoy*. He was honoured with Best Director Award for *Terrorist* and *Dour*.

The Group

'Kolkata Rangeela' was founded last year under the leadership of Koushik Kar. It launched its first production, *Ma Aak Nirvik Soinik*, with the unveiling of its logo by the eminent theatre personality, Bibhash Chakraborty.

The organisation is ready for shouldering the responsibilities of offering a new focus on the Total Quality Theatre. While trying to fulfill the objectives of entertainment, education

and information, it would pay special attention towards developing the thought process of the theatre workers and audience.

Playwright & Director

Koushik Kar

Les Chants de l'Umaï

The Play

Les Chants de l'Umaï consists of five sequences, set in a surreal Indo-Arab context with Persian and Jewish influences, in which dance stems from singing in long undulating iterations, somewhat like the chants of ancient manuscripts. While creating this show, Marcia Barcellos was particularly inspired by the Carnatic songs and signifying gestures of Indian sacred dances. In the imaginary, dream-like state that Marcia Barcellos creates in this piece, she is Umaï, the womb of the universe, or a woman-dragon of the fictional territory of Gravbekistan. In this ode to femininity, the reconstructed memory of many fantasized imaginary divinities is conveyed through five songs loosely derived from Indian or African melodies. Each of them, in the manner of ancient theatre, introduces an epic poem of a past era that only the body-memory can tie us to. As a loyal disciple of American choreographer, Alwin Nikolais, Barcellos uses the whole gamut of effects, including video, lighting, holograms and props created by the co-founder of Systeme Castafiore, Karl Biscuit. The intersection of a movement vocabulary particular to Barcellos and ever-evolving scenography, *Les Chants de L'Umaï* goes as close as it can to a reimagined world.

Director's note

“It’s an operatic form that combines singing and dancing, with a dramatic and scenic device to carry it all. The theme, a sort of distant past, reinvented or a prehistoric mythology revolves around femininity. *Umaï* is a word from the ancient Mongolian which means matrix. Through this form we created different women characters which form a kind of mythology of the origin of the world. Each piece is preceded by a song, in a mysterious language, which announces the next one, a bit like with the Greek chorus. We take the viewer on board of a rather contemplative epic poem, with a great freedom of interpretation.”

The Director

Système Castafiore is directed by theatre director and musician Karl Biscuit and Brazilian dancer and choreographer Marcia Barcellos, both of whom, having worked with Alwin Nikolais, remain followers of his style of total dance-theatre in which dance is just one element in an integrated performance including sound, light and theatrical effects. They first entered the new French dance movement through the *Lolita collective*, before founding their own company in 1989. Together, they created 19 performances including choreographies for national ballets. Naturally gifted with humor, talent, imagination and a rare ingenuity, they put experimentation at the forefront of their art.

The Group

Dance company *Système Castafiore* has no equivalent on the French performing arts scene. Operating for over 30 years, it has created its own universe, flirting with Dadaism. Co-directed by choreographer Marcia Barcellos and director/composer Karl Biscuit, the company’s representation of reality reflects the madness of our world through an extraordinary work of experimentation between movement, sophisticated projections and sound installations.

Dance & Songs: Marcia Barcellos

Music & Direction: Karl Biscuit

Tamasha Na Hua by Bhanu Bharti

The Play

To commemorate Tagore's 150th anniversary, a theatre group is shown busy, rehearsing his celebrated play *Muktdhara*. During the rehearsal, an argument about the relevance of the play in the present time erupts among the actors. This argument leads to the famous debate between Tagore and Gandhi, and the issue of man's freedom in today's scenario. The discussions leads to many real issues faced today, like the Farraka 'barrage' and its effect on Bangladesh agriculture and fisheries, the effects of free economy and consumerist culture on the society as well as 'Gandhian socialism' v/s 'Marxist socialism'. After serious arguments and counter arguments among the actors, the debate remains inconclusive and the play unperformed.

Director's Note

Men's aspiration for freedom has engaged the best minds in the realms of religion, philosophy, ethics, science, arts and politics for centuries. With industrial revolution, economy acquired a central place in all the discourses related to the concept of human freedom, in modern age. With this economy, machine and its relation to the development of human society

also became greatly significant.

All through the freedom movement of India, there were great minds that were watchful and emphatic in avoiding the narrow nationalistic view of freedom and kept the larger issues of men's freedom as the central discourse; freedom, not only from a foreign rule, but a complete freedom at all levels – material and spiritual. While the freedom of the country was paramount, universal humanity was never out of sight. This was a unique feature of our 'national' movement for freedom. Among these great minds with a universal vision, Mahatma Gandhi and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore were the most prominent.

I felt that Tagore's ideologies merited a revisit in the context of the tumultuous modern times. As a tribute to his work and ideas, the play *Tamasha Na Hua* depicts a group of theatre actors rehearsing one of Tagore's most popular works – *Muktdhara*. The narrative is essentially a discussion among the actors on the relevance of the play which leads to a serious debate about the freedom of men in the present political, technological and cultural context.

The Director and Playwright

An NSD alumnus, Bhanu Bharti is best known for his bold innovations and creativity in Indian theatre. In search of an authentic theatre experience, he has engaged in a lot of things, from conventional modes to the freedom of folk idioms, highly stylized Noh and Kabuki theatre to the utterly liberated tribal Bheel 'Gavari' style of his native Rajasthan. Such eclectic influences have informed his seminal directorial output like *Pashu Gayatri*, *Amar Beej*, *Kaal Katha*, *Taambe ke Keere*, *Chandrama Singh urf Chamku* and *Katha Kahi Ek Jale Hue Ped Ne*. Indefatigable and multi-dimensional, he is acclaimed as an actor and as author of original plays like *Tamasha na Hua*, *Chandrama Singh urf Chamkoo*, *Katha Kahi Ek Jale Ped Ne* and *Nachinai*. He has launched many thought provoking events

such as the Centenary of Satyagraha, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, and Celebration of Indian Freedom – Bharat Utsav.

He has been honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in the field of theatre as a director and the prestigious 'Nandikar', an award for lifetime contribution to theatre.

The Group

Aaj Rangmandal was established in 1984 by Shri Bhanu Bharti in Udaipur, Rajasthan. It created a special niche for itself in the theatre scenario. During this process, a need to involve the urban actors along with tribal actors was felt, to further its creative and innovative pursuits. Thus Aaj – Delhi was found and since then, this unique theatre company consisting of the urban and the tribal actors is constantly involved in its innovative and thought provoking work. Aaj Theatre Company presents a theatre festival of its own productions in Delhi, every year. Some of its most important theatre productions are: *Pashugayatri*, *Amar Beej*, *Kal Katha*, *Katha Kahi Ek Jale Ped Ne*, *Naachni*, *Mahamayi*, *Dehantar*, *Bapu* etc.

Playwright & Director – Bhanu Bharti

Jamal-E-Begum Akhtar by Vidushi Rita Ganguly

The Play

Jamal-E-Begum Akhtar, a solo performance, is being presented by, Prof. Vidushi Rita Ganguly (Padmashree), the well-known

theatre artist and vocalist. The presentation is based on the life and times of her own Guru Mallika-e-Ghazal, Begum Akhtar. The play has evolved over the years as a result of Prof. Ganguly's long association with Begum Akhtar as her pupil and her extensive research on the professional woman musicians of the country and the music that thrived in the royal courts of yesteryears. The present play is in Hindustani language and is an adaptation of a *Bangla* play of the same title, which was recently performed in Bangladesh with resounding success.

The play is designed in free story telling format, which necessarily precludes any fixed written text. With her gift as a storyteller, she takes recourse to improvising the text as the play develops. This is perhaps for the first time that an *ekal* is being staged on the life of a legendary artiste.

Begum-Akhtar

Begum Akhtar (7 October 1914 – 30 October 1974), was a well-known Indian singer of Ghazal, Dadra, and Thumri genres of Hindustani classical music. She received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for vocal music, and was awarded Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan (posthumously) by Govt. of India. She was given the title of *Mallika-e-Ghazal* (Queen of Ghazals).

Begum Akhtar was born in Bada Darwaza, Town Bhadarsa, Bharatkund, Faizabad District, Uttar Pradesh. Her father, Asghar Hussain, a young lawyer who fell in love with her mother Mushtari and made her his second wife, subsequently disowned her and his twin daughters Zohra and Bibbi (Akhtar). Akhtar was barely seven when she was captivated by the music of Chandra Bai, an artist attached to a touring theatre group. At her uncle's insistence she was sent to train under Ustad Imdad Khan, the great sarangi exponent from Patna, and later under Ata Mohammed Khan of Patiala. Later, she travelled to Calcutta with her mother and learnt music from classical stalwarts like Mohammad Khan, Abdul Waheed Khan of Lahore, and

finally she became the disciple of Ustad Jhande Khan.

The Director

Born and brought up in Lucknow, Professor Rita Ganguly was drawn to music since her childhood. The daughter of freedom fighter and founder of the National Herald, the eminent litterateur, Dr K L Ganguly, Rita was encouraged from an early age towards academic advancement as well as artistic excellence.

She regularly performs a two and a half hour solo play on her mentor, Begum Akhtar which has travelled throughout the world at all major theatre festivals. It is also her homage to the gurus of dance, music and theatre who have influenced her own life, and contributed to world culture through their commitment to truth. She pioneered a multimedia production on the 7 stages of Sufism, entitled Ruh-e-ishq, celebrating 50 yrs of India's independence.

For her outstanding contribution in the field of classical music, she has been the recipient of a slew of awards. These include the Padmashree, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Ghazal Gayakee, the Priyadarshi Award, the Rajiv Gandhi Shiromani award, Critics Circle of India award and most recently, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Broadcasters Association, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.

Concept, Research, Design & Script

Prof Rita Ganguly

Dahananta by Debasis Majumdar

The Play

This is a tale of a lower middle class septuagenarian couple Akinchan and Sabarni- lonely, isolated and deserted. Their elder son Abhirup, a methodical careerist lives in Oklahoma with his family. Their daughter, Ratnasree and son-in-law Romit, who stay in Delhi, can be called selfish, covetous and hypocrites. Their youngest son, Dhritirup, an extremist yields to his political belief of terrorism by sacrificing himself in a police encounter. Grief engulfs the couple. They mourn Dhritirup's death and keep the sorrow within themselves. Abhirup and Ratnasree avoid their parents and gradually, the couple becomes more alienated and insecure.

Their loneliness and isolation compels them to think, what will happen to either of them if one of them dies? Who will provide them a shelter or lend a hand of support? Such questions bother them, thereby making their life a burden. Both of them decide to consume sleeping pills. But was that inevitable? Another fold of this play raises a question on the future of our socio-political scenario. The quasi-fascist politics that prevails under the veil of democracy, the terrorism or the ideology of Rabindranath Tagore to search humanity within one's self – which one of these ideologies will survive?

The Director & Playwright

Shri Debasis Majumdar was born in Baktiarpur, Bihar in 1950 and grew to adulthood in Kolkata amidst the political turbulence of the early 1970s. Starting as a poet in Bengali, he found his true calling as a dramatist with the production of *Dansagar* (1975) based on Premchand's well-known story *Kafan*. Shri Majumdar formed the theatre group 'Sudrak' in 1977 and launched its first production *Amitakshar* in the

same year. The play subsequently won the West Bengal Natya Akademi's Award (1980) and was translated and performed in several Indian languages. In Hindi, *Amitakshar* was named as *Tamrapatra*. Out of some forty plays and numerous critical essays written by him, *Samabartan*, *Ishabasya*, *Asamapta*, *Chandalini*, *Pratinidhi*, *Swapna Santati*, *Rangamati* and *Dahananta* are some of his most notable plays. These plays were produced by Sudrak and have been published in various literary periodicals. Shri Majumdar has been the recipient of various awards like the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (2005) and State Natya Akademi Award for his plays, *Amitakshar*, *Swapna Santati* and *Rangamati*.

The Group

'Sudrak' came into existence on 9th October 1977. With its first production, *Amitakshar* in 1978, Sudrak established itself as one of the leading theatre groups, involved in the Experimental Theatre Movement of Bengal. Besides the appreciation received from the audience, *Amitakshar* received applause from eminent personalities like Satyajit Ray, Shambhu Mitra, Samaresh Basu, Ganesh Pain etc. The play is considered as one of the best ten original plays ever written in Bengal and has been translated into seven national languages.

Some of the remarkable plays by Sudrak are *Amitakshar*, *Ishabasya*, *Chandalini* (Based on Rabindranath Tagore's *Chandalika*), *Rangamati*, *Pakhiwala*, *Sahajsajan*, *Dahananta* and *Paryabarto*.

Apart from theatre, Sudrak publishes 'Natya Patra : Sudrak' each year. The group also publishes books based on theatre like *Tripti Mitra*. Since, 2008 Sudrak conducts National Theatre Festival, called 'Sudrak Utsav' at the Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata. Besides the theatre festival, the group also organizes exhibitions on painting and sculpture.

Joymoti by Anup Hazarika

The Play

The play *Joymoti*, is about an iron lady of 17th century Assam history, who with her fortitude and self sacrifice entirely changed the course of destiny of the 'Ahom Empire' when the atrocious ruling of a certain class of the Ahom royal family were about to lead the entire Ahom kingdom to its doom. The play not only gives information about Joymati's life but also focuses on her inner thoughts and mental power.

Director's Note

"What Joymati might have thought during her days of sufferings?"—were the key questions haunting us before preparing the play. We were searching for the answer in the available references in the Assam history and other forms of literature. Our discussions with various persons who spent much of their time in the scholarly study of Assam history and particularly on the Ahoms were other resources and inspirations in writing and shaping up the play. But still our search is on; hope someday we will get the answer.

Playwright & Director

Anup Hazarika, the playwright & director of the play *Joymoti*, graduated from National School of Drama in 1990. He specialized in acting. So far he has directed 32 stage plays for both amateur and mobile theatre of Assam. He established his group Baa (The Creative Breeze) in 1995. As an actor he acted in 72 stage plays, 21 feature films, more than

fifty television serials, tele-films and a number of radio plays. Apart from that he enjoys translating plays & dramatizing plays from different stories & novels. He has already translated Mohan Rakesh's *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* into Assamese and staged the play under his direction in 1993. In the year 2008 he was awarded the best light designer's award by The Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (Meta) & in 2007 he was awarded the best supporting actor's award by the Govt. of Assam for his performance in Assamese cinema. Presently he is working at Regional government Film & Television Institute, Kahilipara, Guwahati as a lecturer of Acting

The Group

BA (A Cultural Organization), of Guwahati, Assam was established in the year 1995, by a group of active theatre workers. So far the group has staged several plays including Arun Sarma's *Agnigarh*, Mahendra Borthakur's *Sinsa Paneer Mass*, Jimoni Choudhury & Pakija Begum's *Menaka* and Habib Tanvir's *Charandas Chor*. Apart from producing stage plays the group has organized production oriented intensive theatre workshops and children theatre workshops in collaboration with National School of Drama and Sangeet Natak Akademi in Guwahati.

Gambhira-Gambhira by Parimal Tribedi

The Play

The play tells the story of Bhubhan, a Gambhira artist. Bhubhan believes that without truth, Gambhira is not possible. What we see today, Bhubhan says, is not the original Gambhira.

It's only a mike, a mike to announce various projects like sanitation, literacy, health etc. It has lost its voice. The *vandana* that they once sang to please lord Shiva is now sung to please the political leaders. The voice which once spoke against the social follies and foibles, now advertises different projects.

Director's Note

I was born and brought up in a village. In those days there was no television. Radio was the possession of only rich people. So we found our sources of entertainment only in *Jatra, Alkap, Manosa Gan, Kirtan, Gambhira* and other forms of folk theatre. Among these 'Gambhira' was the most powerful medium to depict the follies of the society of the time. It spoke the truth. It spoke for the common people. But now, days have changed. Entertainment has several fountainheads and in the crowd of media and hordes of TV channels the true 'Gambhira' is lost. I miss it. I miss its real flavor, its power to speak the truth.

As 'Gambhira' has its own distinct identity and it bears the folk identity of Malda district, it was difficult to give it a dramatic shape. I have gone through a lot of experiments and studies. Its language, tone, song, dance, body movement, costume, and theme – every part of it needed an in-depth attention. It was not an easy task to string all the parts into a single thread. We have to arrange workshops, seminar and several sessions of talks with the Gambhira artists to bring clarity on each part of Gambhira. The play took about eight months to get prepared. In these eight months we tasted the real flavor of Gambhira and earned a great experience.

The Director & Playwright

Director, actor, playwright and founder of 'Malda Malancha', Parimal Tribedi is a well-known theatre personality in Bengali Theatre and is a Member of Paschimbanga Natya Akademy. For the

last twenty one years he has been leading his present group 'Malda Malancha' in the mofussil district, Malda. In these years he has directed nearly fifty plays. He has written 15 plays which has been staged and highly acclaimed.

Some of the noted plays written by Parimal Tribedi are *Gambhira Gambhira*, *Ranir Ghater Brittanto*, *Bhalo Manush*, *Ratan*, *Udas Puja*, *Asamayer Bhabna*, *Lotun Jevan*, *Swasti* and *Lajja*. He has directed almost all these with his group.

The Group

A group of young but competent theatre workers led by Sri Parimal Tribedi formed 'Malda Malancha' in 1993 to devote itself to the task of promoting the glorious tradition of experimental theatre movement. "Malancha" ventured to produce some significant modern plays, both original as well as in translations. "Malda Malancha" also organises theatre festivals every year and conducts seminars and theatre workshops.

Darshak by Priyamvad

The Play

Once again they entered into the shiny yet dark...real yet dreamy...cave of love which was built with memories, sorrows and pain. When life has to pay heavily in return to the desires to live, they were in their own magical world. Her body was breathing the coldness and he thought that she is surrendering. She was there...right there... and her soul could see clearly through her body that only the body was needed by him. He always said that the soul doesn't participate and

starts to play an audience when there is this fear or doubt, only bodies are the active participants... And that night soul did the same while the bodies reacted to the desires.

Time passed by and again they met. Her body looked sad and ugly. Still they were ready to enter the cave of love... Again... And so they entered. He was wearing his clothes... Soul was an audience again... When suddenly she uttered ...

Director's Note

"Hum jaadu ke andar the...usi tarah jaise prem aur swapn ya dukh ke andar hote hain..."

These were the lines which inspired me to work on the story and to adapt it as a play. The so called love between a man and a woman is the very manifestation of convenient desires. The entire life keeps revolving around the search for eternal love and satisfaction, both physical and spiritual, dealing with responsibilities and finally getting nowhere...and we start living in installments. What's going to happen when Soul is the audience or when Soul is the active player.

The Director

Sadanand Patil, began exploring the theatre in the year 1987 in Katni, Madhya Pradesh. In the year 1994, he started to work with "Rang-vidushak (Bhopal)" under the direction of the maestro Bansi Kaul and continued till 2001 with the group. In 2001, entered National School Of Drama and graduated in acting and then worked with the NSD Repertory Company for six years where he got the opportunity to explore the art under the legends like Late B.V. Karanth, Late Bhaskar Chandravarkar, Habib Tanvir, Naseeruddin Shah, Anuradha Kapur, Prasanna, Ram Gopal Bajaj, Devendra Raj Ankur, Rob Clare and many other stalwarts.

Having over two thousand performances and more than hundred plays to his credit, presently he works with Kingdom Of

Dreams.

The Writer

Priyamvad is best known for his fictions in Hindi. His widely acclaimed novels include, *Ve Wahan Qaid Hain*, *Parchhai Naach*, *Chhutti ke Din ka Chorus* and *Dharmsthal*. His collections of stories like “Khargosh” and “Aainaghar” attracted the immediate attention of the readers and critics alike for their content and style. He has been the guiding spirit behind the last 19 Kathaakaar Sammelan Sangman. Two films, *Anwar* and *Khargosh*, were based on his short stories.

Story – Priyamvad

Direction – Sadanand Patil

Of Mice and Men by

The Play & Director's Note

Of Mice and Men takes place during America's Great Depression, which lasted from the stock market crash of October 1929 until 12 years later when World War II began. One result of the depression was lack of steady jobs, which resulted in an increase in the number of itinerant workers. For the most part, these itinerant workers were men who traveled from town to town seeking short-term employment. The play addresses the real hopes and dreams of working-class America. It raises the lives of the poor and dispossessed to a higher symbolic level. *Of Mice and Men* tries to explain what it means to be human. It touches on several themes: the nature of dreams, the nature of loneliness, man's propensity for cruelty, powerlessness and economic injustices, and the uncertainty of

the future. Nearly all of the characters admit, at one time or another, of having a profound sense of loneliness and isolation the characters are rendered helpless by their isolation, and yet, even at their weakest, they seek to destroy those who are even weaker than they are. Steinbeck records a profound human truth: oppression does not come only from the hands of the strong or the powerful. The novel suggests that the most visible kind of strength—that used to oppress others—is itself born of weakness.

The farm, of which George and Lennie dream, does not exist in reality but it, is very real in their minds, where they will have self-respect and independence. It becomes a symbol of their relationship and the re-telling of the dream becomes a ritual. In opposition to this symbol is the bunkhouse which represents the cruel world of reality, where we see discrimination, cruelty, insensitivity and suspicion. This production evolved during a workshop with Rang Vinayak Theatre Group. Apart from struggling hard to portray the complex characters the young actors contributed in many other ways. They added certain hand properties, made set props, even brought suitable costumes.

The Director

Hema Singh, a well known actor, a graduate of NSD's Integrated Course, worked with NSD Repertory Company for 10 years. She has done major roles with eminent national and international directors. She was awarded with NSD's prestigious 'Manohar Singh Smriti Award' for her contribution to theatre in 2008. She has acted in tele-films and serials with directors like Shyam Benegal and M.S.Sathyu. Her portrayal of Imarti Devi in a T.V. serial has fetched her 'Indian Television Academy Award 'for Best Actress in a negative role'. She has done innovative work in the field of Parsi theatre and presentation of poetry on stage. She has assisted famous Parsi style actor Late

Master Fida Hussain 'Narsi' at NSD for 6 years. Apart from 15 productions in Parsi style to her credit, she has directed plays of other genres such as *Hot Air*, *Gadar*, *Jasma Odhan* & *Chainpur ki Dastan*.

Presently, she is an Associate Professor of Acting at NSD.

The Author

The winner of the 1962 Nobel Prize in Literature, John Steinbeck was an American author of twenty-seven books, including sixteen novels, six non-fiction books, and five collections of short stories. He is widely known for the comic novels *Tortilla Flat* (1935) and *Cannery Row* (1945), the multi-generation epic *East of Eden* (1952), and the novellas *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *The Red Pony* (1937). The Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) is considered Steinbeck's masterpiece. Many of his works are considered classics of Western literature.

The Group

Established in 2007 by Dr. Brijeshwar Singh, 'Rang Vinayak Rang Mandal' is a cultural wing of Daya Drishti. In 2010 Rang Vinayak formed its own Theatre Repertory which has now 30 artists. It has been hosting theatre festivals, showcasing works of eminent theatre directors. It has also been organizing Children theater workshops, giving them a cultural platform. It's widely acclaimed productions of different genres are *Adarsh Hindu Hotel*, *Jab Shaher Hamara Sotha Hai*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Mattavillas*, *Reunion*, *Saiyaan Bhaye Kotwal* and *Chainpur ki Dastan*.

Design & Direction Hema Singh

Akoopar by Shri Dhruv Bhatt

The Play

Akoopar is based upon the first novel in the history of Gujarati literature, which deals with the life of Maldharis and their relationship with lions, nature and the animals of Sasan Gir- the last homage of Asiatic lion. Written by Shri Dhruv Bhatt, this play won two awards this year.

Director's Note

Akoopar is the only play in Gujarati theatre, based on life of Maldharis. The unnamed narrator, who is a painter, has an assignment to paint the elemental form of Earth, under a grand project. The artist is an outsider who gradually unfolds the inner world of the Gir forest.

To create and understand reality, a team of artists and technicians stayed in Gir forest for ten days, in turns. They met a lot of Maldharis, forest officers, staff, rescue operators and forest guides. To bring authenticity to the play, natural sounds of forest, lions, leopards, other animals and Maldharis were recorded. In addition *marasiya* (death songs), marriage songs and *dohas* (couplets) were also recorded.

The costumes were made in Sasan village and jewellery as well as properties for the play, was also purchased from there.

The Director

Creative Director and Managing Trustee of JT Memorial Foundation, Aditi Desai pursued a career in theatre since

childhood under the guidance of her father, Shri Jashwant Thaker. She developed herself from an actress to an activist, trainer, director, producer, film maker and script writer. Her key areas of interest are theatre, video film making, development of popular educational material and Gender and theatre training. She has directed 18 plays and made 21 documentaries, docu-drama, video-spots and programmes based on various social and environmental issues. She has also acted in plays directed by Bharat Dave, Naushil Mehta, Raju Barot and many more. Desai has worked extensively in Regional Television, feature films, documentaries and radio in last twenty two years. She has been the pioneer of street theatre in Gujarat, on issues pertaining to women and has conducted over sixty theatre training workshops in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Desai has also been a faculty member and course coordinator for theatre in J.G. School of Performing Arts.

The Playwright

Born on 8th May 1947 in Gujarat, Shri Dhruv Bhatt was always interested in writing fictions and plays since childhood. He retired as a Section Manager from an engineering firm. Some of his notable works are *Khovayelun Nagar*, *Agnikanya*, *Samudrantike*, *Tattvamasi*, *Atarapi*, *Shruvantu*, *Gaye Tena Git*, *Karnalok* and *Lovely Paan House*. His work, *Samudrantike* has been awarded by Gujarati Sahitya Parishad as a rural novel, by Gujarati Sahitya Academy as a travelogue, by Marwadi Sammelan as best literary work and by Goverdhanram Tripathi Award committee as a novel. His works *Gaye Tena Git*, *Akoopar*, *Karnalok* and *Tattvamasi* have been awarded by Gujarati Sahitya Academy.

The Group

Jashwant Thaker (1915-1991) was the doyen of Gujarati theatre. He initiated the Navi Rangbhoomi Movement in Gujarati and was the founder member of the Gujarat chapter of IPTA aka Lok Natya Sangh. To honor his memory, JT Memorial Foundation was set up in 2005.

The Foundation works towards development communication, with a focus on gender. It believes that communication and training can be used to strengthen oppressed people and catalyse social movements. They create productions to empower children, youth, women and community members. All the plays under this foundation are usually in Gujarati. Some of their plays are *Agnikaya*, *Akoopar*, *Kasturba*, *Savitribai Phule*, *Patra Mitro*, *Udan Charkaldi*, *Kaagdo*, *Prem* etc.