

"History of Evolution of Acting in Bengal's Theatre Tradition", under the component of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India by Sangeet Natak Akademi for the financial year 2014-2015.

#### **FIRST REPORT:**

Evolution of acting in Bengali theatre is a colossal topic that has stood by the test of time and society. The history of such a grand idea has two parts – academic and the other side that has been in practice on stage. Thus we have also divided our project into two parts, one that analyses the academic progression and the other that documents the practiced side of acting over the years.

For the academic side, we have planned our project as below:

Bengal's theatre have been simultaneously influenced by both the traditional and medieval cultural forms of Bengal; dominated mostly by music and poetry; and the Colonial Victorian style of acting that got incorporated in Bengal's culture due to the British education system.

Our great actors like Kesab Chandra Ganguly, Biharilal Chatterjee, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Ardhendu Sekhar Mustafi, Amarendranath Dutta, Surendranath Ghosh, Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, Ahindra Chowdhury and many more, were the regular practitioners of an amalgamation of both these cultural influences. Though some of them showed inclination for one style, but they were indeed all a mixed cultural patron.

An exception among these stalwarts was Rabindranath Tagore. He broke from the influence of the Victorian style of theatre and brought back the essence of traditional Sanskrit plays and formed a new poetic genre of theatre.

For our research, we have now concentrated on this timeline, beginning from the advent of the Victorian influence on theatre to the then new age of Bengali theatre; brought in by Rabindranath Tagore and Sisir Kumar Bhaduri and so on.

However, during our research and investigation we realized that there is a scarcity of living material regarding the theatre that we want to concentrate on. Most information that we have gathered are from different journals and books.

To disperse the research work among all, we have divided the entire work into different sections and given the responsibility of each section to different participants of our research. They are responsible for investigating, analyzing, researching and writing an article on each topic and each section.

Maheshwata Chakraborty and Sekhar Samaddar, are analyzing and writing articles about the classic Bengali characters of different plays and the style of acting of these characters by different actors.

Other members of the group are writing articles on the different actresses of Bengali theatre.

As a raw material for writing these articles, the members are using books from their personal collection, they are also exploiting the collection of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Natyashodh Sangstha and other similar libraries.

An added benefit that our members can avail, is the availability of the recorded plays at Natyashodh Sangsthan.

For the analysis of the practiced side, we have planned our project as below:

We have chosen some of the classic Bengali poems and plays. They are:

- 1) Meghnadbodh Kabya, Birangana Kabya and Krishna Kumari by Michael Madhusudan Dutt.
  - 2) Chandrasekhar, Krishnakantyer Will by Binkam Chandra Chatterjee. (Though these are primarily regarded as long poem or Novels, but the significance of choosing them is due to their successful stage enactment.)
  - 3) Sadhobar Ekadoshi by Dinabandhu Mitra
  - 4) Prafulla, Billamangal Thakur by Girish Chandra Ghosh.
  - 5) Alik Babu by Jatirindranath Tagore.
  - 6) Shahjahan, Chandragupta by D.L Roy
  - 7) Bisarjan and Raja by Rabindranath Tagore
  - 8) Alibaba and Alamgir by Khirotpasad Vidyabinad
  - 9) Shirajoudulla by Sachinindranath Sengupta
  - 10) Byapika Biday by Amritalal Basu
  - 11) Sharashi (from the novel by Saratchandra Chatterjee) dramatized by Sibram Chakraborty and Sisir Kumar Bhaduri
- And
- 12) Nabanna by Bijon Bhattacharya

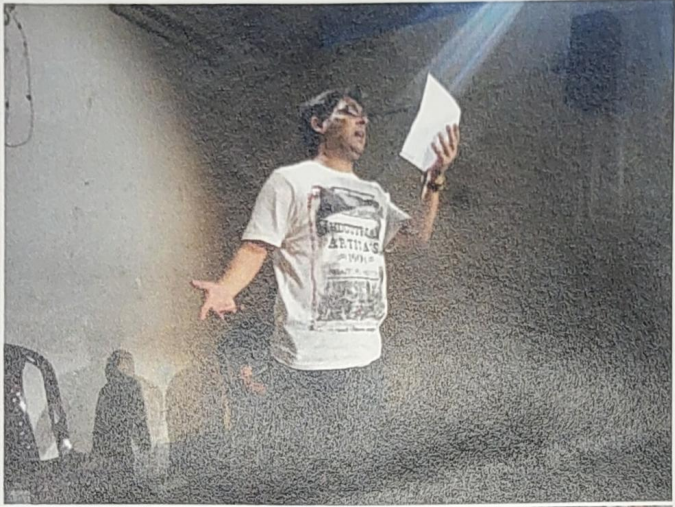
We are spending 16days, 4hours each day, on this rigorous workshop. Some of the moments of this workshop have been photographed and attached hereby with this report.















## OUR NEXT PLAN

We have gathered all available documents regarding Bengali theatre, starting from the time of *Nabanna* to the present day. We will analyze the academic side of these materials and incorporate them and their flavor in a one hour documentary film. This documentary film will have elements from our workshop and also reconstructed and enacted parts of the chosen plays.

As a footnote, we would like to inform that, for our documentary film, we have chosen actor Debshankar Halder (Sangeet Natak Academi Award winner for the year 2015) and Surajit Bandopadhaya to play the characters of Alamgir and Sirajdaulla respectively.

*Amarendra Nath Nag.*

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Secretary

Secretary

Abhaash Dakshin Kolkata

17/6/2015