About Charan Das Sidhu and his Plays by Manohar Khushalani

This article was supposed to be a book review, but because one had known the playwright, Dr. Charan Das Sidhu, so intimately, the personal note is unavoidable. My mind races back to 1978 when I started my theatre career with Badal Sircar's 'There is No End' an English rendition of his Bengali play 'Shesh Nei' directed by Tejeshwar Singh. Amongst the elite IIC Theatre Club audience was a stocky, dark, bespectacled professor of English from Hans Raj College, Delhi University, who spoke in what I later came to know as his irreverently rude but affectionate style

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Plays of Social Relevance and on Feminist Issues / Manohar Khushalani

Firstly on **Women's Day** it is important to recall the innumerable **street play**s we did on women's issues mostly under the banner of **Theatre Union** and **Workshop Theatre**

'***Om Swaha***' was about dowry and bride burning. It contributed towards sensitizing the media and the nation on this issue.'

'The Rape Bill" was about custodial rape and insensitive cross examination of victims in courts. It was performed when a select committee was examining the new rape bill before it

became an act in the parliament. It also informed women about their rights.

'Pardon ka Parcham' was prepared by us after Roop Kanwar an 18-year old Rajput woman committed ***Sati*** on 4th September 1987 at Deorala village of Sikar district in Rajasthan. These plays were collectively evolved by our group **Theatre Union**.

I would also like to recall my brothers and sisters in arms, an endless procession of street theatre co-warriors who came, sometimes stayed for a while and sometimes stopped briefly for a production or two and moved on. In no particular order they were: **Sudhir Mishra, Sushmita Mukherji, Bina Pal. Meenu Chatutvedi, Anamika Haksar, Nandini, Anil Mehta, Anuradha Kapoor, Ravi Shankar, Umesh Bisht, Maya Rao, Vandana Bisht, Sushil Prashar, Sujasha Dasgupta, Chandrashekhar, Urvashi Butalia, Ragini Prakash, Vibhuti Nath Jha, Dr. Harivansh Chopra, Krishan Tyagi, Kumkum Sangaria, Ein Lal, Dr.Ravi Mahajan, Satyajit Sharma, Tapush Chanda** and me, **Manohar Khushalani**. If I have forgotten anybody then please remind me.

I also directed Dario Fo's '***Can't Pay Won't Pay***' for **TU**, it was a proscenium play. The play Kanthi Tripathy's ***'Kurukshetra and After'*** which I directed for StageBuzz was also a proscenium play based on the ***Stree Parv*** of ***Mahabharat***. Which takes up the issue of women's plight during War. And of course how can I forget that as an actor I acted in Henrik Ibsen's ***'Dolls House'*** and Tendulkar's '***Khamosh Adalat Zari hai***' ! Both monumental plays in their own right.

With **Workshop Theatre** which emerged out of a workshop conducted by the Theatre Giant **Badal Sircar** at Sri Ram Center in 1979-80 we did a few plays on social issues, the most important amongst the was Badal Sircar's, **Bhooma**. It took us 6 months to develop the play, which we translated from Bengali to Hindi collectively. We were young and sentimental, and broke down before the audience and audience too became sentimental about the plight of the villagers and farmers of

Sunderbans who had to till and plow a land made fallow by salinity. Other plays we did was William Hinton’s **Fanshen**, Bertolt Brecht’s, **Measures Taken** and a children’s play; **Kaddu Ram** evolved by Workshop Theatre

Would also invite the readers to a conference being conducted by Natrang Pratisthan to discuss our memories of Theatre Union and it’s plays on

Manohar Khushalani