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.

Playwright & Director Debasis Majumdar