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An Amazing Stage-Craft: *Circarena*

Interviewed by Amar Ghosh
Collected and Edited by Bivash Bishnu Chowdhury

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“Now Sir (Amar Ghosh) is no more but his last precious memory is
narrated to all”

*This type of stage can not be found in whole
Bengal.....*

*See, as I have created it I know that I have not
imitated other. That is why this is unique. It can
not exist in Bengal, in India, even in the whole
world. Monsieur Licke, a French stage
architect, seeing four years back, says, “This is
an ideal hall. I have seen many halls through the
world but this is unique.” He is the first to say
it. The famous dramatist Bibhas Chakraborty
was a great witness of this. He came with 52-55
students to hear Monsieur Licke. And after that
Bibhas Chakraborty and his institution “Annya
Theatre” congratulated me. I said him, “It is
late to congratulate me.” (Oh my goodness, the
European has said...[Bibhas Chakraborty said])
Ha! Ha! Ha!.....*

*The late drama teacher, actor,
and director Amar Ghosh, 2014.*



The union of the words ‘circle’+ ‘arena’ created *Circarena*. Circle means a round place Arena means an open place. In Greek Arena acting was taken place down to a hill with three sides opened. In case of *Circarena*, all the four sides are opened and acting is taken place right at the middle. Though it is not famous for ‘Four Sides Opened Stage’ rather it has a different cause. We would discuss later about that. At first we must know who is the founder of this and its idea came. It may not be appropriate to call him founder rather the originator of the idea of the stage and he is no other than the famous actor and director *Amar Ghosh*. Discussing about *Circarena* with the respected teacher *Amar Ghosh*, some interactions are quoted during this conversation. He is an Oriya by birth. He was born at Puri. His schooling was completed at Puri. His *college life* was spent between Orissa and Kolkata. Later he permanently settled in Kolkata by joining at Rabindra Bharati University in the department of drama.

How are you, sir?

I am alright. There is no problem in my body actually left hand is totally broken and there is no way except surgery but doctor would not do that. He fears. When someone crosses 80 nobody agrees to take the risk of surgery. For a joke, suppose, you have very few days to live what is the need to get the pain? Ha!..... I do not think more about the matter.

There is a history behind the name of *Circarena*. There came a production unit to show a new type of cinema. Its name was *Circarama*. The union of the words ‘circle’ and ‘panorama’ becomes *Circarama*. The specialty is that the whole curtain falls around the circle. It is like a round tent. If the round wall of the tent is curtain the audience would be inside the tent. The film falls in the whole curtain. Actually the curtain has 11 parts invisible to naked eyes. Right at the joining point the face of the projector comes out through small hole. That is why 11 films fall in the wall of the other side of the projector. All these films make a picture. From the word *Circarama* the *Circarena* is originated.

But we do not call it Rangamancha (stage) from the beginning rather



we call Rangamandal and if we join them it would become Circarena Rangamandal.

The land of *Circarena* was taken as lease from the Zamindars of Maniktala. The lease was for 51 years. After 51 years the lease will terminate in 2026 A.D. Now all the Zaminders are dead. The owners of the land were five at the time of the agreement. Now the owners are increased to 35. Due to the legal agreement they can not cancel the deal but they want to handover the land to promoters in order to gain large sum of money. So, they have started oppression, tyranny and political hooliganism.

There were groups of various sports in the field of Garh, likewise if any body would make a tent then I would act inside the tent. The thought of acting inside the tent has come to the mind because, seeing circus, it seems I would act inside the ring of the circus, is there any problem? But the first problem acting inside the ring comes in the mind is how we would change the set/setting. We have to decorate the set before the audience. There started a custom also in the foreign country which is 'Theatre in the Round'. They decorated the set there before the audience. But I did not like that. I started to think that magically can be done something or not. Many technical matters started to hover around my head at that time. But the dream of making tent in the field of Garh was broken. But the pattern of the circus has been remained in my mind. After seeing the 'Birla Planetarium' I became very enthusiastic about the matter. If a hall is built in the pattern many works can be done easily. Then the thought of what can be done amid the circularly sitting audience came. If we make a hole through which we can be opened easily and can bring from the underground without interfering the audience. Then it in mind that it would be fruitful and easy to change the setting if we turn up and down the whole stage instead we turn merely ourselves in the hole. But it would take time to turn up and down the disk. The acting must not



stop...the thought of a ring beside the disk came to our mind to carry on the drama. Talking about the ring we have a place, apron, in our stage likewise if a place can be fixed before the circularly sitting audience it would be possible to fetch the stage while the acting is going on. The idea of "Circarena" was started with the thought.

Any of the lines is not straight rather all the lines bent. At the time of building it was measured properly by a thread. Usually I placed the first brick there and they (labors) did the rest. The building was made carefully part by part. The design is circular. A center was fixed in the total land and from the center a round area was measured through the help of a rope. If the center is moved 1 inch from the position what we measured today then the other side also is to move 1 inch. So, at the time of building it was checked every day whether the point was fixed or not. The pillar in which the disk is situated has to put under the ground one and half times more than that is placed above the ground. The turning up and down of the steps or stairs of the building in the ground is not happening spontaneously. There is tunnel below them from there a forceful air like storm comes out when the disk of the stage comes down. Then a violent pressure is being created if there is no way to release the pressure the building has to feel the pressure. If the air is released the disk can come down easily. The face of the tunnel is pointed towards the Green Room which is below the tunnel that is why there is no A.C. in Green Room. The more the disk would come down the more it releases the storm of cold air.

There is the facility of moving the upper disk. If it is necessary to move the disk from the same position for acting the disk can be turned. It has the facility to move the disk manually. The disk is so light that it can be moved through hand. There takes place orchestra in the Cat Walk space above the circular ring parallel.



This type of magnificent style of architecture is being absorbed in the sea of time, and this sublime stage architecture is being destroyed. We should come together to protect this for our self, for the next generations.