



থ্যেপিয়ান
THESPIAN
An International Refereed journal
ISSN 2321-4805

THESPIAN

MAGAZINE

An International Refereed Journal of Inter-disciplinary
Studies

Santiniketan, West Bengal, India

DAUL A Theatre Group©2013-24

Title: Theatre as a Weapon against Fascism: A Case Study of Two Bengali
Plays *Mephisto* and *Barricade*

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63698/thespian.v12.1.1913> || Published: 15 April 2025.

Yr. 12, Issue 23-24, 2024

Autumn Edition
September-October



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Theatre as a Weapon against Fascism: A Case Study of Two Bengali Plays *Mephisto* and *Barricade*

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Abstract

This essay examines the function of theatre as a tool for political resistance through a comparative analysis of *Mephisto* (2002) and *Barricade* (1972), two Bengali plays that criticize the recurrence of fascist tendencies in historical and present settings. Premised on Bertolt Brecht's dialectical theatre and Utpal Dutt's revolutionary dramaturgy, the study focuses on how these performances use *Verfremdungseffekt*, agitprop aesthetics, and historical re-enactment to combat authoritarian systems on stage and create an 'efficacy' beyond its corporeal set-up.

The play *Barricade* reinforces a radical theatrical space inspired by the Weimar crisis to criticize India's oppressive machinery in the 1970s, while *Mephisto* investigates artists' participation in maintaining and, at the same time, challenging hegemonic power. Both the plays promulgate the idea of 'collective' consciousness through 'spectacular' visuals for reflecting the historical consciousness amidst contemporary viewership. The inquiry situates these works within the historiography of communist theatre as a site of counter-hegemonic action, drawing on Raymond Williams' categories of residual and emerging cultural forms, as well as Rebecca Schneider's notion of 'performance remains.'

This study contends that theatre functions as both an archival and insurgent medium, able to mobilize public consciousness against the expanding nexus of authoritarianism and neoliberal capital. It does this by drawing on Baz Kershaw's concept of theatrical 'efficacy.' The essay highlights the ongoing significance of political theatre in opposing current fascist cultural consolidation in the 'post-truth' era by contextualizing these performances within Bengal's vis-à-vis India's changing political scene.

Article History

Received 14 Jan. 2025

Revised 8 Apr. 2025

Accepted 11 Apr. 2025

Keywords

Fascism, Hindutva, Dramaturgy, Communicability, Ideology, Political Theatre, Efficacy



“I will not go anywhere/ I will stay in this country.”

Anirban Bhattacharya¹

The essay addresses the facades of fascism in the recent world from the ‘spectre’² of Utpal Dutt’s play- *Barricade*³ (1972) and *Mephisto* (2002), a Klaus Mann text adapted and directed by Suman Mukhopadhyay that have been staged recently on the Bengali proscenium. There are two significant reasons for choosing *Barricade* and *Mephisto* as the case study. One is the hope to see the reconstruction of a new and collective public sphere around those plays. Another would be to understand the relevance of the political theatre through the circulation of its content, visuals, and its changing spectatorship through a newer intervention of the ‘political’ instead of the existing left cultural nostalgia.

Utpal Dutt’s *Barricade* (1972) is a powerful example of how art can expand the horizon of imagination for an egalitarian world. The play emphasizes the importance of debate and dialogue in fostering a public, collectivized consensus, tracing a journey from the individual to the collective. *Barricade*’s portrayal of collective action and ideological struggle underscores the necessity of moving beyond individualistic concerns to embrace a broader vision of justice and equality. Walter Benjamin’s idea of the artist (or actor) as a producer aligns with this vision, as it calls for cultural and artistic practices to actively engage in producing social and political consciousness rather than merely reflecting existing power structures. By doing so, *Barricade* not only critiques fascism but also imagines a path toward collective resistance and democratic renewal. Dutt’s *Barricade* is believed to make the ‘barricade’ of people’s solidarity through *inqilab*⁴ against the voices of hatred, war, and



riot in its stern reality. On the other hand, *Mephisto*, adapted by Suman Mukhopadhyay from Klaus Mann's novel, presents a critical 'inter-artistic' journey that interrogates the fundamentals of fascism and its contemporary manifestations. The play delves into themes of censorship, hegemony, and polarization, exposing how individuals and institutions compromise moral integrity for power and survival. For instance, the protagonist Hendrik Höfgen's infamous line, 'I am an artist, not a politician,' encapsulates the moral ambiguity and complicity of those who enable fascism by remaining silent or complicit. Through Höfgen's tragic descent into opportunism, *Mephisto* questions the present state of fascism, urging audiences to reflect on the ethical responsibilities of artists and intellectuals in resisting authoritarianism.

Both the plays, to a large extent, holds the 'efficacy' in their content and potential for a 'political' spectacle to identify separate fascist trends in different span of time and spaces. However, it is significant to identify the role of theatre to create a 'revolutionary' stature through its acceptance, circulation, and dialogues it may create beyond the 'stage.' The idea of 'public sphere' becomes crucial as, around a theatre society, an ideological propagation or spontaneous movement spurs the dialogue and dissent through the 'eventness', visual, content, and performance through a theatre circuit. However, as both the productions mainly encompass and cater the urban spectators, it is needless to say, in the contemporary time, these plays hardly promulgate an artistic vis-à-vis political 'efficacy' beyond its epicentre. All the same, the relevance of 'political' in the praxis of theatre, as Utpal Dutt anticipates during the 70s and 80s, would be unprecedented to examine the viability of texts of previous era in the contemporary political paraphernalia. To understand such intricacies of the



discussion, let me cite Utpal Dutt's view towards 'revolutionary theatre' and what this kind of theatre is expected to cater to in a political context.

From the beginning of my theatre work, we have tried to put revolution in a historical perspective. Studying social phenomena in isolation, assuming each phase of development as a whole, that is, substituting the general with the particular, is a universal bourgeoisie vice, which has infected "progressive" thinking as well. (Dutt 28)

From this foregrounding of revolutionary theatre by Dutt, it's evident that his attitude toward building a space for revolutionary theatre has always had clear objectives and processes. Undoubtedly, the idea of class consciousness and politico-cultural extrapolation of this via different spaces of theatre cannot be avoidable in the history of Bengali political theatre. The projection of 1930's Berlin in *Barricade* by Dutt is not an allegorical endeavor to produce imagery of the emergency crisis, ringing as an alarm bell for the progressive left or an excuse to avoid any direct bashing from the then Congress-led government.⁵ Instead, the portrayal of the crisis of several identities that were otherised in then Germany by the mainstream fascists could be mapped as a critical historiography.⁶ All the same, the political crisis in the 70s India was doomed due to the collapse of a possible radical-left revolution- 'Naxalbari'.⁷

Some other political instances like the rise of 'Hindutva' as a mild alternative to the Congressmen, as well as the social bureaucrats.⁸ This historical consciousness is seen as a recourse that transmutes the possibility of new dialogues through old theatre content against



the harrowing growth of ‘Hindutva’⁹ as a fascist political ideology. The event of the *Barricade* in the present time is an absolute political necessity in the theatre space, but it is important to understand the history of India vis-à-vis Bengal’s political mapping and movement diachronically¹⁰. This happened in Germany in the first half of the last century, which is being repeated after the LPG movement¹¹ across the globe, including India, which started in the post-90s. Thus, *Barricade* is now an inevitable theatrical remnant that not only reminds us of history. Instead, it is itself a ‘remain’¹² of history is repeated due to artistic, activistic, and public consensus, participation, and ‘performativity’. The question of the politico-economic situation is important in the context as it is pretty evident how the complex labour structure exists in the neo-liberal world, but the class difference is never relaxed, and neither is economic monopolization shredded.

Both the plays *Barricade* and *Mephisto* present the ‘political’ trope and images of 1930s Germany in the context of the emergence of a totalitarian Fascist party under the leadership of Hitler. However, it is important to note that the previous democratic government faced a massive setback due to the loss and crisis of the First World War (1914-18). Also, the problem that the Weimar Republic, a democratic government, faced with the fascist uprising was due to conspiracy, ethnic hatred, media censorship, and violence.¹³ Instead, the aim is to manipulate the people through the lure of consumerism, divisional politics, and mechanization or *Verfremdung/Entfremdung*.

Verfremdung/Entfremdung of the society mounts the rightist and fascist tendency of propagandizing the rule of few or the ‘Volkskörper.’¹⁴ The scenario is, to my understanding, both the causes and the effect of fascism as it rises from the ‘ashes’ of the



bourgeoisie and continues to establish economic disparity through totalitarian controls on the types of machinery of economy and polity. The Communist International defined fascism as ‘the most terroristic dictatorship of financial capital’ and it is evident when we witness how the 1% of the wealthiest people in India hold four times more than the assets held by the bottom 70% populace.¹⁵ - it shows a tremendous economic disparity caused by the rightists and sustained via cornering the ‘real’ issues (i.e., inflation, freedom of speech, social injustice) to establish their agenda with the inflow of corporate finance.

The number of lyrics of performances written during several oppressive moves of the current government in this reference is a testimony of protest that represents lakhs of the voices of farmers who were repressed, lathi-charged, and silenced in many ways they were tagged as terrorists, an easy way to ‘otherize’ those who are exploited and oppressed by the rightist government. In this case, the victims were those who accumulated 45.5% of the employability of the country (2023), even when they have historically been used for votes without anything beneficial to them post the entrance of capitalism in India. They have still not been promised the required subsidy and MSP.¹⁶ by the present government. The motif of mentioning the current political portrayal is to show the traits of the repressive state of the government, which shares similarities with the reign of Hitler in Germany. The way of protest may change, but the newer language of protest that is concomitant with the cumbersome political crisis for the people is the semblance of the reiteration of political resistance through various forms. Also, the historical consciousness resurfaces the ‘morph’ of the expression of protest that eventually is related to the re-making of plays like *Barricade*. That is how, as per the demand of time and voices, any form of art, literature, or



performance becomes ‘emergent.’¹⁷

Let me try to put some pages back to Indian history to prove the relationship between fascism and the ‘Hindutva’ ideology of RSS, the prime organizational force behind the ruling party. RSS’s prime ideologies, since its formation during the struggle for independence, have always followed fascist principles to design their future agendas, i.e., racist and religious supremacy, ethnic cleansing, and so on. Indeed, the then Hindu Mahasabha ideologue B S Moonje personally visited Mussolini on the 19 March, 1931 to establish a fascist model of ‘Hindutva’ army to promote ‘anti-plural’ homogenous identity supremacy to bring back the glory of ‘Aryasatya,’ a dogma of later Vedic ‘Brahmanism’ with an impression of ‘Manuvada.’¹⁸

The current political scenario of India around certain binaries like ‘Mandir vs Mandal’¹⁹, ‘Hindu-Muslim’, ‘tukre-tukre’ vs ‘bhakt’²⁰ is the result of cultural fascism, which started much earlier- the seed is turned into a fruit. Instances like the killing of Dalits, changing the name of cities, bulldozing the houses of minorities, islamophobia, and neo-magnification of ‘Rama’ into violent imageries are the result of the agendas taken then to revive some imaginary or mythical tropes of Hindutva.

In Germany, we can find similar strategies taken by the Nazi party and its media (censor), which is being done in India by the ‘GODI.’²¹ media to sideline important political issues like inflation, joblessness, freedom of speech, poverty, etc. In the play *Barricade*, the political images of Berlin in 1933 offer the audience a chance to witness the dialectics of the characters’ psyches. The protagonist, Auto, a journalist for a newspaper



backed by the Nazi party, seems to be dominated by the instructions and disclaimer provided by his editor. Thus, the facts he observed, in reality, have to be remoulded as he is compelled to change the incidents, the language of the report as well as the characters of the incidents- it was an instance of tacit censoring, which is a weapon to repress the voices of media to run the party's ideological agenda. 1878 Press Act in India by the then Britishers and the recent draconian laws like UAPA²² that is levied by the ruling party to silence the media and the intellectuals is a parallel reality that proves the recurrent nature of the fascist tendency to establish totalitarianism—the journalist of the play comments on the crisis of democracy, 'the democracy is established only when the Nazi party has grabbed 608 seats out of 608 seats.'

Herein, the paper attempts to recall a concrete instance to strengthen the relevance here. Once Auto writes in his report about the firing from the police, he is advised by the reporter to add the word 'compel' in this kind of circumstance as his belief suggests that the police do not do repression themselves unless there is any provocation from the 'anti-national' or the 'communist' disguised in the troupe of the protesters. Similar imageries are found in different phases of the largest democracy, India, where the corrupt media silences the other side's story. It is observed that whenever there is a protest against the current government, there is a hyper-endeavour from the media to tag the protesters as 'Urban-Naxal.'²³ 'Khalistani,' 'Maoist,' and so on. Dutt had a clear political vision, which may be the astute reason behind mapping history with the future. This emergency can be mapped alike the scenario of emergency during the 70s when Barricade started getting staged despite having political pressures against it. Dutt had the spirit to go along with his idea of



revolutionary theatre with ‘revolutionary actors’ creating ‘revolutionary setting’- the praxis interspersing a sense of ‘political’ commitment prepares the ‘revolutionary’ gesture for his political theatre. Coming back to the historical parallel of two different temporalities, Dutt himself briefs about the context of *Barricade*:

However, the CPI (M) emerged as the largest single party in the state in the election of 1971. And so Indira had no way out of her predicament except shameless rigging. This they carried out in 1972 elections, shooting and bombing voters away, capturing booths, stuffing ballot-paper into the box at the point of sten-guns. All this happened in broad daylight, throughout West Bengal, and to the shame of the intellectuals, not one voice was raised against this naked aggression against democracy. (Dutt 91)

Certainly, the context compels Dutt to produce a play like *Barricade* which provokes the contemporary scenario through dramatization for bringing the historical as well as political consciousness to the silent spectators of the then ‘political’ stage. Stage in this case refers to the ‘real’ political scenario, as Dutt’s account above magnifies. In the contemporary scenario, the rigging may be replaced with ideological and some other kind of repressive (religious, caste, race and gender) manipulation and atrocities. The play remains relevant due to its historical validation, and a recurrent motif through characters to unmask the faces of the fascist in contemporary global scenario. This quality makes the play transnational alongside ‘trans-temporal.’

In the play, there is an event of the same kind- the Nazi goons kill someone who is



known to be a Nazi sympathizer and try to blame the communists. The irony is that the son of the sympathizer, who is believed to be a communist, is charged by the police and accused of killing his father. The trial is painful as he is proven guilty after the judge has been killed who was trying to find the truth. Once the conspiracy is understood by the widow of the assassinated person, Ingeborg Zauritz, in the end, she also joins the communist army in the fight against the fascists. It's not only the reverberation of 70's India, indeed, but the picture is also crueller and cruder in the present day, once the powerful state machinery represses the victims. The power is induced by the financial capital that funds several propagandas in social media as a fake revival of 'Hindutva' ideology; the motif is something deep to keep the 'divide and rule' intact for vote-bank politics.

Dutt strongly commented on the roles and responsibilities of intellectuals and civil society in this play. The intention behind the making of a character, the learned man, Doctor Strubbel, in the play, who is a voracious reader but silent mostly about the fascist atrocity, is the projection of the stance of several intellectuals who remain silent during the wrongdoing by the ruling party with the minority and the marginalized for their narrow agenda across phases of post-independent Indian political history. The doctor finally becomes despondent once he observes the book-burning festival of the Nazi goons.

Dutt wants intellectuals and commoners to stand up firm as Voss, not become compromised. The erudite eyewitness Dr. Strubbel distances himself from current affairs and prefers reading literature instead. In the end, after the Nazis infamously set books ablaze in front of Humboldt University, Strubbel's conscience stirs, "If I have to survive by carrying out their commands, where is my respect for reading Schopenhauer and Karl



Marx? They are burning books, understand?” (qtd. in Lal, par. 12).

Strubbel finally joins the communist group not with a gun but with his medical expertise to help them in the battle against the fascists. It is Dutt’s success in preparing the dialectical structure of a character to uncover the potential of the progression of a character towards a revolutionary path. He proves the notion of ‘Marxism’ in a newer context by showing how a revolutionary is born in the societal dynamics, which, in a way, without overlooking the functional aspects of a complex Indian society, tries to find the spirit of the Marxist path through his critical retrospect within the society.

Barricade is a play that extrapolates the process of ‘becoming’ politics through the space of stage and ‘offstage’²⁴ also. This regular dialectical process of ‘becoming’ further offers resistance and protest through a sense of theatricality and its melodramatic counterpart in its hue and cry. Dutt’s dramaturgical strategy is romantic, vibrant with the imagination of the repressed, and revolutionary in its impact as it is not limited to a mere reality or the tragedy of a crisis. Instead, he successfully brings the audiences closer to the dialectics of a character and prepares their revolutionary psyche to counter-act beyond a theatrical space. It is not a sheer ‘defamiliarization’ from the theatrical illusion; instead, it is an attempt to re-familiarize them with the path of a Marxist trajectory of aesthetics, which is effective beyond its limited space of corporeality. This ‘propaganda’ of an ‘artist’ is still relevant once the play is adapted to the Bengali stage. In contrast, the mediation over time in renovating the process is necessary to re-work Dutt’s Dramaturgy to produce the content more effectively. The participation of audiences and their active intervention can be observed as the ‘efficacy’²⁵ of theatrical content produced by Dutt but performed and re-



produced by the other theatre group after 50 years. However, the study is limited once the ‘efficacy’ is judged realistically, as the detailed ethnographic study of the performance and the current cultural aspects present in the theatre fraternity has not yet been done. Although the recent scenario of theatre culture in West Bengal, the rising consciousness of revolutionary theatre pedagogy among the activists, audiences, and participants may be broadly seen as a progressive sign of ‘activism’²⁶ in proscenium against the fascist cultural trends.

Mephisto, on the other hand, staged in several political junctures across the nation by Suman Mukherjee and his ensemble is a mark of antagonistic repertoire culminated through its massive anti-fascist statement and the circumventing of its high political overtone through the lens of artists. The original 1926 novel by Klaus Mann had been staged earlier by Ariane Mnouchkine and also filmed by the Hungarian filmmaker Istvan Szabo. Suman took inspiration from all the aforementioned texts, and without making a regionalization, he tried to keep the story intact but brought out the charged-up voices of the regional bodies in such flux of ‘chronotype’ connecting the universal political problems and the stance of art, even, in the complex contemporary world. Hendrick Hoefgen, the lead protagonist turns antagonist, is an actor in Germany during the rise of Nazi regime and earns accolades for playing Goethe’s Faust- the ironic element of this political staging is found in the ‘mise-en-scene’ where Faust’s desire is manifested through Hoefgen which, in its trope, reflects the Nazi dream that helped other dream but through mass hysteria, dystopia, exclusion, antisemitism, and demonization of the other. All the super-fabrics of a crude nationalization are universally a ‘faustification’ that an actor/artist may mimic on



stage. However, when the stage turns into a platform to heighten the self as a mass leader without understanding the political and social possibility and materiality, it turns out to be cultural fascism. Hoefgen is the epitome of the juncture of popular politics in a character morph. As per Mukherjee, *Mephisto* was first staged to critique the Hindutva propaganda in the Gujarat riot and has been re-staged several times to “remind people of how authoritarian fascist rule can destroy the fabric of a country and what the role of an artist can be in the situation” (qtd. in Ghosh, par. 2).

In contrast to *Barricade*, which is an example of a proclaimed left theatre, *Mephisto*, planning by Suman Mukherjee, who is also known to be a critique of the leftist government in Bengal through his other works, might have tried to re-frame stage from the lens of artists, audiences and the people who are in the periphery of the power dynamics of politics. Hoefgen’s journey and the assemblage of his self-reflection and self-projection through the other characters and the ambit of the fascist notion of self-glorification is a critical projection of ‘uncanny’ through the history of civilization. Instead of a black-and-white aspect of left vs right political dynamics, *Mephisto* addresses the inner sabotage and renovation of a ‘self’ through the rise of a fascist tendency in society, and an artist could be the best epitome to represent the location of ‘self’ within the growing tendency of fascism outside the system, within the cultural expression and self-positioning. Mukherjee’s purpose is to make the people aware and create a sense of public sphere to have a preparedness for dissent against the fascist tendency seen across time. Outside the left grouping, Suman’s theatre hereby targets the psyche of audiences of various backgrounds willing to witness political history’s performance with a sensitive but sound mind. He



further asserts, “[t]he idea is to hope that one resonates with world history and realize that if we do not speak up, the times will get much worse” (qtd. in Ghosh, par. 9).

Taking cognizance of the Dramaturgy, theatre practice, and scenography, if the plays are kept parallelly, they are anti-fascist plays relevant much to the current scenario of India, but the creative and practical treatment of the kind of theatres they have produced are demarcated from each other in terms of its political overtone and underpinning. *Barricade* bespoke the language of antagonism as a form of collective people's fight that, through its dialectic repercussion, shows a substantial consolidation with the Marxists across the globe. On the other hand, *Mephisto* looks into the dialectics in the history of the human psyche, repression, self-validation, and self-desire as its part when the ‘self’ is situated in the distortion of time and the rise of mass hysteria. The artistic expression through the act of ‘Mephistopheles’ on stage shows the change of inner-psyche and the battle between ego, id, and superego- the fight between idealism and romanticism, in a manner a self-elevated artist may perform. Where *Barricade* shows the battle between the troupes who are clung to their stance, the inner conflict in the crisis period shown in *Mephisto* reflects the centripetal force for the performance of history.

The discussion shows that the political consciousness in studying, understanding, and connecting with the revolutionary functions of theatre may expand once there are multiple mediations and commentaries on specific important theatre works in the ‘public sphere’ or within academic paradigms. Adaptation, translation, dramaturgical innovation, and a strong ideological consensus of a theatre society in the current scenario are important in addressing the political issues and finding a collective antagonism against the fascist



expansion on their cultural and ideological bases. As the climax of *Barricade* suggests a war against fascism in Berlin as a marker of important political trajectory, reiterative in different times and spaces, the battle becomes a necessity, and the content or the performatives still try to emphasize the importance of this resistance. Also, *Mephisto* reminds us of the responsibility of an artist, performer, or even an audience to weaponize theatre as a vibrant medium for the circulation of historical and political consciousness. All the same, in the era of complex media, globalization, and liberalization, mediation needs to adapt other strategies as well to reach out to different kinds of audiences/ readers. In the contemporary era, resistance or revolution may depend not only on the ballet or bullet but also on “it has to be fought, in the ideological, social, cultural and educational fields as well” (Grewal).



Endnotes

¹ Anirban Bhattacharya is a Bengali theatre actor and director who has recently contributed to Bengali cinema as an actor, director, and singer. In the recent productions of *Mephisto*, he played the lead protagonist. In the earlier productions, Gautam Chattopadhyay, another eminent theatre actor used to play the lead protagonist.

² The term “spectre” refers to the persistent and haunting presence of fascism, which continues to threaten societies even after its apparent defeat. In the context of Utpal Dutt’s *Barricade* (1972) and Klaus Mann’s *Mephisto* (1936), adapted by Suman Mukhopadhyay, the specter of fascism is depicted as a recurring danger that takes on new forms over time. Both works emphasize how fascism relies on authoritarianism, exclusion, and the suppression of dissent to maintain power. In contemporary times, this specter manifests in the rise of authoritarian leaders, the erosion of democratic institutions, and the spread of divisive ideologies. These plays serve as a reminder that fascism must be actively resisted through collective action, egalitarianism, and a commitment to democratic values.

³ The play was rephrased on *Unsere Strasse*, a fictionalized chronicle on Nazi Germany, by Jan Pietersen.

⁴ The Urdu term “Inqilab” (انقلاب) translates to “revolution” or “uprising” in English. It is derived from the Arabic word انقلاب (inqilāb), which signifies a significant change or transformation. In Urdu, “Inqilab” encompasses meanings such as upheaval, transformation, and political revolution.

<https://www.rekhtadictionary.com/meaning-of-inqilaab>

⁵ Utpal Dutt’s decision to set *Barricade* (1972) in 1930s Berlin was not merely an allegorical device to critique authoritarianism indirectly but a calculated strategy to navigate the political climate of his time. Scholar Sudhanva Deshpande, in his book *Theatre of the Streets: The Jana Natya Manch Experience* (2009), explains that Dutt often used “displaced contexts” — historical or foreign settings — to avoid direct censorship while still resonating with audiences familiar with global anti-fascist struggles. By situating the play in Weimar Germany, Dutt universalized the dangers of fascism, drawing parallels to contemporary anxieties about democratic erosion in India. Samik Bandyopadhyay, in *The Indian Stage: History of Indian Theatre* (1998), adds that this approach allowed Dutt to sidestep confrontation with the Congress-led government while amplifying the play’s relevance to broader anti-authoritarian movements.

⁶ *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany*, 2005 by Eric A. Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband.

⁷ The Naxalbari movement originated in 1967 in the Naxalbari region of West Bengal, initiated by local peasants and radical communist leaders. Prominent figures such as Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal, and Jangal Santhal led this uprising, drawing inspiration from Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution in China. The movement



emphasized armed struggle and aimed to redistribute land from large landowners to landless farmers. Charu Majumdar's "Historic Eight Documents" provided the ideological foundation for this movement, advocating for a Maoist-style protracted people's war in India. For a comprehensive academic analysis of the Naxalbari movement, *The Naxalite Movement in India* by Prakash Singh, can be referred to.

⁸ Smugglers of Truth: The Indian diaspora, Hindu nationalism, and the Emergency (1975–77) published online by Cambridge University Press, written by Edward Anderson and Patrick Clibbens.

⁹ Hindutva is a term used by the Hindu radical organization and the political party BJP to refer to the ancient culture of the inhabitants of India, the Aryans. However, there are several debates within the organization regarding the reflection of the meaning and the political uses of the term.

¹⁰ "Diachronically" refers to studying a phenomenon over time, analyzing its historical development and evolution. See Paul, Hermann. *Principles of the History of Language*. Cambridge University Press, 1880. In the context of the left political movement in urban Bengal, the notion of space-time critically positions the political culture of the left that profoundly impacted the theatrical expression in Bengali theatre since independence.

¹¹ Post-Cold War period, the massive liberalization, privatization, and globalization in economic policies under the leadership of the USA is also reflected in India, which started during the government led by Narasimha Rao.

¹² In her book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (2011), Schneider delves into how historical events and performances are reenacted and how these reenactments carry forward the "remains" of the original. She argues that performance is not just a fleeting act but something that can be revisited and re-experienced, blurring the lines between past and present.

¹³ The Weimar Republic (1919–1933) was Germany's democratic government established after World War I. It faced economic crises (hyperinflation, Great Depression), political instability, and public discontent over the Treaty of Versailles. Weak coalitions and extremist movements, including the Nazi Party, exploited these issues. Adolf Hitler rose to power by promising to restore Germany's strength and overturn the treaty. The republic's failure to address economic and social problems, coupled with the Enabling Act of 1933, allowed Hitler to dismantle democracy, establishing Nazi Germany. Thus, the Weimar Republic's collapse paved the way for the totalitarian regime and World War II.

¹⁴ The concept of Volksgörper (German for "national body" or "people's body") was a concept used in Nazi ideology to promote the idea of a racially unified and biologically pure German nation. It reinforced the exclusion of those deemed "unfit" or "alien," such as Jews, Romani people, and other marginalized groups, aligning with the regime's eugenic and genocidal policies.



¹⁵ This data is extracted from the Oxfam report published in The Economic Times in 2020.

¹⁶ MSP is the minimum support price for various crops, ensuring farmers' social security and economic stability.

¹⁷ Raymond Williams has discussed three categories of literary art- Residual, Emergent, and Dominant. The idea of Williams is borrowed here.

¹⁸ The idea of an ideal Hindu society discussed by the sage Manu in his book *Manu Smriti* is called 'Manuvada.'

¹⁹ Based on the report of the Mandal Commission set up in 1979 by the Morarji Desai government, the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) was formed by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment that recommends the reservation for the backward classes (almost 2400 backward classes in India). During the 90s' there was a grand movement by the members of the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) to establish the Ram Temple in the place of Babri Mosque situated in Ayodhya, which had received massive success amidst the 'Savarna' (upper caste) populace in India and played an important role in polarization in electoral politics as there was a rising hatred amidst the dominant caste everywhere in India against the backward classes due to the reservation recommended.

²⁰ Tukre-tukre referred to mostly the students of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) broadly by the rightist leaders and the journalists in favor of the ruling party after an incident in JNU, whereas 'Bhakt' is a self-proclaimed term used by the 'Hindutva' leaders who follow 'Sanatani' (Fundamental) Hindu religious aspects in their daily life.

²¹ GODI media is a colloquial term invented to tag media houses that are biased toward the ruling government and refrain from criticizing any of the government policies.

²² UAPA is the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, first passed in the parliament in 1967 and later amended in 2019 by the present ruling government in India.

²³ Urban-Naxal is the recent term popularised by the rightists in identifying the intellectuals or activists who are either communists or radical communists or oppose the ruling party in the public sphere. A rightist filmmaker, Vivek Agnihotri, had written a book with the same name- *Urban Naxal: The Filming of Buddha in a Traffic Jam* to theoretically establish the logic of the rightists in this case and to propagate why they are harmful to the nationality of India.

²⁴ The book *Offstage Space, Narrative, and the Theatre of the Imagination*, 2010 by William Gruber tries to find the extension of theatrical imagination beyond the theatrical space. Citation needs to be in the targeted style.



²⁵ 'Efficacy' in theatre is the effectiveness of theatre, as extensively discussed by Baz Kershaw, the professor emeritus at the University of Warwick.

²⁶ It is a portmanteau of two terms- Art and activism- that is used mainly for social activism.



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