



ISSN Print: 2394-7500  
ISSN Online: 2394-5869  
Impact Factor: 5.2  
IJAR 2019; 5(3): 203-205  
[www.allresearchjournal.com](http://www.allresearchjournal.com)  
Received: 05-01-2019  
Accepted: 10-02-2019

**Dr. Shylaja S**  
Principal, Government First  
Grade College Peenya  
Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

## Catching the conscience of the people theatre in (AS) education

**Dr. Shylaja S**

### Abstract

Experiential learning makes issues comprehensible to the students. Theatre is one of the strongest medium that a teacher can resort to. Difficult concepts can be made easy through role plays and through the participation of the students on the stage. This paper explores the merits of theatre in and as also as education. The paper speaks about the personal experiences of scripting and directing the plays for college students.

**Keywords:** Conscience, theatre, education

### Introduction

Drama comes to life on stage. It unfolds and offers itself to the critical appreciation of the audience through performance. The stage unravels the multifarious meanings subtly suggested by the playwright through the interactive participation of the characters on the stage on one hand and on the other the dynamic interaction of the performers and the spectators. For the both performers and the spectators the theatrical experience can be both liberating and binding at the same time. In other the performance transforms the immediate reality and paradoxically heightens the awareness of present reality. Both the spectators and performers are carried to an imaginary world without losing sight of contextual, spatial and temporal dimension. After the performance the sense of the 'present' gets more acute.

With this assumption that the basic and all important purpose of great drama is to heighten the sense of the present, this paper explores the qualitative merits of theatre in and also as education. As illustrative example this paper makes use of the personal experiences of scripting and directing plays for college student, especially girl students and women's organizations. It is not out of misplaced conceit that such examples are quoted but to share with everyone the enriching possibilities such experiences offer.

When Shakespeare made Hamlet say "The play's thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king (1982:273)" he was making an observation born directly out of his experience as a playwright and a director and the impact of drama as an art form could not have been expressed more succinctly than these words. Long before Shakespeare, Aristotle spoke about the cathartic effort the audience undergo while watching the performance of a tragedy. Catharsis is supposed to clean or purge certain emotions by invoking the very same emotion in the spectator. But theatre in education in my understanding is not aimed at purging of emotion but at bringing in a better understanding of the present so that the spectator might critically evaluate the give situation.

At this juncture I would like to say a few words about the kind of students we get in Government run colleges. The fee structure followed by the Government colleges makes higher education affordable for the social and economically disadvantaged students. Moreover, in the case of girl students who are usually constrained by the orthodoxy, exclusive women's colleges offer an opportunity to pursue their education. Many of these girls are first generation college goers whose parents are either completely illiterate or have primary education. Nearly 60% of these girls are from rural background whose linguistic skills, let alone in English, even in their mother tongue is dismal. Their reading habit is confined only to the notes dictated by the teacher in the classroom. Even browsing through the textbooks is an anathema for these students. This situation albeit surprising is very much prevalent in Bangalore, the hub of all IT activities.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Dr. Shylaja S**  
Principal, Government First  
Grade College Peenya  
Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

In such a situation a student especially a girl student needs to develop self-confidence to effectively negotiate intimidating cosmopolitan atmosphere. At the same time she should become conscious of the issue involved in her relation to the society outside. From an individual involuntarily responding to emotions she should be transformed into a thinking individual capable of contributing to the transformation of the society around her. This is where a constructive theatre can be of immense assistance.

### **Significance of Theatre**

Theatre has always been considered as one of the significant and effective tools of pedagogy as it enacts the issue and can create a lingering effect which is hardly achieved by theorizing over a topic. When theatre is adopted as the teaching methodology the actors and the audience cannot remain passive to the theatrical performance. It is a learning process for all those involved including the teacher/director. As mentioned earlier a student is expected to develop her critical faculties to address the various issues. Theater being powerful tool which can effectively develop such qualities should cater to such a need. In such a situation the necessity to develop scripts which are related to such issues is acutely felt.

To illustrate this fact let us take one example. It is already that the reading habit among the students is pathetic. Popular fairy tale characters like Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow white and Rumpelstiltskin are not a part of the cultural upbringing of the majority of student. It is this scanty awareness which prompted me to prepare a script in English involving all these tales. This script attempted to not only contemporize but also subvert the tales by reversing the accepted roles of the characters involved. The compulsory reading of the original texts by the performers facilitated better understanding of the stories and also the subversion which was made contextual. The combined elements of farce, satire, burlesque with elaborate song and dance sequences made a lasting impact on the minds of the audience too. The play was really educative in the sense that it helped the student from regional language background who lacked English language skills to pick up the nuances of English by not only repeating the lines of their assigned roles but also by interacting with the other actors who were fairly good at English. As the audience also comprised of the same mixed ability an elaborate introduction before the performance both in Kannada and English made the play more intelligible and it was enthusiastically received.

Certain abstract concepts like 'Feminism' offer a real challenge to the script writer than the topical issues such as literacy, female foeticide, evils of dowry, attack on women, fees hike in colleges, inadequate infrastructure, etc.

An attempt was made through the script 'Fantastic Stree Vaada' which parodied the western concept of feminism and stressed the need for feminism suitable to India situation. This play was enacted by the teachers and student as audience. It unfurled the meaning of the term feminism which is more familiar in academic circle among the researchers and it immediately registered in the minds of students. The play could do what the reading of a text cannot do within such a short span of time. The duration of the play was just 45 minutes and it was successful in not only defining the term feminism but also imparted the contextual varied meaning of it. The students at once

discovered answers to so many of their innocent queries which bugged their minds whenever the blanketed expression feminism was used. Play as a medium fulfils the immediacy and the urgency of the teacher/director to reach larger audience within a short time. Let alone students it proved educative to so many teacher teaching different subjects who had never dwelt deep into the topic. The dominating wife, a pseudo social worker, her hen pecked husband, another women organizing protests and strikes in the name of exploitation by men and teenaged girls who misunderstood the term conveyed the intended meaning through this light comedy with an important message which ensued discussion and debate among the audience.

More often the students coming from the lower strata of society are very submissive, they suffer from a terrible sense of inferiority complex as they lack assertive qualities. It is very disturbing to note that some of them lead quite aimless lives because of the uncertainty of the fulfillment of their dreams. No amount of consoling can instill the required confidence in them. Such students with their dejected attitude to life are a real challenge to concerned teacher. It is here that theatre comes as the essential quality of theatre is not to theorize over a subject but to project it in a very subtle artistic way which can, not only inspire the audience but can also change their mindset. It is sure to stir them up because they witness their counterparts going through the same plight that they are in and yet emerging successful. They can immediately identify themselves with the characters. Optimism is enacted and not forcibly injected into their minds. I would like to make a mention and explain in brief the effort of three plays exclusively scripted and directed for this purpose.

### **Nimagondu Kanasideye-'Do You Have A Dream'**

Firstly, 'Nimagondu Kanasideye' meaning 'do you have a dream' was a play which drove home the point that it is very necessary for every girl to pursue a dream, a goal of her own. The emphasis was on girl because the prevailing social system and the traditional background of their homes offer marriage as the only goal. A play like this one where the significance of aspiration and also the uselessness of not cherishing dreams were discussed in a subtle and artistic manner with a chorus song about facing the constraints with indomitable courage percolated into their conscience. Until many after they were seen humming the song in the corridors and quadrangles of the college. I don't think that any text book reading could create this kind of a pervading effect.

### **Kavaludari**

'Kavaludari' - at the fork roads, is another play which attempted at presenting and solving the dilemma involved while making various choices. With the growing stratification in the academic courses, mushrooming universities and colleges and job opportunities within the country and outside, the student are torn asunder when they reach a certain point where they are compelled to choose one and be satisfied with the choice. The arguments, the debates, the discussions that normally takes place both within their one interesting skit which projected the existing dilemmas in various field. It was like simultaneously watching the plays as well as resolving a debate already going on in their minds. This is where theatre can have an

interactive effect - within the play actors, between the actors and the audience.

### **Prathirushi- Counter Creation**

The third play which needs a mention here is 'Prathirushi' - counter creation - which was a real inspiration to the young girl students as it aimed at making them the sculptors of their own future. It refuted the meek images of women formulated by the male dominated society. It highlighted the need for women to write, think and plan own lives as even the most understanding male fails to gauge the inner sallies of a women's mind. Themes such as these can really enliven the idlest of minds and install the much wanted confidence in them. What is not possible through the black lettered text books, or white chalk could be archived effectively thought the colourful, dialogic action filled live performance on the stage. The venture of play directing in government under graduate college has its own constraints. often it became the sole battle of the director. Beginning with the indifference among the students the teacher has to put up with the attitude of the disinterested parents, financial constraint and so on.

### **Conclusion**

After overcoming the students' apathy it is a rewarding experience for the director to mould the uninvited students. During rehearsals and the actual stage performances the participants themselves come up with their reflections and suggestion based on their own experiences. It's a learning experience for both the teacher and the students. Sometimes, the parents need proper counselling to allow their daughters to participate in the theatrical performance which is considered a taboo even today in many families.

It is indeed heartening to notice that drama competitions are held at the university level which has to become a regular feature. Meaningful theatre is always capable of bringing gradual changes in the mindset of both the participants and the audience. theatre functions as an important tool to make the young minds comprehend and respond to their environment in a constructive manner. in today's scramble for gaining the top ranks and high percentage of marks the students tend to lose sight of the important issues which are crucial in making them thinking citizens. they hardly realize the significance of expressing the ideas through the art forms nor do the concerned people take the students seriously.

when issue based scripts are enacted by the students which are not mere adaptations of the plays penned by renowned playwrights, the theatre comes alive in its sense and is capable of stirring the conscience of the people.

### **References**

1. Jenkins, Harold- Hamlet, London; Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1982
2. Hamlet (Simon & Schuster; New Folger) William Shakespeare