Mahasweta Devi’s Play: Bayan

BAYAN
Writer: Mahasweta Devi
Director: Usha Ganguli
Group: NSD Repertory Company, New Delhi
Language: Hindi
Duration: 1 hr 35 mins

The Play
Based on a story by Mahashweta Devi, Bayan is that play which creates awareness about the core expression of her writing, i.e. socio-economic disparities and the different shades of human life. Bayan’s Chandi Dassi is one who, at a very young age, is thrown into the work of burying dead animals. By invoking her responsibility towards the work of her ancestors, she is forced to live a life of great hardship. In time she decides to tie the knot with Malinder, a man who works in the government crematorium, and one who takes on her responsibility. However, the same Malinder later declares her to be a ‘bayan’ and Chandi Daasi loses all her rights to live a decent life. She starts believing that her life of inhuman exile is simply the norm.

Director’s Note
In my creative journey in field of theatre, along with the works of Rabindranath, Manto, Kabir and Premchand, the works of Mahashweta Devi have also struck me with a strange sharpness and intellectual perceptiveness that moves alongside their human aspects. Even before Rudali or Ganesh Mahima. Bayan’s Chandi Daasi had made a place for herself in my memory. Over the past few days, she has been helping this director search for a new vision, sometimes searching for a new theatrical language, shirking from the complexities of realism on the stage and trying to both give and take in the exchange of creative energies. For the past many years, the prop-less stage has appealed to me and attracted me for many

reasons. I believe that minimalism on the stage might be able to help in the search for a new theatre vocabulary as drawn from the power of the actor's body language, the internally developed characterization the symbolic imagery on stage, and the sounds of music- and this is what I kept trying for. Chandi Daasi and her creator Mahashweta Devi and those human shapes that get lost in the darkness and then remerge with strength and burn like sparks, are the ones who have been the sources of my inspiration.

The Director & Adapter

Usha Ganguli, a renowned theatre activist, known for her presentations like Lok Katha, Mahabhoj , Holi , Himmat Mai, Court Martial , Rudali , Mukti , Chandalika , Manasi , Hum Mukhtara and many others.

Rangakarmee, the Theatre troupe found by Usha Ganguli in 1976, remains the most active and prolific group, performing in Hindi, not only across India but also travelling abroad extensively. Usha Ganguli is perhaps the first and only theatre Director in India to be directing a play for a Pakistan theatre group Ajoka Theatre under their two-year long programme Theatre for Peace which includes theatre festivals, workshops, seminars etc. She has received the Best Production and Best Director Award (1993-94) by All India Critic Association and Paschim Banga Natya Academy for Rudali, Best Director Award for Lok Katha by Ritwik Ghatak Memorial Committee, Sangeet Natak Academy Award (1998), Girish Puraskar by West Bengal Govt in 2016 and several other awards from West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh State Academies. At present, apart from being the Director and President of Rangakarmee, Usha Ganguli is a member of SWAN (South Asia Women's Network) which is a wing of SAARC. She is also currently the Scholar in Residence at the Viswa Bharati University.

The Author

Mahasweta Devi (14 January 1926 – 28 July 2016) was an Indian Bengali fiction writer and socio-political activist.

Her notable literary works include Hajar Churashir Maa, Rudali, and Aranyer Adhikar. She was honoured with various literary awards such as the Sahitya Akademi Award, Jnanpeeth Award, and Ramon Magsaysay Award, along with India's civilian awards Padma Shri and Padma Vibhushan.

The Group

Established in 1964 with a membership of only four persons, the Repertory Company is the regular performing wing of the School. It was set up with the dual purposes of establishing professional theatre on one hand and continuing with regular experimental work on the other. Over the years it has produced a variety of plays ranging from stylized musicals to realistic contemporary Indian drama to translations and adaptations of foreign plays. In addition, several eminent persons of national and international repute have worked with the Company, and it has performed over one hundred and eighty one plays by ninety-eight playwrights and has worked with ninety directors. Quite a few of its actors have emerged as celebrities in theatre, cinema and television. The Company has toured extensively in India and abroad. It is celebrating fifty years of its existence this year.

Cast & Credits

Chandi Dasi Shruti Mishra
Joshi Sampa Mandal
Jhumu Anamika Sagar
Kali Suman Purty
Chumki Palak Jasrotia
Somari Sakshi Sharma
Puti Kaki Snehalata S. Tagde
Chorus Sampa Mandal, Anamika Sagar,
Palak Jasrotia, Suman Purty, Aparna Menon,
Snehalata S. Tagde, Debomita Sur
Malinder Deep Kumar
Bhagirath Sikandra Kumar
Ketan Kaka Shahnawaz Khan

Sutradhar (Debu) Ashutosh Banerjee / Shubham Pareek
Dhuna Virendra Singh
Ganju (Gajendra) Naveen Singh Thakur
Budhu Manish Dubey
Dulu Rahul Kumar
Kali Mata, Khokan Jitu Rabha
Mintu Parag Baruah
Tulu Shubham Pareek / Ashutosh Banerjee
Khokha Vishveshvar M. Gondhali

Set Design Sanchayan Ghosh
Set Execution Ram Pratap, Manoj Kumar, Brijesh Sharma
Music Kajal Ghosh
Light Design & Operation Souti Chakraborty
Light Operation & Execution Govind Singh Yadav
Assistance Md. Suleman, Pradeep Aggarwal
Sound Mukesh Kumar
Costume Design Usha Ganguli
Chief Costume Co-ordinator C.S. Bhatia
Properties Design Dipankar Ghoshal
Assistant Mole Kumar Jana
Property Incharge Moti Lal Khare
Make Up Sikandra Kumar, Shruti Mishra
Assistance All Repertory Artists
Tabla & Dholak Om Prakash
Shehnai Shakti Pada Matti
Octopad Narender Kumar
Harmonium Naveen Singh Thakur
Production Co-ordinator Sukumar Tudu
Stage Manager Govind Singh Yadav

Story Mahasweta Devi
Dramatization, Design
& Direction Usha Ganguli

Contacts
NSD Repertory Company
Bahawalpur House

Bhagwandas Road
New Delhi – 110 001
Ph: 011 23383420
W: www.nsd.gov.in