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AT THE INTERSECTION OF
THEATRE AND SOCIAL WORK IN ORISSA, INDIA
NATYA CHETANA AND ITS THEATRE

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ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic study of the theatre group Natya Chetana (Theatre for Awareness) working in the state of Orissa in Eastern India, and the group's work as social work. At the same time, relying on its empirical standpoints, the study participates in the discussion on international, increasingly global social work. The study departed from the observation that practices acknowledged as social work in one place are not necessarily accepted as such elsewhere. Social work raises a number of opinions and is comprehended differently by a variety of actors around the globe. This study, although driven by social work interest, is strongly interdisciplinary: besides social work, anthropological, theatre, postcolonial and South Asian studies also inform the subject matter of the work.

The main aim of the study is to figure out what Natya Chetana's social work is like. How does Natya Chetana comprehend social work, how is it involved in social change, and how could its approach be understood from a more 'Western', such as Finnish, perspective to social work? Answers to these questions are based on ethnographic fieldwork with Natya Chetana during early 2000 s, and material gained or produced at the course of it (e.g. field notes, photographs, minidisk recordings, video recordings, material produced by Natya Chetana).

The parties of the study are a researcher from Finland, qualified through a university-level training in social work, and an Indian, specifically Orissan, theatre group – Natya Chetana. While no member of the Natya Chetana team of volunteers has an educational background in social work or related subjects, the group, as well as local people that know the group, regard the group's theatre work as social work. The study is essentially an attempt at a cultural translation between the two different social work approaches that the parties embody. However, the composition also brings forward broader locally and globally strained, occasionally competing dimensions of social work. In so doing, it touches on a number of social work discussions, such as what and why social work is, what professionalism and volunteerism imply, and what kind of role activism, spirituality, or art have in social work. Most importantly, the study illustrates theatre as social work in postcolonial India, calling acknowledgement for the diversity

of social work, as well as postcolonial analysis to deepen the self-understanding of social work both locally and globally.

As the study shows, Natya Chetana is first and foremost a theatre group, but with specific social agenda. The group has developed two theatrical formats of its own, "cyco theatre", performed to rural audiences during bicycle tours, and "intimate theatre", targeted at urban, largely middle class audiences. Both of the forms are principled constellations starting from the process of the theatre making to the aesthetic choices on the stage. Natya Chetana's plays are largely grounded on local stories and background research, and built up through a participatory process. Thematically, they depict and address structural violence, lack of social justice, and unmet basic needs in society, but do not offer solutions to the issues discussed on stage. Instead, the aim is to "disturb the minds of the audiences", in other words to activate the audiences to think, reflect and discuss the issues from their own perspectives. Natya Chetana's plays refuse to bypass and forget suffering. While refraining from further suggestions, most of the plays emphasise the importance of united attempts in solving social problems.

From Natya Chetana's perspective, social work and theatre are not separate entities. For the group, its work is social work because of its content and commitments. Thus, as long as the goal is a more just and equal society, social work is an umbrella term for various possible practices. Yet, while the only cure Natya Chetana can offer for the ills of the society is its theatre, the group stands for critical, political social work and theatre, not for remedial work or charity. Furthermore, for the group social work is not limited to stage, rather it covers the entire, collective lifestyle. The emphasis is on volunteerism and personal sacrifices for the sake of society and art, such as being able to live on a meagre and insecure income and take what follows from that. Belonging to the group also necessitates the capability to adjust tight group work and life.

Natya Chetana's approach has parallels, for example, to critical, activist, constructive and eco-social social work approaches elsewhere. The group's approach can be also seen both as an example of indigenous social work and a local expression of the global movement of socially committed theatre. In attempts to think about social work on a international/global scale, the case of Natya Chetana highlights the importance of dialogue and productive border-crossing between amateurism and professionalism. Furthermore, it stresses the importance of location. Although not confined to this, social work, like theatre, must be understood in their cultural, political and economic contexts. The study also underlines the need to learn from postcolonial analysis, for it can give social work new clues for tracking past and present oppression, marginalisation and resistance.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS
AND TABLES

ILLUSTRATION 1. Map of India (drawing by Subodh Pattnaik).
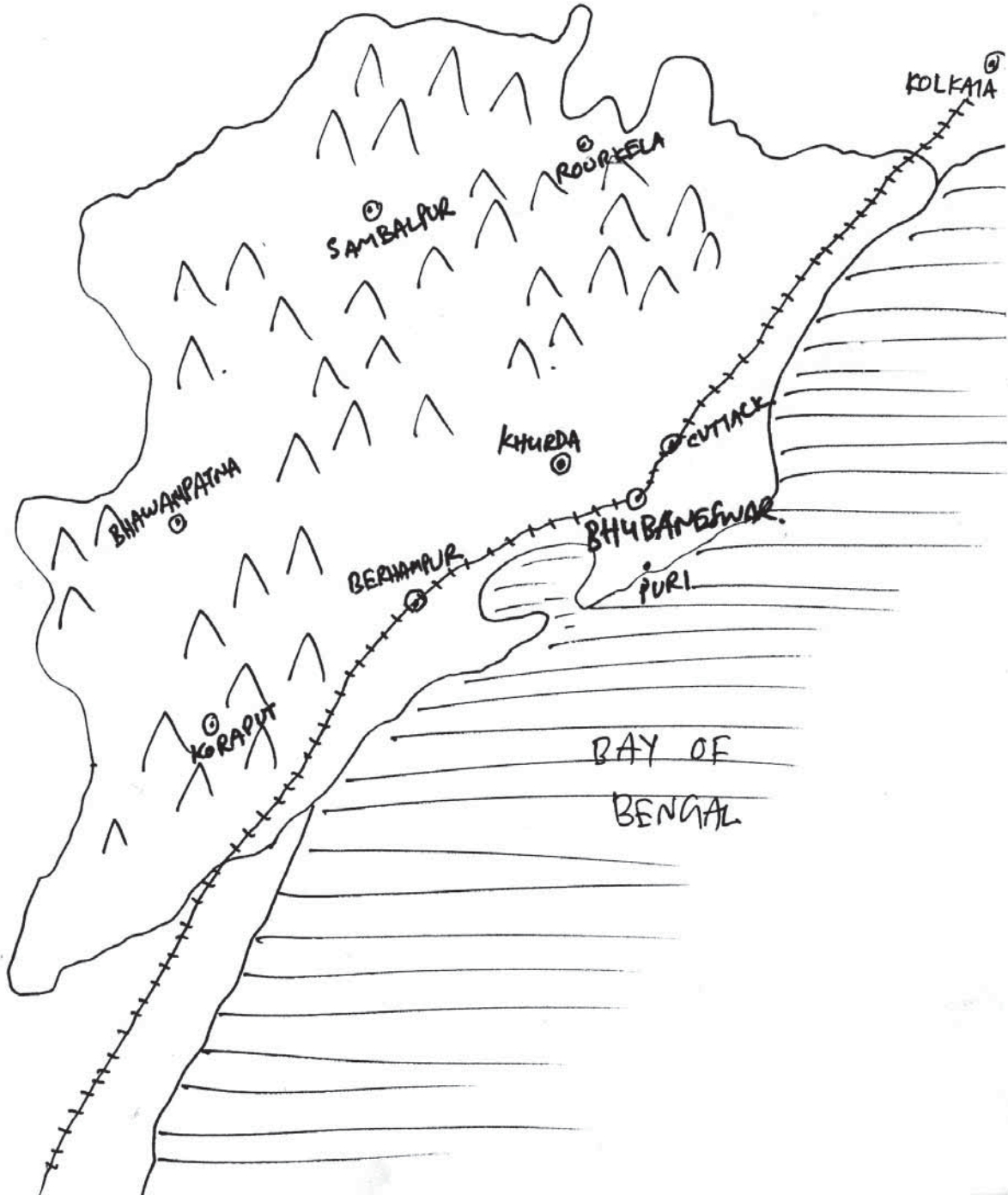
ILLUSTRATION 2. Orissa in India (drawing by Subodh Pattnaik).

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 TRACING THE GLOBAL DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL WORK THROUGH THE CASE OF NATYA CHETANA

This is a social work study of Natya Chetana[1], a theatre group working in the state of Orissa in Eastern India. Through an exploration of the local realities and reasons behind Natya Chetana's work, the study also takes part in the discussion regarding social work from an international or global perspective.

A group of local drama students founded Natya Chetana in 1986 in Orissa's capital Bhubaneswar. The group's name is a sanskritised version of Oriya, the official language of Orissa. *Natya* means theatre and *chetana* awareness; Natya Chetana can so be translated into English as *Theatre for Awareness.* Since its genesis, the group has moved forward through trial and error. Today it is a theatre group with a specific social agenda and commitments, and identifies its theatre as people's theatre, *loko natya*. Other labels for Natya Chetana's theatre could be, for instance, street theatre, community theatre, theatre for development, or political theatre. Besides theatre, the people involved in Natya Chetana, as well as local people that know the group and its work, regard the group's work as social work.

Over the course of its quarter of a century of existence Natya Chetana has done dozens of topical plays dealing with the problems and tensions that local people face in their everyday lives. It has toured widely performing in towns and the countryside, to all kinds of audiences from the rural poor to the urban middle class and cultural elite. Usually the plays do not offer solutions to the problems handled in them. On the contrary, the intention is to "disturb the minds of the audiences". Therefore, despite its social and political orientation and the careful examination of the issues that the plays are

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1   Natya Chetana is Natya Chetana also in reality; I am writing about the group without any code names or attempts to hide the group's identity and location. The issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.6.

built on, Natya Chetana's theatre is not primarily educative in the sense that it would provide ready-thought solutions. The aim of the performances is to create awareness of current issues and to activate the audiences to reflect their own position and possibilities of action to change their own, as well as other people's lives.

Over the years Natya Chetana has had to work hard to justify its approach within the realm of theatre art, whereas the social work commitment of the group has been so self-evident that it is rarely specifically articulated. Accordingly, when the Natya Chetana volunteers discuss their work through the framework of theatre, the work's essence as social work is taken as a matter of course. For Natya Chetana social work is not about formal qualifications or contributing to welfare ideology of the state. No one in Natya Chetana has an educational background in social work or related subjects. From the group's perspective, these things are rather irrelevant. Natya Chetana's work is social work because of its content and commitments. The group emphasises volunteerism and personal sacrifices for the sake of society and art. These sacrifices mean, for example, choosing to live on a scarce and insecure income and to take whatever follows from that.

In my academic and professional context in Finland (a country in Northeastern Europe and one of the Nordic welfare states), seeing and naming Natya Chetana's work as social work has been often challenged. Those who have doubted whether Natya Chetana's theatre work can be understood as social work have usually found it difficult or downright impossible to imagine a Natya Chetana kind of approach taking place within the Finnish welfare state context. While refusals to call and perceive Natya Chetana's work as social work have not been the only kind of reactions to the topic of this study, they convey how conceptions of social work are particular and culturally specific. Social work raises a number of opinions and is comprehended differently by variety of actors around the globe. Yet, global connections and ideas of universality have also been and continue to be important for social work.

In this study I conceive Natya Chetana as a group practicing a specific ideology of social work in a particular cultural and historical situation. My method of inquiry being ethnography, and thus involving an extended stay and interaction with Natya Chetana, my aim has been to achieve a close understanding of the group, its work and location in its own cultural context and beyond. The task of this research report is to produce a culturally embedded account of the kind of social work that Natya Chetana does, while at the same time connecting it with broader theoretical discussions. Though there could, from a social work perspective, be many more discussions, my choice has been to focus on the discussion established as international (shifting to global) social work, as well as the discussion on colonialism and postcolonialism. Initially international/global social work caught my attention because of my desire to find links between different culturally

specific manifestations of social work. However, my early finding was that much of the (English language) discussion has been oriented towards developing global awareness in the field and the discipline, as well as respective professional practices. Possibly because Natya Chetana's starting point is voluntarism[2], it or likeminded actors seem to have been recognised and accommodated within the international social work discourse only with some difficulty, being relegated to a rather shadowy existence in the terrain of social and community development, or related activities such as development communication. Of the possible views to take on the situation, as well as to think about the global setting of social work on the whole, I obtained useful and relevant help from postcolonial theory. Colonialism and postcolonialism demanded consideration because of the colonial past and postcolonial present of contemporary India. Therefore, while focusing empirically on Natya Chetana's social work, this study also provides a perspective to reflect upon the foundations of international/global social work. All in all, it calls for acknowledgement of and interest in the very diversity of social work.

1.2   FRAMEWORKS FOR THE STUDY

North and South: A Finnish social work researcher and an Orissan theatre group

In India Natya Chetana's footing in social work is principally voluntary, whereas I am qualified through a university-level (master's degree) training in social work, many aspects of which can be compressed into the broader 'modern professional project' of social work (discussed, e.g., by McDonald 2006). To be very specific, this study is an attempt towards cultural translation and a dialogue between two different social work approaches: Natya Chetana's and mine. However, as particular as our locations and approaches are, they also do bring forth broader locally and globally strained and sometimes competing dimensions of social work. Accordingly, the study has called for plenty of location seeking and mapping for and from both of us, in social work terms and otherwise. While the focus of the study is on Natya Chetana, in what follows my Finnish social work background has influenced the kinds of questions and clarifications I have asked and sought.

My personal journey, recalled in the beginning of Chapter Two, describes my initial motivations to learn about the interfaces of drama and social work in India. Though

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2   In what follows, I use the words voluntarism and volunteerism interchangeably, referring to both practical and metaphysical aspects of giving one's time without proper salary.

from the start I was willing to have eyes for the social work qualities of Natya Chetana's work, I was not able to identify any single social work discussion that had neatly accommodated my approach when I started the study. Thus, when I was frequently asked: "What does your study to do with social work?" I found that my difficulty was that although it in my mind had a great deal, I lacked a path and the vocabulary to answer the question. Gradually, I found that Natya Chetana's particularity communicates with or into the direction of a number of broader discussions, some of which are well established, while others are still in the process of emerging. These discussions have to do with the very essence of social work, such as what it is and for whom does it exist, and why and how social work emerged, or did not emerge, in different parts of the world (e.g. Payne 2005). Furthermore, the study touches the debates about professionalism versus volunteerism in social work (e.g. Kauppinen-Perttula 2004; Dantwala & Sethi & Visaria 1998; more generally on professional expertise see Turner 2001), social work as activism (e.g. Jesani 1998; Healy 2000), as well as self-development as one possible, often political and/or spiritual dimension of social work (elaborated from different angles, e.g., by Gandhi 1909, 1941; Giri 2005; or Kauppinen-Perttula 2004).

What is social work then? To put my perspective in a nutshell, social work as a concept or a specialised practice does not exist in every culture or language (e.g. Mafile`o 2004; Sipilä 1989, 61). Tasks that in modernising Western societies increasingly became the realm of social work, such as care of the destitute or counselling and helping individuals in distress, have at other times and places been taken care by kin and community. As Sipilä (1989) points out, many meanings are attached to social work, which makes an exhaustive description of it impossible. On the whole, human beings can use the word as they like and still understand each other fairly well. At the same time, however, one of the eternal questions within the field is: what is social work? Is it a mindset, an occupation among others, a calling, a social movement, a scientific discipline, a professional practice, a social convention, part of the social and administrative machinery, an ideology or something else? If it is all these things, can there be any joint informational and intellectual basis, or a definition that all involved in social work of some kind could agree with? (Ibid. 57-63.) My understanding is that social work covers a range of genuinely and deeply divergent approaches, some of which may never turn into same language not to speak about binding them together into a single training programme. Still, as Jokinen, Juhila and Pösö (1999, 3) argue, despite its multiplicity and fragmentation social work can and should be researched, expressly by exploring its actual practices.

This study is built on the now commonly shared understanding that as an activity that essentially happens between human beings, social work is culturally constructed and bound to time, place and its doers (e.g. Cox & Pawar 2006, 2; Jokinen et al. 1999,

3; Payne 2005, 11; Sipilä 1989). Sticking to the cultural specificity of social work entails that, for instance, so-called Western social work theories, even when written as universally applicable, are in many ways culturally specific. Sometimes this specificity has strong elements of Eurocentrism, in other words being biased in favour of Europe (or 'the West') and keeping Europe as the centre and the measure for the rest of the world (about Eurocentrism, see Shohat & Stam 1994[3]). As Malcolm Payne notes, most histories of social work are written by people from the West, and

> assume an *internationalist view*, the centrality of Western social work with a chronology of events leading to it. Also, they assume that a narrative account of *what* happened explains *why* social work is as it is." (…) At present, (…) Western social work maintains its cultural dominance. But alternatives exist, they are important in the relevant welfare regimes and at times they increase their international impact. (Payne 2005, 5, emphasis original.)

Despite occasional references to Finland, the main focus of this study is on social work outside 'the West' in India, on the case of Natya Chetana. Though India and Finland became the sites of this study because of my personal history, the two countries make a useful comparison in view of the global diversity of social work and its circumstances. As returned to in detail in Chapter Three, in India, a country with approximately one-sixth of the world's population and estimated to be the most populous country in a decade or two, social work is, as everywhere, a contested, imprecise and paradoxical field. Though academic professional social work has long been well established in India, the everyday, street level understanding of social work stresses personal qualities, character and actions as determinants of social workers before any institutional or educational criteria. In general, social work is not understood as a profession that should necessarily bring income to its doer.

In Finland, whose population of 5.3 million makes less than half of Delhi's, social work largely means the kind of work that welfare professionals who are entitled and qualified as social workers do. Trained in the discipline of scientifically grounded

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3   According to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994), originally Eurocentrism emerged as a discursive rationale for colonialism but it has shown its longevity since the formal end of colonialism. Having achieved the position of naturalised, largely unnoticed "common sense", it has structured contemporary thinking, practices and representations, in particular the comprehension of the world as "the West and the Rest". In acknowledging Eurocentrism the point is not to claim that Europe is the source of all evils but to be informed about it as a historically situated discourse and Europe's historically oppressive relation to its internal and external Others. As Eurocentrism has been established as the "normal" view of history that not only Europeans but also people in other continents have imbibed at school and from the media, non-Europeans can be Eurocentric just as there are Europeans who are anti-Eurocentric. As a paradigm, Eurocentrism is unrepresentative of a multicultural world. (Shohat & Stam 1994, 1-8.)

professionalism, their required competence is a master's degree in social work. In the wider field of Finnish welfare services, social workers are but one professional group among many others, outnumbered by practical nurses as well as professionals with polytechnic-level training. Social work is generally conceived as part of the welfare state machinery, and social workers, while working for and in the name of the poor and the marginalised, largely maintain (and are expected to maintain) a professional attitude with their clients, stick to their working hours and enjoy their annual vacations. Although social workers may at times have a relatively high authority over the lives of their clients, as a female-dominated 'soft' profession the work is relatively poorly paid in relation to its qualification demands and generally taxing nature. Moreover, despite the common stereotype of a social worker as elderly woman allocating money in the municipal welfare office, social work is an amazingly diverse field also in Finland.

Though Finland never was an imperial power, today Finland and India are apt examples of countries from the Global North and South, terms North/South, like West/East being, as Connell (2007, 212; see also Koponen 2007, 29-30) notes, common ways to name global divisions and refer to "the long-lasting patterns of inequality in power, wealth and cultural influence that grew historically out of European and North American imperialism". Regardless of the wealth of societies or the culturally specific nature of social work understandings, one thing that social work approaches in all their diversity generally agree on is that social work has always contained a genuine concern for the poor and the most vulnerable in society (e.g. Shardlow 1998, 23). From this perspective my stand is that globally curious social work research should not sidestep India, or for that matter any other area of the world, whether there is formally organised social work or not.

North and South can be thought of as fluid and at times overlapping, relative categories: enclaves of North can be found in the South and vice versa. In the ranking of states in India, Orissa has been for decades identified as a backward, conventional and stagnant agrarian economy with an extremely weak industrial base, gross unemployment and abysmally low incomes with dire distress and abject poverty (Kanungo 2004, 99), and thus a place which can be thought as South even within the so-called South. It is also known for starvation deaths and the mass migration of men to work elsewhere in India. The particular feature of Orissa's poverty has been that the state has abundant natural resources, in particular bauxite (70 % of India's reserves), but also iron ore, coal and chrome. Accordingly, since early 1980s the fastest growing sector has been mining and quarrying. The latest information shows signs of a significant acceleration in the state's growth rate and in total income. However, even though in an examination of an 11-year period (from 1994 to 2005) the per capita income of the state increased 48%, there was hardly any change in the head-count ratio of poverty (48.6%

to 46.6%), still the highest in the country. A very high incidence of poverty remains, and in certain regions it has become more severe in particular among the groups that were poorest and most vulnerable to start with (tribal people and *dalits*, discussed in more detail in Chapter Three). Thus, in Orissa the increased prosperity has not trickled down to the poor, rather the growth has been a prime example of growth without inclusion. (Panda 2008.)

Being concerned about poverty and social problems in distant lands, be it India or Finland, is not only a gesture of compassion but well founded for a number of reasons. Though social work in general consists of multifarious local practices, the local conditions are intertwined with global processes. Problems and solutions are no longer country specific, if they ever were, although their outlooks and consequences vary from place to place. Economic crises, pandemics, war and violence and environmental problems affect us all, directly or indirectly, and manifest themselves in the form of various social problems. Often, the frontline sufferers are the most vulnerable at the bottom of different societal hierarchies. As the study will show, Natya Chetana's plays deal exactly with these kinds of issues, the use and abuse of natural resources, the consequences of industrial pollution, the social and human costs of the cutting of coastal mangrove forests, or the problems caused by the opportunism of those in power.

Around the world, local social workers have box seats to witness the manifestations of the darker side of globalisation. How should social work react to the situation? In view of Lyons, Manion and Carlsen (2006), social work has to be able to conceive of itself in broad terms, and to be able to ally itself as well with movements and political goals:

> the values of social work are akin to those of many of the current global social (and environmental) movements and we need to see an end to the way in which social, economic and environmental issues are decontextualised and individualised. These components are inter-connected. (Ibid. 11.)

Ferguson and Lavalette (2005) also argue that social workers need to actively connect, or re-engage, with "movements for global justice and against war, whether globally or locally". A broader alliance among social workers and the people for and with whom they work, service users or the poor and vulnerable population groups, and rediscovery of collective action and organisation, is important to both parties. While the immediate goal is to work for social justice and human dignity for all, in many capitalist democracies such new, engaged practice could lift social work above the pessimism and despair into which it has fallen due to the constant commodification and privatisation of social welfare as part of recent neo-liberal politics. (Ibid. 223.)

Turning the gaze in social work to outside 'the West' forces us to acknowledge, sometimes more explicitly than inside western countries, how the main reasons for social and health problems lie in poverty and powerlessness of people. Problems such as illiteracy, malnutrition or the spread of HIV/AIDS embody the human face of underdevelopment, which has its roots in the distribution of resources both within single countries and globally (e.g. Werner et al. 1997). Social work is part of this picture. In Chapter Three I will argue that the development of social work in North America and Western Europe, and to a significant extent elsewhere, has been connected to the processes of colonialism and colonial philanthropy, and further to the paradigms of progress and development. Yet, the binary division of development/underdevelopment, or professional social work's commitment to post-enlightenment ideas of progress, are not issues widely examined within the field (e.g. Kuruvilla 2005). My experience from Finland suggests that taking a stand on development as paradigm or range of practices is seen as something that may have relevance in the so-called developing countries, but does not really touch lives and social work in the Nordic welfare states. In (English language) literature on social work, one of the pioneering authors demanding that social workers should tackle the problems of development has since early 1980s been James Midgley (e.g. 1981, 1996, 1997, 2001; Hall & Midgley 2004). Recently for example Kuruvilla (2005), Burkett and McDonald (2005) and McDonald (2006) have also added to the discussion with their insights, calling for social work as a profession and discipline to take the ideas of development and progress under critical examination. In my view, taking colonialism, ideas of progress and development, and their desired and undesired consequences onto the agenda of social work discussions is extremely topical and necessary even today.

While problems of practices attached to the ideas of progress and development form more the context than the core of this study, development, – perceived differently from different positions – is part of the landscape in which Natya Chetana works. Therefore, this study has links with the discussions concerning social development, community development, and social work in Global South (e.g. Bak 2004; Burkett & McDonald 2005; Cox & Pawar 2006; Hall & Midgley 2004; Midgley 1981, 1996, 1997), indigenous social work (e.g. Cox & Pawar 2006; Ferguson 2005; Habashi 2005; Kassim Ejaz 1991; Mafile'o 2004; Tsang & Yang 2001), international social work (e.g. Cox & Pawar 2006; Healy 2008; Lyons et al. 2006; Midgley 2001; Payne & Askeland 2008), and political social work (e.g. Jordan & Parton 1983, Powell 2001). However, rather than trying to accommodate Natya Chetana within, or measure it according to parameters that could be derived from these discussions, I have endeavoured to describe and discuss Natya Chetana's work by its own terms.

Interdisciplinarity

Natya Chetana can provide food for thought also for researchers not primarily interested in social work. My treatment of the group is also strongly interdisciplinary; I have backed my understanding about the group and its multiple locations with reading from relevant disciplines. In addition to social work, methodologically and through my orientation I am indebted to anthropology, identifying myself as much of an anthropologist as a social work researcher. In so doing I have drawn plenty of insights and contextual backing from South Asian, postcolonial, and theatre studies as well. This kind of combining of different disciplines is often the case with empirical social science studies covering current issues in the Global South. It is also typical for interdisciplinary ethnographic research projects that work "in real time and in relation to various pragmatic, social, and ethical issues" (Cerwonka 2007, 3), and that are derived from the multiplicity of everyday life (Atkinson & Delamont & Housley 2008, 54). From Allaine Cerwonka's view, rather than assess interdisciplinarity as "merely a "failure" to achieve the standards of any particular discipline" it should be thought of as

> a knowledge-production process that flexibly adopts approaches and tools as a consequence of the questions being asked, not as a consequence of the methodological constraints dictated by the history or current hegemony within a given discipline (ibid. 14).

Interdisciplinary ethnographic analysis allows moving between theory and empirical social facts in dialectic that often reshapes both the researcher's theoretical ideas and view of the empirical data (Cerwonka 2007, 15). Cerwonka points out that the way of ethnographic knowledge production and how it "draws on theory to interpret cultural phenomena as they are encountered" is, to use Paul Willis's expression (quoted in an interview by Mills and Gibb 2001, 411-12), "principledly eclectic". (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007, 118.)

My guideline in incorporating a broad set of debates and disciplines within the study has been to be 'object driven'. In order to do justice to my object of study, Natya Chetana and its work, I have employed a range of approaches rather than narrowed the framework into something perhaps more manageable. Being often unable to place myself exhaustively in any single disciplinary context, I have been left with the attempt of trying to keep myself on the map of relevant discussions on the basis of how they connect to my topic. In so doing, my attitude has necessarily been horizontal and combining, embracing often breadth over depth. Yet aspects of verticality, that is more in-depth inquiry from a restricted angle, can also be found in individual chapters discussing Natya Chetana and its work. What in my view nonetheless makes this perhaps

most useful as a social work study is the direction in which my research questions and arguments strive.

Colonialism, postcolonialism, and social work

In contemporary Orissa, one of the progenies of the postcolonial situation is the anxiety felt by many local upper and middle class people due to the experience of the state and its people as being sort of brushed aside from the map of important locations, identities or capacities by the British and their intermediaries, as well as latter-day orders of ruling and ranking. Therefore, in order to understand Natya Chetana's work, priorities and argumentation within the context of Orissa, and informed by earlier mentioned social work discussions, one of the streams of this study is an attempt at a postcolonial reading of social work.

Postcolonialism, a term originally used in literature studies, refers not only to certain historical period "after colonialism", but functions as an umbrella term that refers to representations, values and interpretations of colonialism and its impacts. Consequently, there is no one postcolonialism but a spectrum of conceptions and interpretations. One of the main aims of the research on postcoloniality (postcolonial studies) has been theoretical sense making of the colonial pasts and their consequences. (E.g. McLeod 2000; Gandhi 1998.)

Postcolonialism reminds of the history of oppression as well as the struggle against it, and has given tools both to recognise suffering and criticise the material and discursive practices that cause it (Gandhi 1998). On the other hand, postcolonialism has been criticised for the danger of sustaining, despite its stated goals, Eurocentric conceptions of non-Western cultures if only as the other of 'the West', and thereby stressing rather than undermining the role of Western Europe in the world history. (E.g. Habashi 2005; Hutcheon 2003; McLeod 2000, 246-257.) Nonetheless, postcolonial theory may, even through its problems, help to understand present local and global realities at large, as well as to recognise current neo-colonial practices. In this study remembering colonialism is also useful for my efforts to understand and connect the prevailing rhetoric and practices of social work both in India and in Finland. My proposal is that postcolonial analysis benefits social work. Actually I find it odd that thus far a discipline emphasising anti-oppressive and culturally appropriate practices has not shown greater interest in this direction.

Theatre as social work

As Natya Chetana is first and foremost a theatre group, this is also a study of theatre as social work, or theatre at the crossroads of activism and social work in a postcolonial

society. In India, otherwise a country with rich history of theatre from the beginning of time, the practice of political street theatre started from the communist revolution in Russia and was used in the independence movement (e.g. Bharucha 1999). Today, the use of theatrical performances is common all over India, for instance in various development projects. Usually the aim is to achieve project goals, namely, get the message through. Though these kinds of performances as such do not receive much attention, in project reports they get a line or two, such as "local talent and folk media were used to educate and mobilise people's support" or "folk forms of communication like folk songs and local theatre, based on folklore, were also used to communicate health care related messages" (examples from Bardhan 2000, 72-74). In India this is often also the most immediate image of theatre as social work, and using theatre as a tool of communication is infused throughout many social work training programmes up to the university level. Instead of plain message delivery, Natya Chetana is interested in contributing to deeper individual and collective processes. Theatre can obviously serve ends, delivering messages as well as generating questioning.

Theatre always happens in a larger context. With its need for a public place, physical resources, workers and audience, theatre is more complexly and intimately intertwined with the outside world than many other literal and artistic activities. (Fortier 1997, 102.) According to Finnish social pedagogue Leena Kurki, the significance of theatre is both individual and social. Theatre has a special capacity to generate participatory processes. It brings forth joy and attachment, builds up personal responsibility and helps to promote and understand new ideas and to analyse them. Moreover, theatre is one way of sharing experiences and reflecting everyday life. At a collective level, theatre can be used for social critique and it can explicate dominant ideological and cultural power structures. As theatre can help to take a distance with everyday life and offer an outsider's view on it, it can be used as a methodology of examining everyday realities. (Kurki 2000, 140-141.) From a social work perspective, such theatre can well match with, or as, social work with political aims.

When in Finland much of the participatory or applied theatre work tends to take place in relatively closed group work settings, in Asia, Africa and Latin America theatre has been a tool for community development and consciousness raising (fields that highly overlap with social work even if not recognised as part of it or vice versa) for many decades (e.g. Hall 1982; Mlama 1991; van Erven 1988, 1992, 2001; Vuorela 1987). In all its specificity Natya Chetana is one example of this phenomenon of a transcultural vanguard of change seeking, socially committed political theatre. Implicitly or explicitly, one of the inspirations of the global community/political/popular theatre movement has been Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, known for his Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970). Freire (1921-1997) made a number of theoretical innovations that have had consider-

able impact on the development of educational practices, particularly in the spheres of informal and popular education. In India many theatre practitioners and NGO workers, including the volunteers of Natya Chetana, often explain their work in 'freirean' terms such as "breaking the culture of silence". Another thing is that Freire as such is rarely mentioned, as if there had been so many intermediaries for his ideas that his name flew out of window on the way (see Krishna 2004, 42). Without downgrading the generally strong importance of Freire or the Latin American origin of approaches of social animation[4], in India there are also other remarkable sources of inspiration for consciousness rising and work with communities, such as the life and work of Mohandas Gandhi[5]. Natya Chetana, though paying homage to Freire, adheres more strongly to selected elements drawn from global community theatre, local Indian performance traditions, and local ideas of social work emphasising volunteerism and personal sacrifices.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE ATTEMPT OF CULTURAL TRANSLATION

With this study my aim is to bring, through the case of Natya Chetana, new insights into discussions concerning social work and its diversity in a global scale. My main research question is: What is Natya Chetana's social work like?

The sub-questions that follow are:

— How is social work comprehended within the group?
— How is Natya Chetana involved in social change?
— How could Natya Chetana's social work approach be understood from a more 'Western' (in particular 'Finnish', professionalism-oriented) approach to social work?

In seeking answers for my questions, I am relying on my ethnographic work with Natya Chetana, which has allowed me to take a close look at the everyday life, practices and the kinds of conceptualisations Natya Chetana has on its work, as well as a variety of theoretical insights helpful to my attempts to think about social work in a global context, and from one social work approach to another.

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4   Animation means literally breathing life into something. To put it simply, social animation is one name for a community-oriented, culturally curious approach of working in society. Its common aims are uniting and mobilising the community, often with the help of cultural media, to do what it wants to do as united, and increase communal capacity to plan and manage its own destiny at large.

5   In India, Freire and social animation seem to be better acknowledged and referred to in particular in areas and by doers who have been connected to the cultural and political influence of the Portuguese.

Having done ethnographic research, I see ethnography as much more than just a name for participant observation. Rather, I understand it as an orientation that allows a highly holistic and, in a positive sense, eclectic form of doing research. In line with the tradition of ethnography, my desire has been to understand and depict the phenomena under study, Natya Chetana and its work, and to use its particularity to inform my reading of selected scientific discussions, and vice versa. In practice the attempt turned to be neither very straightforward nor one-way. To be able to learn in communication with others, one has to not only understand, but also be understood. Therefore, learning about the other's premises also entails introspection. In order to comprehend Natya Chetana, its work, and the context where it works, as well as my own location as a Finnish doctoral student of social work, I have simultaneously, along with the above listed research questions, needed to ask plenty of other, oftentimes elementary questions. To name a few examples, these questions have been: what is social work, what is social work in India, and how much does one need to know (and write) of Orissa and local social problems? What is the specificity of theatre as social work, in particular in India? And what to then think of Finland and Finnish social work?

With all of my questions, my way of looking at the world around me as well my understanding of science, and social work, largely connects with what is conceived of as social constructionist thinking and what ethnographers, in particular anthropologists, have long taken for granted before social constructionism actually made its breakthrough into academic debates[6]. The central ideas of social construction are that knowledge is produced in interaction and that it is related to its social context. Accordingly, social constructionism implies that "the social world is a human product" and that "people are social products of the society". (E.g. Payne 1999, 25-37.) As Malcolm Payne (ibid. 25) summarises, social constructionism is a complex set of ideas. One of the sources of the approach is the sociology of knowledge, in particular the work of Berger and Luckmann (1967) on how knowledge becomes legitimated in society. As a scientific practice, social constructionism means paying attention to the social processes that have constructed the knowledge, thereby being critical towards 'taken-for-granted knowledge'. It also means understanding knowledge as a culturally and historically specific product of social interactions, sustained by social processes. Finally, knowledge and social processes go together: we act in certain way on the basis of our knowledge and vice versa. (Burr 1995.)

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6   Liisa Malkki (2007, 171) recounts that, for instance, Bronislaw Malinowski, working in 1930s far before any talk about postmodernism, was "very aware of the constructedness of facts and of the simultaneously theoretical and empirical nature of "fieldwork"."

Having internalised the worldview of ethnographic and social constructionist thinking, my aspiration has been to make an inquiry between different kinds of constructions of social work knowledge. My starting point is that my own position within the field of social work is culturally and historically specific, as is the posture that Natya Chetana takes. Sudhir Chandra (1992) who has studied social transformation and social consciousness in India points that

> while all understanding is eventually in one's own terms, any encounter with the Other, i.e. the alien and unfamiliar, ought to result in a process of questioning, modifying and extension of these terms, and of incorporating new terms from the Other. (Chandra 1992, 4.)

In Chandra's view, if one's attempts to comprehend the unfamiliar remain only at the level of terms already familiar, proper understanding is not possible. When and if the Other really is Other, there are no exact equivalents for talking about the Other in one's own language. Nevertheless, awareness of the situation increases the possibility of faithful translation, and can thus lessen the degree of violence and mutilation done to the Other. (Chandra 1992, 4.) Following Chandra's ideas, and taking the position that Natya Chetana's social work might in many ways represent the Other for my colleagues and me, I recognise that I have a different footing and language to talk about social work than Natya Chetana. Chandra warns that jumping from one kind of construction of knowledge to another, or back and forth, might not be that easy. My chance is to change, and to construct my knowledge anew through re-examining and possibly modifying my own epistemological location. However, as we are products of our own histories, our degrees of freedom to change might not be unlimited. Though I have to contest my own starting points and background, I cannot render them non-existent. I remain a social work educated Finn studying Orissan theatre cum social workers and their work.

Learned what I have the way I have, I try to understand Natya Chetana's work from the perspective I have, but I am conscious of its partiality. Indeed, this kind of acknowledged, self-reflexive, partial position, combined with the responsibility to explain it to various audiences bothers anthropologists and social workers alike. As Allaine Cerwonka stresses, interpreting from a subject position does not have to equal the rejection of all notions of objectivity:

> To say that understanding is always a situated practice is not simply to acknowledge that we always bring personal "bias" (conceptual and personal fore-understandings and prejudgements) to our research. It is to say that we always understand through a set of priorities and questions that we bring to the phenomenon/ object we are researching (…) …how one's

personhood is also *a condition* for knowledge claims, rather than a deterrent to understand-
ing. (…) …far from being a deficiency, the sustained contact and negotiation between the
ethnographer and the phenomena she researches is really ethnography's creative center.
(Cerwonka 2007, 28-31.)

Exploring familiarity and difference has traditionally been at the heart of ethno-
graphic research, being the common way in which human beings piece things together.
Related to the above discussion, one of the lessons to be kept in mind is that here lays
the risk of exoticising the Other, in this case making Natya Chetana and its social work
approach a distant oddity. As many world travellers and armchair travellers before
me, I could actually end up bolstering my own identity, as well as that of the kind of
social work I have been taught. Indeed, I am afraid I have heard of a heroic Finn, who
"exported" child protection to certain African country, as if no practices of protect-
ing children existed there before his arrival. As Finland also looks fairly exotic from
India, similar processes could be equally claimed the other way around. Essentialising
the strangeness of what is not readily familiar can be used as a strategy for not even
attempting to comprehend, as well as not to recognise that other places are not vacu-
ums, even in social work matters. Chandra is of the opinion that though one should
not expect sameness, expecting only difference might be equally counterproductive
(Chandra 1992). This is where I have my hopes in ethnography. Though there is no
truly un-theoretical way to do participant observation, the method "has directed itself
towards a profoundly important methodological possibility – that of *being "surprised,"*
of reaching knowledge not prefigured in one's starting paradigm" (Willis 1980, 90 ref.
Malkki 2007, 174).

Without belittling the challenges for cross-cultural and cross-lingual understand-
ing, the aim of this study is not to amplify the idea that doing (or studying) theatre as
social work in the state of Orissa is something exotic and exciting. My aim has been to
make sense of what kind of work Natya Chetana's does and to explore how and why it is
meaningful and reasoned activity for the people involved. In doing so, I have attempted
to make an inquiry across cultures, and to create bridges and understanding between
different approaches. For these reasons I have found it necessary to discuss Natya Che-
tana in relation to multiple contexts, India, social work and theatre. The word attempt
is genuine. Experience from interdisciplinary projects teaches that learning to talk
and communicate is only the first step in translation. Translation, when it means for
instance translating one another's cultural and historical settings, takes time. Some-
times meanings, when they meet, can be mutually exclusive despite all the attempts to
find working compromises. Moreover, it is possible not to see exclusions in the work,
in other words what gets silenced and excluded in the other's approach. (Hemmings

2006^7.) Sometimes it might be impossible to find a common language. In the case of this study the language has been a real challenge – my interaction with the team members of Natya Chetana and vice versa is affected by our reliance on English, mother tongue to none of us. While acknowledging constraints, my solution has been to try to keep learning along the way.

1.4   PROGRESSION OF THE STUDY

In ethnographic research, and the kind of long-term togetherness it entails with the people under study, the researcher's person and background is bound to be part of the picture. As is common in contemporary ethnographies, also my depiction and discussion of Natya Chetana and its work proceeds largely through my subjective accounts. Through the style of writing I want to make clear that the research is based on my participant observation and personal experience. The solution aspires to verify my own footing, and thus allow the reader an opportunity to judge my position and work as a researcher. Recognising and mapping the situatedness of my viewpoints, even if too detailed to appease every taste, also serves my larger goal. That is to establish that our histories and locations define our perspectives, also in our attempts for a global dialogue in social work. They deserve due attention, for coming to terms with them might be the prerequisite for dialogue and collaboration to truly start.

In what follows, the individual chapters of the study vary in their tone and purpose, all having a role in unravelling the story of Natya Chetana's theatre as social work. In Chapter Two, "Researching Natya Chetana", I open up my understanding and practice of ethnography as a research method as well as an important determinant to the overall approach and composition of this study. Thereafter I have used a fair number of pages in contextualising, and making connections to diverging cultural and social processes that have meaning for the contexts of this study. Chapter Three, "Mapping worlds of social work", contains much of social work backing and theory needed along the way. I start by outlining international social work and some core questions relevant for this study, and continue with a review on social work and its circumstances in India. Chapter Four, "Locating traditions of theatre" delves into the multiplicity of theatre in India, as well as Natya Chetana's theatrical influences. It locates Natya Chetana as an Indian, but most of all an Orissan theatre group that is simultaneously active both in the local

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7   A word of thanks from this learning belongs to Dr. Clare Hemmings from London School of Economics, who gave the lecture "Practicing Interdisciplinarity. European Perspectives." in the University of Tampere 16th November 2006.

theatre scene and as part of the global movement of participatory community theatre. The chapter also elaborates the possibilities of theatre and more generally arts in and as social work. Chapter Five introduces Natya Chetana as a team and a way of life without forgetting my own settling into the team. As the chapter illustrates, belonging to Natya Chetana presumes commitment, as well as the ability and willingness to adapt to group life and its realities. Chapter Six, "Natya Chetana's conceptions of theatre", deals with the concepts and contents of Natya Chetana's theatre work, introducing the group's two theatrical formulas, "cyco" and "intimate" theatre, and discussing the group's politics of representation and performing. Chapter Seven provides a thematic summary of Natya Chetana's plays, proceeding with a more detailed account of two plays, the intimate theatre play *Boli* and the cyco theatre play *Sapanara Sapan*, the kind of issues they commented on, and the processes they became part of. Chapter Eight "Social work by Natya Chetana" gathers together various elements of Natya Chetana's social work and discusses them further. In Chapter Nine, I connect my account and analysis of Natya Chetana with the discussions of postcoloniality, theatre, and social work, as well as the possibilities and meaningfulness of cultural translation between different social work approaches. Further, I elaborate on what kind of questions the particular case of Natya Chetana and this study as a whole, pose to the discussion and practices evolving under the label international/global social work. Finally, the epilogue gives some insights into what has happened to Natya Chetana volunteers over the course of all these years.

CHAPTER 2
RESEARCHING NATYA CHETANA

This chapter is about ethnography as an orientation and a predisposition, as well as a series of phases and practical solutions on the lifeline of this study. I begin by recalling how my interest evolved to study theatre as social work in India, and how I came to know Natya Chetana. I then turn to participant observation as ethnography's definitive mode of acquiring data, and how it distinguishes ethnography from other qualitative research methods.

Thinking of the kind of ethnography I have done with Natya Chetana, the fact that the group allowed me to enter its life made this study possible. The group members have supported this endeavour in numerous ways by introducing me to Orissa, the basics of spoken Oriya, local theatre people, social activists, friends and relatives, where to go, what to eat, how to find the places or get the things I need. In addition to taking me to live with them, observe, photograph, interview, and often intervene, many of the group members have occasionally engaged themselves to think seriously about my study, its objectives, and how could it be advanced. Though I cannot review all of this in detail, in the following my aim is to illuminate the nature and quality of the circumstances, relationships and experiences in and through which I have gained my data and understanding. Through certain examples, I discuss my being 'in the field', namely my position, cooperation and negotiation with the Natya Chetana team, paying attention also to the corporeal aspects of knowledge production. I end the chapter by summing up the research process, its sets of data and cycles of analysis, and with a discussion of the ethics of my writing.

2.1   MY PERSONAL JOURNEY TO NATYA CHETANA

I ended up studying Natya Chetana through a series of both haphazard and determinate and sincere efforts, many of which took place already in the 1990s. Initially, I was a student of international politics. My entry to the field of social work occurred in 1991

when, to earn my living, I started to work with people with cerebral palsy (a form of disability). Liking the work I soon started to cast around for studies that could support me in my work and found rehabilitation studies, which was a university course within the social work curriculum. I realised that I felt at home with the discipline and eventually changed my major and completed my master's degree in social work.

Before the work with disabled people I had also found my way into student union activities, and was spending much of my free time attending and organizing meetings, campaigns and cultural events. What's more is that I had fun, which to my mind is an important but often neglected aspect of voluntary work. Nonetheless, after few years of campaign work, among other things for women's issues and more democratic and sustainable development both "here" in the North and "there" in the South, I felt the need to be better ground myself. A particular turning point I recall is visiting several student associations during dark Finnish November nights in 1991, and recruiting students to give their labour to support a reforestation project in Northwest India[8]. Armed with a slide show, I was fluent and successful, displaying turbaned men and veiled, colourfully clad women next to the kind of soil-moisturizing earthen dams and rainwater-harvesting tanks that would be built with the money. Despite my seeming fluency, I asked myself what I knew about these people and their preferences. I was not the only one with such questions. Therefore, after careful correspondence, study groups and saving up, I headed to India with seven other women in August 1993. People from *Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti*[9] (GVVS, these days better known by the acronym GRAVIS); the organisation responsible for the reforestation and rainwater harvesting works my slides had presented, received us at the Delhi airport. Having agreed to take us for a work camp, they hosted us during our stay.

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8   The campaign *"Joulupuusta elämänpuu"* (From Christmas Tree to a Tree of Life) was run between 1988-1993 by the Student Union of the University of Tampere in cooperation with a several of local organisations. Part of the fundraising was to collect tops of chopped down spruce trees that some benign forest owners donated from their logging sites, and to sell them as Christmas trees. The campaign generated funding for a number of reforestation projects. The first receiver of the funds (in 1988) was Mwanza, the twin city of Tampere in Tanzania. In later years the campaign extended its funding to the Green Belt Movement in Kenya and Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti in India.

9   GVVS's own translation of its name into English is the Centre for Rural Science and Human Development (e.g. Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti, 1994).

GVVS is a gandhian rural development organisation working in the western part of Rajasthan, nurturing the ideas of Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi (1869-1947)[10]. Gandhi was one of the leading figures of Indian nationalist movement and later the esteemed father of the nation. Today, the gandhian movement consists of individuals, organisations and communities, who seek ways to adapt Gandhi's views to present conditions. In the case of GVVS, this means working together with local communities on various issues from education to water scarcity. In 1993, we spent a month planting trees as we had agreed upon beforehand, and learning about the organisation, the area and its people. At the same time, we were ourselves under scrutiny, being expected to explain our motives and produce a cultural arts programme for an exchange. Later on back home, we produced a joint report about our learning[11]. My responsibility was to sum up GVVS work from social work perspective. This was not so simple. In GVVS everyone from the car drivers to village workers had been calling themselves social workers, condensing social work into "voluntary poverty" and "simple living and high thinking". Interestingly, the gandhian ideology of the organisation was also specified in similar terms. It took me time to grasp that for GVVS workers social work and gandhian ideology were (and are) one and same thing. Coming to terms with such a simple realisation took time because it did not quite fit into my presuppositions. Rather, in India I had been baffled by the convoluted manner in which we were given similar answers to questions that from our perspective tried to map two separate terrains. In retrospect, the visit to GVVS belongs to moves that have led me to the present study. It gave me a lesson about the diversity of social work understandings, and made me acknowledge that social work can be conceived as something far more pervasive than I had considered before.

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10 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, whose impact on social work in India is discussed more in Chapter Three, raised a spectrum of opinions during his lifetime. According to Ashis Nandy and Ramin Jahanbegloo (2006, 35-36) there are four Gandhis who survived after Gandhi's death: "Gandhi of the Indian state", "Gandhi of the Gandhians", "Gandhi of the eccentrics", and "Gandhi who is basically not read but only heard". In this division, GVVS is devoted to the 'Gandhi of the Gandhians'. In view of Swedish Thord Björk and Finnish Marko Ulvila (2007), Gandhi has also been a remarkable inspiration for international solidarity work, peace movements, various local environmental struggles such as Koijärvi in Finland, the Nordic folk high school system, and ethos of anti-consumerism.

11 From today's perspective our visit entrenched cooperation between GVVS and the Student Union of the University of Tampere, which has continued to today. While the actual forms and aims of cooperation have been re-evaluated and renewed many times, throughout the years GVVS has provided a number of students an opportunity to participate in and learn of its work, and India; whereas visits to Finland have served GVVS as a chance to learn about Finnish social and health care systems. Throughout its history, the cooperation has been marked by vigorous discussion and documentation, and given an impetus to various study papers (e.g. Ranta-Tyrkkö 1997, Simos 2008). At the time of writing (2009) the focus of the cooperation at the India end is at sexual and reproductive health work with women and girls.

From my first trip to India, I ran across performances all the time. In 1993, after our month with GVVS, we travelled to Central India to visit another non-governmental organisation (NGO), *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA, Save the Narmada Movement), whose main task was to fight against a mega-scale dam project, actually a set of dams, meant to tame the mighty river Narmada. While the dam supporters claimed the project would bring welfare in the form of electricity, irrigation, and drinking water, critics were appalled by the human and environmental costs of the approach, and questioned its sensibility on the whole. For the latter camp, the project and its implementation in the name of development was symptomatic of big development policies and their inbuilt violence and disinterest towards local people. To articulate their protest, the volunteers of NBA had built the river, its Goddess, a crocodile, and all other parties involved in the dispute out of papier-mâché. Though we were not able to stay for the actual performance, we were told that in the final scene the World Bank, a huge round face with gaping mouth, would eat everything and everybody. It was obvious that for the local NBA activists the performance was a way to bring their struggle alive, and that from their perspective it had parties and orders of importance that the World Bank or other financiers had not been keen to recognise.

In 1996, I was back in India to do my social work practice internship at GVVS and was able to witness how the GVVS communication team, as the organisation's performance team was called, made miracles. In certain rural villages in the Thar Desert, which at that time were notorious for their tense inter-caste relations, the performances managed to gather the whole village communities together to enjoy a relaxed and humorous atmosphere. While I thought that this already was an achievement in and of itself, the performance also raised a number of hard topics on the stage, discussing them bravely, skilfully and above all with humour. Songs and a number of short dramas brought the oppressed position of local women, corruption, treatment of malaria, and the consequences of opium addiction all to the stage. Being known by the villagers, the performers utilised the collision between their civil and stage roles in the making of drama. When a high caste woman appeared at the stage as a lowly sweeper, the audience was just silent.

Though I did not really know how to conceptualise what was going on, I felt that the performances created a space of being together that was different from the ordinary. More importantly, the performance event seemed to enable communication and interaction so that despite the prevailing disputes, coming and being together as a village was both possible and bearable. Furthermore, this came about through a performance that – to some extent – dealt with the very disputes that were dividing the villagers. The alienating effect of the drama worked – the comicality of the performance made it possible for everyone to keep his or her face, and not to take the performance too per-

sonally. I had a strong hunch that learning more about these kinds of dynamics could be particularly healthy for social workers, including those from far-off lands like me. When I was later considering doctoral studies, this experience returned to my mind. Before then, I had already been sporadically involved with various kinds of amateur artistic activities as well as studied a bit of applied drama in Finland. The more I thought of it, the combination of drama and social work felt both meaningful and magnetic enough topic for a doctoral dissertation.

In practice, the research started in the fall of 2000 when I received a scholarship from my university, which gave me the opportunity to travel to India with a short list of addresses of possible groups. Guided by the performances I had previously experienced, I sought out an NGO or possibly a theatre group that made theatre to advance its social work goals, and with which I could become engaged. Visiting first GVVS and then Saint Xavier's Social Service Society in Ahmedabad[12,] I travelled to the other side of the country to Kolkata (earlier known as Calcutta) to meet three friends of mine, all of whom were theatre professionals[13.] Our aim was to visit Natya Chetana, a theatre group we had heard of from the Finnish community theatre teacher Olli-Pekka Ahtiainen. He had met Natya Chetana's leader and director Subodh Pattnaik (hereafter referred to as Subodh) a few years earlier on a theatre festival in Kenya. However, in Kolkata, we found ourselves uncertain as to whether Natya Chetana still existed and if so, whether we could find the group. Despite several attempts at contact none of us had received any response from the group. Deciding to anyhow go and check, we headed to Bhubaneswar. To our surprise, some Natya Chetana volunteers were there, receiving us at the platform. They had just arrived from a long tour in Europe and had found our letters and faxes.

We checked ourselves into a hotel and made our way to meet the rest of the group. After few days' of becoming acquainted, we shifted to Natya Chetana's "hostel", a residential apartment at the outskirts of the town, in which there were altogether four rooms to accommodate unmarried women, men, and the two couples of the group. We fit in well, women in women's room and the only man of the team in men's room, sleeping on mattresses that after the monsoon smelled of mould. Daytime, we hastened to

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12   As part of its activities, Saint Xavier's Social Service Society was doing theatre and other creative work with children living in the slums of Ahmedabad. The organisation introduced me also to some local political and theatre activists, namely Hiren Gandhi, Saroop 'Behnji' and Sonal Mehta. Many thanks to them, as well as to Father Cedric from Saint Xavier's Social Service Society and Dr. Vasanthi Raman from the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, who all fed me well with their contacts and insights.

13   These friends were dramatists/writers Kirsi Porkka and Riikka Ala-Harja and community theatre teacher and practitioner Jouni Piekkari.

the countryside, to weddings, to numerous performances. In between we chatted with the group members and just enjoyed the homey atmosphere, feeling almost to be part of the team.

From the beginning of the trip, I had started to gravitate towards accentuating the drama rather than the NGO -aspect in the study. After having met Natya Chetana and seen two of its plays, *Kaatha* and *Sapanara Sapana*[14], I felt I had found my research subject. I liked Natya Chetana's plays because unlike some others, they were not forcefully propagandistic or marketing a particular ideology – if refraining from propaganda is not counted as an ideology. Nevertheless, they were strongly political by their choice of topics, showing what being a migrant labourer or a poor agricultural worker possibly means in present local-global economy. Both of the plays were thought provoking and touching in the way they examined the difficulties of their protagonists, yet they refrained from offering any action plan, leaving things open. It is one thing to tell the audience what to do and quite another to pose a question and ask the audience what they think they should do. In comparison to many NGO-performances with a more educative or edifying focus, I found the latter to be refreshing. Moreover, the plays of Natya Chetana suited my fairly unarticulated ideas about theatre as a tool for cultural or political sensibilisation or awakening, which could be essential also for social work, at least to social work seeking to be political. I felt this was my chance to witness work which is serious about facilitating social change but which does not predetermine its steps and direction.

After Natya Chetana I still visited one more organisation, the Village Community Development Society (VCDS) in Tamil Nadu, South India. Still determined that my choice for a group to study would be Natya Chetana, I met some Natya Chetana people again, this time in Chennai. For me, the crucial reasons to lean towards studying Natya Chetana were the kind of theatre I had seen Natya Chetana to do, as well as my feeling that the cooperation could practically work. I assumed that I would be able to adjust to the lifestyle of the group and, having spent plenty of time in India while being ill, saw

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14   The play *Kaatha* tells a story of a tribal couple that comes to Bhubaneswar to work as migrant workers and the exploitation they face. Sapanara Sapana examines how coastal mangrove forests are cut to make room for commercial shrimp cultivation. The play and the environmental circumstances it refers are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.2.

it as possible to remain in adequate health to be able to conduct the study[15]. When the Natya Chetana volunteers also considered that they could take me to stay with them and allow me to study them, the task was decided. My mission, finding a group to study was fulfilled and I returned home.

As the above itinerary conveys, many of the questions at the heart of the study, such how to understand social work within and in between different cultural contexts, or what is the specificity of theatre as social work, have been present, though initially in a raw form, throughout my journeys to India and Natya Chetana, and have motivated my wanting to know. With my interests, the obvious choice for a research methodology was ethnography, the approach marked most of all by its tradition of intensive participant observation and the aim to produce a culturally embedded account of the phenomena researched (e.g. Atkinson & Delamont & Housley 2008, 2; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995, 1, Stacey 1988, 22). In my case, the phenomenon was Natya Chetana and its work. Theatrical performance happens here and now. Even when the same play is performed consecutively, as on tours, the outcome and the audience's reaction is unique every time. I could not imagine any other way to learn to understand theatre as social work in another culture, paying attention to the process, context and organisation of the work, than by being present myself.

It took me some ten months to prepare myself to travel to Natya Chetana again to do my fieldwork "proper" (September 2001–May 2002), which has been later expanded, as it has turned out, by shorter trips to India, and Natya Chetana team members' visits from India to Finland. Before my departure to Orissa in September 2001, Subodh was in Finland just by himself in May and again two months later in July, this time with the full Natya Chetana performance team. The group gave a workshop on its theatre style in Suomusjärvi and performed at the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival as well as in Viikin-saari, Tampere[16.]

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15 If this sounds either insignificant or exaggerated I assure it is not. Though there are people with iron guts and plenty of good luck who never face any health problems in India, doing fieldwork, especially far from big cities (which often equals far from reliable medical services) can be challenging. From my earlier trips I had enough experience with amoebas, dysentery, and various infections, which of course bother locals alike, to know that continuous illnesses could endanger my work. I have reflected on the issue on a more general level in two articles (Ranta-Tyrkkö 2003 and 2005).

16 These visits were made possible thanks to Jouni Piekkari's organisational skills. He arranged for Subodh to conduct workshops for drama students at the Turku Polytechnic as well as to have an exhibition in Maailma Kylässä (World Village Festival) in May 2001. Subodh earned his flight tickets by his teaching, whereas the visit of the whole team was financially possible as an extension for the group's visit to Norway to the conference of IDEA, the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association.

2.2 ETHNOGRAPHY AS A RESEARCH METHOD AND IN THIS STUDY

Seeking for holistic understanding

Ethnography, literally description of the people (*ethnos*), is indebted to the discipline of anthropology, the science of researching and understanding human beings within their particular cultures and societies. While anthropologists sometimes refer to ethnography as one of the names for a research report and as a genre of writing, for others the word stands for the anthropologists' method and research practices. The main method of anthropology, applied these days also in various other disciplines, is ethnographic fieldwork, in other words intensive participant observation that serves as the main and most important source of information. The aim of "situated, long term empirical field research" is to achieve a close understanding on the phenomena studied (Malkki 2007, 164), the term 'field' refers to the community of human beings who are being studied (e.g. Srinivas, Shah & Ramaswamy 2002, 1)[17].

Ethnography is one of those research methods that divides academics. Though relatively little known beyond its sphere of practitioners, it is sometimes treated suspiciously (among other things) because of ethnographers' unwillingness to make generalisations, and the acknowledged subjectivity of the approach. Indeed, rather than only a straightforward matter of working, fieldwork is also about being in the world (Malkki 2007, 178) as "all ethnographic work implies a degree of personal engagement with the field and the "data"." (Atkinson, Delamont & Housley 2008, 52).[18] The other side of the coin is that many regard ethnography in many ways as an invaluable form of empiricism (ibid. 2; Malkki 2007, 166). Both time and intensity work for its benefit. It is a different thing to live several months 24 hours a day with a theatre group, writing notes, conducting interviews, and videoing on the way, than to only interview and/or depend on video documentation in one's attempt to understand both the work and the

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17 One fairly typical element in ethnographic research narratives is 'an arrival story', a narrative of how the researcher found his or her 'field'. My journey into Natya Chetana can be seen as one.

18 Thus, in ethnographic research the most important research "instrument" is often the researcher (e.g. Eriksen 2004, 46) with his or her professional capacities, communication skills and entire personality. This is also the possible weakness of the approach. At worst, as Ruth Behar writes, ethnography can be reduced to making notes about issues trivial or misunderstood, then packing and flying home. Other known problems of ethnographers include inadequate language skills, being biased because of one's gender, paying disproportionate (over) attention for the members of the elite of the community under study, or seeing only those aspects of local reality that are meaningful in relation to the researcher's earlier experience. (Behar 1996, 5-9.) However, while various defaults can have their place in ethnographic processes, they are seldom without researcher's critical awareness and reflection on them (e.g. Cerwonka & Malkki 2007).

group. Researching a theatre group, I have found ethnography's commitment to pay attention also to sensory, discursive, spatial, temporal, and material aspects of social life, and cultural and organisational complexity (Atkinson, Delamont & Housley 2008, 2-3) particularly important.

When a great deal of qualitative research has become "thin" in the sense of relying on a single preferred method of inquiry and the kind of data associated with it, such as interviews, ethnographies appeal to holism and capturing complexity both in terms of data and the phenomena studied (Atkinson, Delamont & Housley, 31-33.) Beyond the technical issues of data collection and related analytical procedures, the usual aim of ethnographies is to understand the entirety of the phenomena under study as much as possible, including the social organisation and cultural procedures as part of the picture. (E.g. ibid. 207-208.) At best, though relying on cases in particular social worlds, ethnographies can capture social processes, arrangements, and doings that are observable and applicable beyond their particular context. In other words, ethnographic research can also produce generic ideas, concepts and theories, which transcend the bounded contexts of particular social worlds (ibid. 220-221).

One of the strengths of ethnographic research is its ability to provide understanding about social practices and informal or unofficial knowledge that in everyday life gets taken for granted and easily passes without notice. Often anthropologists/ ethnographers in particular conduct studies on economically and politically marginalised places, people, and their stories, and may therefore be in a position to articulate criticisms and resistance that would otherwise remain undocumented and without wider recognition. (Gupta & Ferguson 1997, 36-37.) This latter idea comes close to the possibilities of ethnography as witnessing, testimony or advocacy[19], aspects of which are embedded also in this study. In a twofold process, when Natya Chetana's theatre is labelled on various levels by its specialisation in the economically and politically mar-

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19   The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences (entry: Advocacy in Anthropology) defines advocacy as "a variety of applied anthropology advancing the interests of a community, often as a plea on its behalf to one or more external agencies (Paine 1985; Wright 1988.)." Advocacy can encompass a broad agenda of social and political activism. Often the advocates try to improve the situation of a community, ideally in close collaboration with it. Usually they operate from an idealistic position, rejecting the supposed neutrality of science, and stressing moral and political issues instead. In anthropology, advocacy has been also criticised, mainly for supposedly abandoning scientific objectivity and reducing or abandoning anthropology to some form of social work or political action. The encyclopedia notes that all anthropologists are advocates in some sense: First of all, the decision not to act also involves politics and morality (no scientist is apolitical and amoral); secondly, anthropology should have some relevance to the communities researched; and thirdly, many anthropologists are involved in advocacy because they are sincerely concerned with applying knowledge on the behalf of the communities who are indispensable for their research, among other things as an expression of genuine reciprocity, and to avoid dehumanising their hosts and themselves. (Ibid. 204-206.)

ginalised and by their stories in Orissa, my attempt is to document and discuss Natya Chetana's work. So doing my work testifies to Natya Chetana's work, namely making performances about incidents, processes and people that the group has encountered and witnessed in Orissa. While both Natya Chetana and I witness and advocate, our intended audiences are different. Natya Chetana tries to influence the minds of its audiences in Orissa, including the wider public as well as those in power. In my case, as common to ethnographic work, changes of location (between Finland and Orissa) have given me opportunities to see also my own location from distance. My primary audience being social work academics and practitioners, my aim is to challenge and discuss aspects of selected social work discussions with the insights I have gained with Natya Chetana.

The subjective nature of ethnographic accounts should not conceal the fact that "ethnographic knowledge production draws on theory to interpret cultural phenomena as they are encountered" (Cerwonka & Malkki 2007, 118). Understanding the phenomena under study takes place in dialogue with theory: Ethnography is simultaneously critical theoretical practice, quotidian ethical practice, and improvisational practice. Alone, neither effort nor knowledge of methods guarantee success in fieldwork. Needed are good communication skills and readiness to improvise. (Cerwonka 2007, 20-22; Malkki 2007, 162-164). This is because the researcher is seldom in a position to control the circumstances in which the study takes place. Rather, s/he has to adjust and do what is possible within the situation at hand. For example, my tightly scheduled trip to Natya Chetana in December 2008 to conclude this study was supposed to be spent in discussions with Natya Chetana's director Subodh and others willing and capable of stealing time from their other duties for such activity. However, the day after I reached Orissa Subodh fell ill with cerebral malaria and was hospitalised, while the rest of the Natya Chetana team was to rehearse a play on their own and prepare for a tour during a hectic schedule. Cerebral malaria is no joke. In a high fever and under heavy medication, and weak for days after the worst was over, Subodh was in no shape for any lengthy discussions. On the other hand, many people came to see him in the nursing home[20] where he stayed, and in which a number of close people were anyhow needed 24 hours a day to take care of him. After it started to seem that Subodh was slowly getting better, I dared to hold some short conversations for my research purposes in the hospital corridor outside his room. When I met past or present Natya Chetana volunteers of whom or whose work I had written about, I showed them the passages in question both to hear their critique as well as for information. In this way, though not able to follow my

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20 In India a common term for an inpatient clinic in which people are receiving treatment and recovering from their illnesses.

initial plans, I was able to utilise the visit also for study purposes. And in the end, of which there was no guarantee a day or two earlier, Subodh and I managed to discuss two central chapters on Natya Chetana, and it was even possible to attend Natya Chetana's performance in the Nandikar theatre festival in Kolkata.

Liisa Malkki (Cerwonka & Malkki 2007, 79) states that "the living social context of ethnographic research is *expected* to transform one's original or framing questions". In my search for tools to locate, explicate, and more deeply understand what I had found out about Natya Chetana's work through my fieldwork, I ended up using a wide array of discussions. If I had a different orientation, the study could have remained narrower, focusing primarily on Natya Chetana's plays, which now receive relatively little attention as such. In retrospect, my realisation is that the present contextual spreading took place partly because of the ethnographic method. The experience in the field urged me to seek other kinds of connections and grounding that I had not used before. Accordingly, though at different levels and in a different tone than the actual Natya Chetana chapters, Chapters Three and Four on social work and theatre differ from more conventional qualitative research reports in the sense that they convey not only background information and contextualisation, but also incorporate findings and insights that were born of the cause of the research work.

Between anthropology and social work

In Finland, ethnographic studies in social work (e.g. Forsberg 1998; Korpinen 2008; Kuronen 1993, 1999; Pösö 1993, 2004) are largely profiled as institutional ethnographies. Though non-institutional 'street' ethnographies are also occasionally done in the social sciences, in particular regarding young people or addictions, these are usually not distinctively social work studies. The situation reflects the character of Finnish social work as deeply bound with the institutional, often bureaucratic structures of the welfare state or, as critics would say, what still remains of it. Accordingly, the institutional context influences the themes and positioning of the studies undertaken to the extent that social work research in institutions is often in proportion with the aims and practices of the institution in question. From the perspective of ethnographic research, fairly closed institutional research settings seem to enable studies based on relatively short fieldwork periods and limited amount of data. This further enables working with the entirety of data in a systematic and detailed way – it is for instance possible to transfer all the data under analysis into a textual form. Even when the researcher's presence at the field is more limited, ethnographies tend to bring forth issues that would be hard to grasp by other means of qualitative or quantitative research. By and large, however,

more extensive ethnographies approaching the anthropological end of the genre are basically missing from Finnish social work research.

In contrast with the kind of social work ethnographies, in which ethnography marks acquiring data through participant observation for fairly limited periods of time, or in otherwise more narrowly defined settings, my own work with Natya Chetana in India has many of the elements characteristic to traditional anthropological work. Among others, these include travelling to distant land, immersing oneself and learning to navigate adequately in a new cultural context, and at the end producing a culturally embedded account that is by nature comparative research on the matters of cultural and social life. Indeed, studying Natya Chetana I have had one foot in social anthropology while the other has been seeking a foothold, finally finding some reasonably solid options in social work research. Therefore, this study represents anthropologically oriented social work research to the extent that it could also be applied anthropology in social work.

Above and beyond a method of acquiring data, for me an important aspect of ethnography is that it gives the researcher an opportunity to use one's own personhood and experiences as a condition for knowledge claims (see also Malkki & Cerwonka 2007). Moreover, as long as different theoretical or methodological approaches are more complementary than contradictory to one another, ethnography allows utilising a variety of findings and insights. It has served me as a holistic way to orientate both in relation to Natya Chetana as well as to the theoretical discussions that I have relied on in constructing theoretical locations and grounding for my points of interest. This matches Sarah Pink's (2001, 18) conception of ethnography as an approach to experiencing, interpreting and presenting culture and society that informs and is informed by sets of different disciplinary agendas and theoretical principles. Accordingly, I cannot help thinking that though fieldwork in this research refers to my time spent with Natya Chetana, certain aspects of this research process started years earlier. Although I had no knowledge of the times to come when I lived with the gandhians in 1990s, the experience has paved way for the present research, and has served me as a foundation on which I have been able to rely and build in new circumstances, and when reading various texts[21]. As a consequence, when I started this study, I had already imbibed a fair amount of information about Indian society and was from the beginning somewhat acquainted with everyday life in India, including customs and codes of behaviour. Yet

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21 An elderly Indian social scientist and politician, P. C. Joshi, has reflected the renewing nature of fieldwork thinking back to a study he conducted in villages of Uttar Pradesh in early 1950s: Even if conscious only of a fraction of the experience at any time, in later years when his theoretical perspective had widened and deepened he was able to reconstruct it in response to new theoretical formulations and refinements. (Joshi 2002, 77.)

I had plenty to learn and much to adjust to. At the time of writing this learning has resulted in insights on how could I have acted possibly better, starting from being more determined in seeking a local language teacher.

2.3   INFORMANTS AND ENGAGEMENTS

The main informant Subodh and others

As a team of artistic work and lifestyle Natya Chetana relies heavily on Subodh Patnaik, the leader-director who is the main visionary and backbone of the group. He is the one who originally thought about the idea of Natya Chetana, and the only one left from the founding team of 1986. Artistic work as well as the group's relatively atypical communal life style requires vision, confidence and leadership. Though Subodh is not the sole carrier of these virtues in Natya Chetana, it is fair to say that throughout the years he has more than others embodied, nurtured and demanded these qualities (also from others), as well as created space and scopes for others to join the process called Natya Chetana. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, the above does not mean that others would not have their say in the group. Theatre is teamwork, and in Natya Chetana every team member has to speak on his or her own behalf, and carry one's own share of responsibilities. With the course of years, collectively done ideological and practical choices have brought about changes in the team, inviting new kinds of volunteers and urging old ones to decide about their staying or leaving. All said, Natya Chetana is highly identified with Subodh and vice versa. Of all the Natya Chetana team members Subodh is undisputedly the main informant of this study. He is the person with whom I have discussed most extensively and to whom this study thus relies on most. This is not only because of his position and in-depth knowledge of Natya Chetana, but also due to his personal interest and endurance for such discussions.

A common weakness of ethnographies conducted in another culture is that they tend to draw heavily on the knowledge of the members of the educated elite and thus remain partial when it comes to the studied community as a whole. Such criticism is obviously valid in this case as well; I have not discussed equally with everyone in Natya Chetana whereas Subodh fits into the category of elite because of his position, university education and upper caste background. However, it is worth noting is that Natya Chetana team members have on occasion found the idea of everyone equally representing the group to outsiders somewhat disconcerting. Furthermore, though I received valuable information from individuals who have been involved in the group for weeks or months as well as from complete outsiders, such information has its limitations compared to

in-depth discussions with those who have been involved for several years or since the beginning, like Subodh. Yet, as essential as Subodh's contribution has been, it should not conceal the fact that I have also spent a great deal of time with others in Natya Chetana, and that on the whole the theatre group has been actively engaged with the study. Our discussions have evolved throughout the years, with people commenting on the issues at stake from their own respective standpoints at that particular point in time. Accordingly, quotations from Subodh or other Natya Chetana team members should be read as views from the midst of the process, not as static truths. In general, informants' accounts are not, as Atkinson, Delamont, and Housley (2008, 38) remind us, independent of cultural conventions and genres of narration, rather they enact a variety of biographical, self-presentational, and explanatory work in a given time and situation.

Thinking of the Natya Chetana team members as my informants, the research has, as more or less the rule in ethnographies, meant establishing and maintaining relationships, including friendships. As the group members have mostly been busy in their daily tasks, my knowledge of Natya Chetana has developed largely through informal discussions and hanging around. Still, in a group one does not establish equally close relationships with everyone. In May 2002 when we all sat together on the roof in the heat of the deepening night and evaluated my stay before my departure, Santosh, one of the long-time volunteers of Natya Chetana condensed our relationship from his side "like a working relationship". Even though we had spent a lot of time together, we had not gotten to know each other very well. Moreover, even though our relationship still continues in another form, at the time of the fieldwork the known fact was that I was a temporary visitor.

In a research like this the borderlines between the personal and professional, and the public and private inescapably blur. The photographs that I have taken serve as a practical example: a single photo can serve equally well as a tourist, friendship, or professional document, and be interpreted differently in each context (for more about multiple lives of photographs in research, see Pink 2001). Though different in each case, my relationship to each Natya Chetana team member was rather straightforward. Besides Subodh, I spent lot of time with his wife Mamata, our friendship and conversations being boosted by Subodh's and Mamata's fluency in English, our next door location, and many parallel interests. Others in the team "strong in English" included Bebi, Kunia, Debraj, Santosh and Debi. With others I communicated mostly with a mixture of English, Oriya and gestures, with varying results but getting along rather well. Even with those with whom my verbal communication was not so strong, namely Chuni, Dhira Bhai, Sanjaya, Purna, Nibaran, Mongu, Tutu and Jalandhar, I spent a lot of time together, learned a lot and had a lot of fun as well few more heated debates. Communication does not always require very many spoken words common.

Engaged informants

Natya Chetana collectively decided to let me stay with the team. This is not insignificant due to the fact that throughout the study, despite the generally hectic life style the group leads, Natya Chetana has been supportive of this research and ready to organise time and space for it. For some of the team members the interest in the study also exceeded their involvement in Natya Chetana so that even after leaving the group they have remained willing to read my drafts of chapters. Clearly, the primary idea of the team members' involvement has not been to control my study, rather I have received good suggestions about who to interview and approach outside of the group as well.[22] Apparently, one of the reasons behind such a positive attitude is that in a way the group itself has acted as team of ethnographers researching their own culture, or the cultures of Orissa. As discussed later at greater length, most play making processes necessitate fact finding and background research in the areas and communities the plays are about to be performed. The results of such background research surveys are then embedded in the group's performances. In addition, the group has invested time and effort in book-form scholarly presentations, such as the book about Orissan folk music instruments (Natya Chetana 2002, academic research by Santosh Lenka). In a nutshell, Natya Chetana has plenty of understanding for research work. If anything, it is my way of doing research that sometimes raised eyebrows because of my habit of talking to anyone as well as broad interests that certain Natya Chetana team members occasionally feared were too unsystematic for academic research.

Wishing to keep Natya Chetana informed of my research, I have explained my work to the group when possible and had couple of joint sessions with the team in which I have explained my ideas and then received reflections, feedback and suggestions from the team members. One such group discussion took place in the beginning of February 2002, after my several month long stay with the group. For Natya Chetana, that was a time full of worries. Subodh was still recovering from a severe traffic accident, which had occurred a few months earlier, and the unsolvable financial problems of the moment made the group's future look gloomy, dampening everyone's spirits. Instead of one session, the discussion, interrupted from time to time by phone calls and visitors, finally took place over two consecutive days. The group sank into long conversation

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22   Malkki reminds us that "the ethnographer's relationship with an informant is not authored or defined by the ethnographer alone". Informants have their own reasons and motivations just like researchers. Some just want to be helpful, others may have desire for company, intellectual curiosity, need to feel important and so forth. The tone of the motivation does not necessarily mean that the informants would be less truthful or authentic than otherwise, or than the ethnographer in his or her business. (Cerwonka & Malkki 2007, 94.)

ILLUSTRATION 3. Natya Chetana listening to my review of the ongoing research, February 2002.

about the very topics I had posed but the discussion was in Oriya, which I was unable to follow at that level of complexity. For instance, my question about whether theatre can have a role in social change turned into a long discussion about the role of methodology as a medium in theatre (with the conclusion that methodology is after all only a medium, not an end itself). The vivid conversation was so lively that it was not possible to trans-late everything to me. On the other hand, during the same session we had also more systematic moments with tables drawn on paper sheets tacked to the wall. Everyone suggested good individuals to interview about specific topics, both within the team and outside it. The group also made a list of reports and other material to be found for my purposes from the group's office. Later on I shared my insights and papers with Subodh in particular, but also with other interested team members. When I was finally able to get this study closer to its present shape, I travelled to Orissa twice (in August 2007 and December 2008) and went through most of the content with Subodh, and smaller bits with some of the others. Our method of working was that I read aloud a section or two, then Subodh gave his feedback and reflections, which we discussed further.

As Malkki writes, calling the people whom we study, from whom we learn and who are our source of data 'informants' may conceal the ways how they often offer more than mere data, or information in a raw form for the digestion of the specialist researcher. Often the informants "have critical or analytical insights about the project as a whole".

Her point is that especially in the attempts to understand, "talking with one's "inform-ants" at many different analytical levels is surely important." Giving oneself up to such discussions does not mean that the researcher would or should be "an empty vessel". (Cerwonka & Malkki 2007, 57.) I have found conversations about my ongoing research with the Natya Chetana team or its individual members extremely valuable. They have provided me opportunities to share what I think, or am about to start thinking, or what I have written about the group. There is also a strong ethical imperative, especially for the latter reason. Sharing my views with Natya Chetana has also helped me to understand whether and if my writing has any relevance for Natya Chetana, as well as to fill in miss-ing data and correct what I have possibly misunderstood or just not got right in the first place. My feeling is that this kind of sharing has made our mutual relationship more equal. On occasions, rather than needing to be fed all the time with information, I have been able to contribute with my book learning and an outsider's perspective.

In short, it is justified to say that this study is backed with by plenty of collective and individual effort from Natya Chetana's side. Grateful for the participation that has often meant invaluable comments and suggestions, but also the hard work during tired hours, it should be nonetheless abundantly transparent that the accountability of the study is my responsibility, not Natya Chetana's. This research report is my construction, and its opinions and claims about Natya Chetana are entirely mine. As such my views can at best focus only on selected aspects of Natya Chetana and its work, and can make no claims to speak for the group or its individual participants. In my view, acknowledging this kind of partiality specifies the terms and area of qualification of research. As Sarah Pink (2001, 18) writes, ethnography does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographer's own experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced. Before summing up the data and analysis part of the study I will therefore illuminate aspects of my experiences that determine and frame the knowledge production circumstances of the study.

2.4 ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK AS A WAY OF BEING AND RELATING

New name and new territory

I was not the first European participant in Natya Chetana's life. Before me the group had had, for example, a couple of drama students from the Netherlands staying with the team and participating in their theatre making. From Natya Chetana's side, living

together was the condition for my coming; the idea of me living outside, on my own, and visiting the group on a regular basis was unacceptable to the group.

After my arrival in September 2001, Natya Chetana and Subodh in particular was busy to find me an Oriya name. I was not exactly enthusiastic about the idea to begin with; my first name is not particularly difficult for most Indians to pronounce. Once I realised that there was no escape, I did my best to have a say in the choice of the name. We came up with Sanju, a local name sounding not that different from my Finnish name. Natya Chetana's idea behind renaming me was to help locals to relate to me in a more relaxed way. The nickname has been in use ever since, and actually it is me who keeps using it, especially in my correspondence with Natya Chetana. However, my initial uneasiness reminds me of how adjusting to group life meant certain compromises. I had to make room for friendly but not always invited trespassing in what I was used to conceiving as my personal space. I have obviously practised similar rights to far greater extent by invading and witnessing the lives of Natya Chetana volunteers. In the form of memories, interviews, photographs and diary notes my observations and shared moments make part of my data, and I have needed to find my ways to use them discreetly.

From the beginning, Natya Chetana integrated me tightly into its everyday life, which I embraced wilfully despite certain problems. I certainly did not have problems in 'getting into the field'. From my perspective, living with Natya Chetana was an advantage, though it also outlined my scope of action and my access to people knowing the group. My understanding is that from Natya Chetana's perspective integrating me into the everyday life of the group was the best possible solution to guarantee me an intimate but also sympathetic perspective to the life and work of the group. Moreover, it reduced the group members' worries about my safety and coping with the local conditions. Consequently, Natya Chetana was well aware of my doings and able guide me. As I noted, this did not mean that the group guarded me or narrowed down my contacts to other people, though it did not send me to its worst defamers either. The latter, in my view, is every informant's right if not duty; to adhere to the kind of representations one can identify with.

Several anthropologists working in India have observed that there the choice of the people under study brings along boundaries and limitations, in particular in getting to know other people. For instance, the caste status or religious background of the researcher or his/her close associates, such as interpreter, landlord or domestic servant, may have an impact on the kind of information passed to him or her, or to whom the researcher has access. (E.g. Berreman 2007, 149-155; Béteille 1975, 102-111.) Even in situations in which there are no evident hindrances in communication, the researcher can be a pawn in a larger game of quarrels and grudges hidden from him or her (Berreman 2007). Accordingly, my obvious connection to Natya Chetana must have influ-

enced the ways people knowing Natya Chetana perceived and treated me. Again, this has in many instances been to my benefit; I have enjoyed good access to local film stars, esteemed theatre personalities, teachers and social activists. Though the setting may have added to the politeness of the people I have met, many of them were giving their opinions and comments freely. Moreover, as the following account of an incident with two local traders shows, attempts to determine my contacts and behaviour were by no means limited to Natya Chetana or the group's core areas of influence.

With Natya Chetana, I often walked to the nearby market to make my little purchases and ended up favouring one friendly and service-oriented shopkeeper. One day his next door colleague started to rage at my favourite shopkeeper in my presence. The reason was me. The next door man accused 'my' man of stealing a customer from him. I found the whole altercation ridiculous. The other shop was often closed and lacked the kind of products I was mostly looking for, such as dry-cell batteries or chocolate within the 'best before' limits. Its owner, however, counted me as 'his' customer. This he justified by the fact that in the beginning of my stay I had occasionally bought cold drinks from his shop together with one Natya Chetana volunteer who was his distant relative. My conclusion from the conflict was that either my little cash was far more important for the shopkeepers than I had ever thought of, or then my custom had high value for other reasons. As Westerners are generally assumed to be rich, it is possible that my regular visits increased to the status of the shop, or evoked jealousy in other shopkeepers. Moreover, my friendly relations with the other shopkeeper gave proof of his capacity to establish contacts with foreigners, and who knows what other explanations people entertained about my preference for his shop. As different kinds of transactions are obviously important, be they social or in cash, next I say a few words about my exchanges with Natya Chetana.

Money matters and other exchanges

My life together with Natya Chetana has involved various kinds of transactions on a symbolical level as well as in cash and kind. Sometimes the giver has been Natya Chetana, sometimes me. I have, for instance, been equipped with proper attire, including Natya Chetana 'official' garments[23] as well as a matching set of *sari* and *kurta* for my spouse Mika and me after we got married. Correspondingly, the team of Natya Chetana has be-

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23 A 'uniform' outfit (of similar cloth), that enables distinguishing the team from crowd, is in practice either a shirt of a set of clothes (for men a waistcoat and kurta, and for women the salwar kameez or sari with Natya Chetana's logo stitched or printed).

come familiar with Finnish chocolates and other markers of 'Finnishness'. When with Natya Chetana, I have for the main paid a fair price for my maintenance, as I have not wanted to add to the group's financial troubles by being another mouth to be fed. This has been my choice; I have been made clear that Natya Chetana's hospitality covers me.

While the above belong to the sphere of appropriate behaviour in most close relationships, I have also been involved with Natya Chetana's finances on a different scale at more official levels. I have once been active in suggesting and writing a proposal for development cooperation between Natya Chetana and the (these days somewhat defunct) Community Theatre Association NOW in Finland, a project which also brought Natya Chetana funding for specified activities for a few months time. In Finland, I have been organising workshops to finance Natya Chetana team members' trips to Finland or coordinating the group's program and schedule. From my side these activities have served as a way to utilise my contacts and organising skills in order to perform work that I myself appreciate, as well as to meet my friends/informants. I have also given my opinion, when and if certain foundations or educational institutes have asked, about Natya Chetana. For Natya Chetana, the trips abroad have provided chances to interact face to face with old friends and make new ones. Occasionally they have also served as opportunities for receiving small-scale voluntary cash donations as a kind of performance fees, or by selling the group's publications, which has then further enabled the work done back home in Orissa. What's more, invitations abroad have not gone unnoticed in Orissan theatre circles, and have thus raised the group's local esteem. Further, it is likely that having me or other Westerners staying with Natya Chetana has also had some symbolic value for the group and helped in its small part in local struggles for recognition and status. Mostly, however, this is a front fought by other means such as invitations and participation in national and international festivals. On my behalf I have gained a lot, among other things I have collected material for this doctoral dissertation. Natya Chetana makes this book a study of real people (cf. Harrington 2003, 603.). My relationship to Subodh and many other Natya Chetana team members, past or present, is considerate, and on an emotional level binds me to do what I can to help them and vice versa. They are by no means expecting miracles and are sensitive to my life situation.

In my negotiations with Natya Chetana our financial imbalance has been an issue several times. Even in this realm things are not entirely black and white, with India as only a place of poverty and underdevelopment or Finland one of riches. Having lived in relatively basic, old-fashioned conditions in Finland, some aspects of my standard of living actually rose with Natya Chetana (meaning I got access to a proper bathroom inside the house and so forth). However, in Orissa my Ph.D scholarships, which in Finland are a far cry from average salaries and give no scope for any carefree consumption,

allowed me to afford basically anything I considered useful, needed or just wanted to buy. Such a position is totally beyond the financial range of an average Natya Chetana volunteer. My consumerist capacity became visible in my choice and need to buy books to which I would have otherwise had hardly any access from Finland, as illustrated in the following excerpt from my diary.

> Finally, I found a reasonable history book on Orissa, a brand new hardback by Orient Longman, Situating Social History of ORISSA, rupees 380. Subodh nearly had a stroke when he heard the price – I was happily introducing this book as I though he might be interested in it too: "Who Indian is reading these?" [Meaning, what Indian could afford these books?] Well, now they are all recommending a high school edition to me by some state famous history guy, and also planning to smuggle me to the library to see some cheaper books. (17.1.2002.)

My different alignment to owning and wearing things became clear after Subodh had been in the serious traffic accident, which nearly took his life, and brought about many unsteady, frightening days and nights in and out of the intensive care unit of the local hospital and even after he returned home. In the accident Subodh hit his head dangerously with the consequence that he remained unconscious for several days. As I often travelled in Bhubaneswar on the backseat of motorbike or moped driven by someone from the Natya Chetana team, I thought that I should learn a lesson from Subodh's accident and buy myself a helmet. I even considered that as a helmet is a rare scene on the road, I could be one of those who stubbornly start to use it and from my little part publicise its use[24]. I came to realise, however, that the use of helmet seemed to be heavily loaded with social meanings that I had not taken into account.

When finally home from the hospital after the accident, but still in such a bad shape that he could not shift the point of his gaze without having his whole field of vision disturbed, Subodh strongly opposed my helmet-buying intentions when he heard of them. Though unable to move on his own after the accident, he convinced me that no helmet is needed in Indian traffic culture, which is based on continuous negotiation and generally low speeds. Furthermore, my whiteness makes other road users drive more carefully. My left arm was still scabbed after a minor accident weeks earlier due to a scooter tyre blowout, and I found numerous counter arguments. In the end, the discussion made clear that for Subodh safety was not the number one issue in the use of a helmet. Besides he was clear in saying that he was not opposing safety as such.

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24 Already those days the law was that everyone must use helmet, but in general the law was neither obeyed nor controlled. If policemen happened to be short of money and decided to hold a raid, the explanation I received for the occasional crackdowns, one could usually either bribe the policeman or rent a helmet from the roadside to pass a checkpoint.

What he wanted me to understand is that a helmet is seen as a symbol of wealth and privileged position of its user. If two people are on a motorbike, the helmet should be on the one who drives. If both have helmets, the driver should have the better one. If I, a tall and white Finn just sit on the back with a good and expensive helmet, people cannot but wonder why I travel by motorbike when I could obviously afford a taxi. A good, (by my standards) safe and sensible helmet means that I am so rich that I can throw away money on such items, and it makes most people feel that no equal friendship is possible with me. Rather than safety, which may after all be a matter of destiny, Subodh was concerned about my relationship with the local people. From his perspective, the helmet was one of the things that allowed scopes for impression management (of which see, e.g., Berreman 2007, 147; Ganesh 1993, 132-135), a common headache for ethnographers[25].

Ethnographic research is a fruitful ground for self-evaluation. Regarding money matters, one of my personal findings borne of the life together with Natya Chetana was to acknowledge, to my own surprise, how habituated I was to be a consumer. On occasions when I crept up to the nearby market or downtown, I delighted in the chance *to be able to choose* what I wanted, be it a scarf, coconut or kilo of guavas. To have power to decide over such matters made me feel like a doer and brushed up my mood – as if the capacity to make these kinds of choices had made me a more free and independent being. I later found this matching with Anne M. Cronin's ideas (2000) of consuming as the realm of (forced) individualism for Western women. Consuming is discursively attached to ideas about self-realisation, autonomy, choices and willpower to change, and therefore many women try to approach the kind of ideals they entertain about themselves through their consumer choices. Then there is the element of fulfilling one's desires. In Natya Chetana the circumstances (which are oftentimes either non-existent or limited opportunities for consumption, or choices about what to eat) made me put such projects aside, which made me feel sometimes somewhat undermanned or bored. At the same time, realising how conditioned I was to practice self-determination through consumer acts was in many ways healthy.

In my view the above episodes of finances and consumption are informative regarding the positions I and Natya Chetana group members had in relation to one another in certain fundamental material and cultural aspects that matter also for the grounding of

25 In the end, I bought a not too fancy duplicate (a cheap copy of a branded product) helmet hoping it would make itself useful should an accident happen. Because of my lack of trust both with the helmet and local traffic (it happened more than once that I saw somebody abandoned for dead or unconscious on the road), I finally started to move more regularly by taxi. After all, I really was able to afford it. Later the very same helmet has served me during my later visits to Natya Chetana, so at least it gives me the needed sense of having taken some safety precautions.

this study. It is anyhow also worth reminding that in the eyes of the more well-to-do members of the local cultural elite there was nothing to envy in my capital or lifestyle, nor do I think that Natya Chetana team members wanted to change seats with me. When I have visited friends and families of Natya Chetana volunteers and answered polite inquiries about my parents' professions, more often than not the discussion has ended into a recognisable silence. During most of the study process my now retired father was unemployed after some twenty plus years as a welder in various factories, while my mother worked as a cleaner. The sons and daughters of an Indian unemployed father and a cleaning lady mother just do not roam around other continents writing dissertations. (Indeed, as my case attests, Nordic welfare states have been highly successful in reducing class and income based disparities. As the political concensus about the desirability and meaning of the Nordic model is not a certainty, the present challenge is how to develop and maintain the model, and not to give up what is valuable in it.)

Corporeality is part of knowledge production

Relationships and communication are the backbone of ethnographic field research. They are influenced by the settings in which they take place, and stored not only as various kinds of records but also in the corporeal and sensory memory of the participants. For me the memories of fieldwork that quickly come to mind are flashbacks of conversations on the floor, or me sitting behind my computer and talking with Subodh at the midnight hour, tiredness turning to spiritedness or vice versa, our topic powerful enough to make us continue still a while. Though Finland is lacking many of the smells of India while having others, the smoke that the winds sometimes bring to Finland from the summer time forest fires in Russia boost my mood, strangely enough, for the smell awakens the sensory repertoire that in my experience is marked by the label India. Indeed, I am afraid that in the form of burning garbage and exhaust gas from tightly packed, "please horn" decorated cars and rickshaws, the cloud of pollutants covering South Asia has become an inescapable part of my field work experience. So has the beautiful, ephemeral sight of flowers flowing down when the flag of India unfolds in flag hoisting. But what kind of love and pride can a foreigner, who basically doubts the very virtues of nationalism, feel for India?

While senses, emotions, and corporal memory make no unparadoxical equation, corporeality is one key to the temporality of research. In long-lasting studies, places and people are bound to change. For instance, Bhubaneswar is no longer the town I got to know on my first visits, a fact that tells its own story about the pace of change in many Southern cities. Since 2000, the population of the town has nearly doubled, and

shopping malls, rivalling each other with glitter, have entered the town. The national highway that cuts through the town has been lifted above the town traffic by various ramps and bridges, and its widening has eaten away some of temples that used to be next to it. In its proximity, not far away from the residential area where Natya Chetana's office is located, the earlier sleepy streets bustle with life and new restaurants, one of them serving traditional Orissa food. And when in 2001 mobile phones were precious and rare, now nearly everyone seems to be carrying one.

But corporeality entails much more than smells, sights, or sense of space. While academic tradition tends to be sceptic towards the researcher's "naked subjectivity" (Willis 1980, 90, quoted in Malkki 2007, 174) and fear that his or her personal sensory and corporeal experiences contaminate the research, in ethnographic fieldwork gathering information involves the researcher's physical being. As Cerwonka writes, "fieldwork is less amenable to the reproduction of the binary split between mind and body". (Cerwonka & Malkki 2007, 152-154.) Further, a researcher is not, nor does the temporal and socially situated nature of ethnographic participant observation allow him or her to be, "a fly on the wall". Instead, one has to work with what one is given, including one's gender, age, temperament, histories and so on. (Malkki 2007, 174-177.) To Cerwonka (2007, 154) this is an *opportunity* for understanding ideas and identities. It is no coincidence that in the academy ethnography and corporeality are often discussed in highly similar terms, such as how do we approach the world around us, how do we communicate, how does our own life span affect the ways how we experience our bodies or ethnographies, and how do we produce ourselves (Coffey 1999, 59).

As an observer I have been aware of my own as well as other people's flesh. At times, this awareness has been multilayered, even sarcastic. For example, when I videotaped the rehearsal process of the play *Boli* in the humid, up to 40 degrees Celsius monsoon heat, it occurred to my me that my research motives can be made fun of once I am back home. Although to me they were persons, not just bodies, the inescapable fact was that for the most part my videos exuded sweating, scantily dressed young men rehearsing the play. What did the young volunteers then see? My estimation is that by then I had already stopped carrying that frozen smile of a researcher who is desperate to look simultaneously interested, empathetic, and easy to approach (see Coffey 1999, 73). Actually, though I seldom felt particularly tense socially when with Natya Chetana, the photographs that Sanjaya and Subodh snapped during the very first days of my stay show a tight-jawed and frozen-looking pale being. Later photographs have surprised me too. Did I really look that tall, skinny and old when compared to most of the others? While the answer is yes, I can mark a certain, though not exactly contradictory discrepancy between the photographs and my experience. Even when the photographs do not fully match with my memories of the situation, they attain something else, which I can also

recognise as valid. To my juniors, I was the "aunt" (*apa*) from Europe hanging around. As I have been a regular practitioner of yoga since mid-1990s, on Natya Chetana's request I turned also into the yoga instructor of the play making camp on occasions when it served the needs of the rehearsal process. In our continuum of being interactively together this surely had an impact on our corporeal coexistence. In the yoga classes that took place in morning time I taught the poses by showing and explaining them, or occasionally adjusting them, and directed our focus into the highly corporeal matters of breath, posture and concentration.

In the kind of ethnography that I have undertaken, corporeality and knowledge production have gone hand-in-hand. In Natya Chetana, even in my moments of being 'purely' and only an observer, I have been visible and exposed to being observed and interpreted, to be photographed or videotaped. Due to my inadequate skills in local languages I have been highly dependent on body language, including scarce or wordless communication both as an observer as well as in my attempts to communicate myself. I have been interpreted on the basis of my outlook, gestures and actions. While my body has inspired comments both from my informants and others, it has also demanded my attention, particularly in taking health matters seriously. The conclusion is that one simply cannot do away the body. As much as fieldwork relies on issues like interviews and writing field notes, it also relies on other equally mundane but less written aspects of everyday life: what and how the researcher eats and drinks, the ways s/he dresses up, does laundry, conveys or is interpreted to convey attitudes and stances in interaction and gestures. Amanda Coffey also points out that both the researcher and the researched are identified by their bodies, their personal size and shape, hair, skin, ways to move, personal charisma, their scent, the colour of their voice. Their corporeality influences their location in the social order as well as the atmosphere of that order. (Coffey 1999.) Indeed, Natya Chetana team members entertained me by acting out each other's mannerisms and teaching me the general messages that different gestures and poses convey. A person in a submissive position cannot stand grand in front of those more powerful than him or her, s/he better squat on the ground. In India a woman cannot sit legs spread apart, unless she is a foreigner or "from Mumbai" (and purposefully provocative). *Namaskaar* (the greeting) has to be made properly, if sloppy or crooked, it is disrespectful. It is for all these reasons that in particular in the case of research methods, which rely on participant observation, that the body/corporality has to be written about. But even the most paper-flavoured academics do have bodies that remember, think, interpret, and do the writing job.

In the field the ethnographer is observed and judged as a gendered being, and gender affects access to people or places. My gender has been often far from clear to the local people in India. I assume that this has been because of my different size and skin

colour when compared to local women, as well as the fact that especially on my first trips to India I wore often 'men's clothes', *kurta* (long shirt) and *pyjama* (pants). Learning my lesson, my India-wear these days is usually women's *salwar kamez* or even *sari*, and I get mistaken as a man far less often. One proof of my better acculturation to local codes is that at first sight locals in Bhubaneswar nowadays suspect me to be either a Hare Krishna devotee or a student of Odissi dance (these are the usual reasons why Western-ers stay longer in the town). Still elderly people especially are sometimes uncertain of my sex. All of this has helped me to realise how 'my' gender is not disconnected from my body even if interpreted differently than my intended message. My vague gender has then added to my local friends' burden to explain my being and manners to other local people. As 'the field' is always gendered (Bell & Kaplan & Karim 1993), gender can be an important factor even when the researcher does not him/herself pay attention to the gendered aspects of the situation.

Gender is connected with sexuality and marital status. Pat Caplan has pointed that in the field a woman ethnographer has only a limited scope to define her own sexual-ity. Rather, others may be keen to define it on her behalf, and sometimes despite her. (Caplan 1993, 24.) At the point when I was preparing myself for the fieldwork with Natya Chetana, it seemed as if all the female ethnographers discussing their field-work as *women* in South Asia were married, which was strongly positive in relation to their social status and acceptability in the field. The only exception was Sarah Caldwell (1999) who, during the course of her fieldwork and to the dismay of the local people, fell in love with a local man and divorced her husband. In 2001, single and in my early thirties, I was by Orissan middle class standards past the best age for marriage. As re-lationships between men and women are organised in many ways differently in Orissa than in Finland, I faced situations in which I was expected to explain my singleness as some kind of an ideological choice. On the other hand, my caring local friends made me discreetly aware that in case I am interested, they could work their networks to check if they could find a suitable marriage candidate for me. Conditioned to the ways of my own background, I did not accept the offer but was touched by the concern for me. Over the years my understanding of arranged marriages had widened, and although it did not feel a 'natural' (whatsoever that means) option for me, I was able to comprehend why many of my Indian friends adhered to the practice.

In India bodies and bodily functions are discussed freely. If I have had an upset stomach, other people have not hesitated to ask for details. However, I learned that many woman-specific bodily functions, in particular menstrual periods, are a thing to be mentioned only among women, if at all. Though periods are not really trumpeted in Finland either, I was insensitive to the deliberate nature of the issue. When teach-ing yoga at one Natya Chetana theatre camp, I explained to the young men and women

in the midst of different poses, which are to be avoided during menstruation. Recognising some dumbfounded faces and fearing that there was some misunderstanding, I talked the thing through once again, this time with justifications. After the yoga class Subodh, who had been translating my talk to Oriya, sighed that he had just done one of the toughest translations of his life. Having sensed how the English-following participants had been nervous about how he coped, he was after all pleased having managed to translate my period talks in a matter-of-fact, vague style. I soon found that amongst the young women present my talks launched a wave of curiosity. I was now expected to be the one who had plenty of knowledge and a readiness to talk about sensitive women's issues. To summarise, my orienting in the midst of local cultural codes and rules of appropriateness was not always exactly successful, but by and large my blundering caused no great harm either.

In a group like Natya Chetana, one is in many ways close with others in the group. This is no abstraction. Amidst the lack of space or other facilities, I have occasionally slept next to other people under the same mosquito net or in the same bed – makeshift arrangements when better ones have been beyond the scope of the situation. (For those who just raised their eyebrows, suffice it to say that Natya Chetana is careful to follow morally acceptable practices, one of the group's many missions being to cleanse the of-

ILLUSTRATION 4. Closely spaced but in peace: Afternoon nap in Angul during the Boli tour. Women's division at the upper left corner of the room (I am the one with arm raised, fixing my *dupatta*).

ten dubious reputation of theatre people.) In such conditions, as during more spacious moments, the researcher has to know not only how to get close enough with the informants but also how to find enough personal space to be able to work (e.g. Coffey 1999, 73). More than with physical space, my difficulties had to do with time and energy.

The fullness of ethnographic work can be and often is taxing. My being in India has, besides many good things and times, been marked by a constant feeling of weariness that has not been lessened by certain common health problems that tend to accompany me in the subcontinent. Only later have I learned that tiredness and poor physical strength are familiar to many other researchers in similar settings. Despite my interest in body-conscious feminist ethnographies, I had either managed to skip this kind of information or then the matter is either silenced or taken for granted to the extent that it just was not there in my elementary reading before the actual fieldwork. Anyway, as a researcher I have needed to leave interesting meetings unattended and interviews or contact addresses unasked when my weak body has set the limits. Nonetheless, I have not been clever enough to change my flight tickets and simply travel back home even when the health hazards have taken my strength to the minimum. Quite the contrary, being ill or weak has felt a nuisance that I would have rather pushed aside. When other plans and set agreements have engaged my determined mind (combined with the awareness that days in the field are running short and future funding is yet to be seen), I have more often than not preferred to keep going rather than stop to rest or start organising myself to see the appropriate doctor and get medical tests. While my behaviour tells something of my personal constitution, including my fears of failure as well as losing the benign approval of my colleagues, supervisors and so forth, not to forget further funding, I must say that the financial and other strains typical for research work support such an approach.

I have learned that in ethnographic fieldwork compartmentalising the corporeal and the cognitive into two distinct spheres is neither truly possible nor, even if momentarily achieved, sound or recommendable. The same is the case with emotions and thought, or affect and intellect (see also Malkki 2007, 176). Enthusiasm, joy, excitement, anger, helplessness, boredom, or feelings of loss and sorrow, are felt in both body and mind, and like physical weakness, they are not necessarily easy to tackle. Though the fundamentality of emotions in research processes is not the top theme of research literature, Ruth Behar has written about the vulnerability of the researcher, which I conceive to have both mental and corporeal dimensions. (Behar 1996.) In an optimal world, a researcher who is conscious and in peace with her/his vulnerability could perhaps be mindful and daring enough to give value to his or her emotions, corporeality, and very humanity. In reality, this can sometimes mean taking higher personal and political risks, also of losing valuable data, rather than just following the lines of called-for efficiency. Vulnerability should not anyhow be read as a synonym

for weakness and underperformance. Consciousness of one's own as well as others' vulnerability is possibly the best guarantee of humane treatment from the perspective of the informants. But it is all too easy to be greedy in research, to brush aside one's own and sometimes also other people's fragility. My research choices have contained agreeing to little pulls and bruises, though as far as I can recognise mainly for myself. The fact that my informants have not been openly complaining about theirs does not however mean that they haven't received any.

Ruth Behar suggests that being a researcher means that one is at times powerless and inadequate. Ethnographic research can contain feelings of fear, frustration, loss, sorrow, as well as a willingness to integrate with the people around, but not knowing how. It can involve feelings of guilt or fear for observing others too coldly, unevenly or simply being personally too confused or broken. One can be furious about one's own cowardice or insights that come too late or as mere hindsight. According to Behar, acknowledging also this side of ethnographic work is the key to being truly objective. (Behar 1996, 3.) For me, the issues that Behar addresses stand for critical awareness of the possible weaknesses and limits of ethnographic research. As such, the fact that these issues can be and are reflected by ethnographers themselves conveys more of belief than disbelief in the approach; the idea is not to abandon ethnography but to critically unravel and reflect it and its ethics. The basic idea of ethnographic research is that the personal is good enough foundation for scientific knowledge. It is however important to notice that using one's person as a condition for knowledge claims does not mean that the researcher would reject all notions of objectivity. Instead, objectivity is often reconceptualised. If one's understanding is that one's location and motivations behind the study colour the research, then the location and motivations are to be discussed, not edited out. Only then can the researcher's person serve as a productive influence on interpretation and understanding. (Cerwonka 2007, 31-32.) It is in this sense that I conceive ethnographies' open partiality and subjectivity more as a possible strength than weakness. As a science of particularity, ethnographic research is bound to time, place, the researcher and his or her relationships with the people whom s/he studies or gets information from – and should be read like that.

2.5 COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY

Chronologies

Put into a timeline, important markers for the study have been my encounters with Natya Chetana, of which I have so far focused mainly on our first encounter in November-December 2000 and the longest fieldwork period from September 2001 until May/

June 2002. The latter is my main period of reference throughout the study for the reason that many of the aspects I discuss about Natya Chetana would be too difficult to deal without anchoring them to a certain situation and consistence of the group. In reality, the study has continued for almost a decade, both Natya Chetana and me facing many changes during the course of it.

As increasingly possible in a globalising world, I have not met Natya Chetana and its individual team members only in India, but also in Finland. Before my major period of fieldwork Subodh was in Finland twice, the second time with a full Natya Chetana performance team. Hence, when I went to stay with Natya Chetana in 2001, most of the team had already been to my then tiny and old-fashioned apartment, eaten my soups and met my parents. It was actually with Natya Chetana that I explored certain Finnish venues such as the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival or 'the VillageShop' Brothers Keskinen for first time. The next time it was a four-person Natya Chetana team that visited Finland in November-December 2002, followed by my visit to Natya Chetana's people's Theatre Festival in January 2003, followed by another visit during the same trip to India, this time to introduce my India-arrived husband-to-be Mika to the team. In 2004 I had no chance to meet Natya Chetana people, whereas in 2005 Subodh was twice in Finland: first in April and then again in September. In August 2007, it was my turn to travel to Bhubaneswar and Natya Chetana, this time to discuss the drafts of the chapters I had written so far, followed with a similar trip in December 2008 to finalise the study. The opportunity for finalising was further extended when Subodh was able to stop for a few days in Finland on his way Central Europe in the end of April 2009. The list of these encounters can be found in table form in Appendix 1. As important as my encounters with Natya Chetana have been, for the study to proceed the time and work that has taken place in between has been equally important. At the time of writing I am wondering what will happen in the future, as it is likely that my personal resources to visit Natya Chetana may be less because of new professional engagements and other changes in my personal life.

In my encounters with Natya Chetana there have often been many other parties involved. For instance, at the Finnish end Subodh or the Natya Chetana team have often had agendas and engagements that have had little if anything to do with me. Consequently, my fact-finding and other missions have taken place in multifaceted and messy situations. Moreover, though ethnographies often separate 'home' and 'field' as separate entities, in this study these categories have occasionally overlapped, although the actual writing has taken place predominantly in Finland. To illustrate my point and to provide another angle to the timeline of the study, the following examples about my efforts to trace the origins of Natya Chetana's people's theatre approach give an idea about the nature of the steps through which the research has proceeded. In addition,

the excerpts (from my diary and an interview) demonstrate the character of some networks with which Natya Chetana, and in particular Subodh as its personification, has been involved inside and outside Orissa.

HELSINKI, FINLAND 7.9.2005: I sit with Subodh on reindeer skins around a fire lit in the middle of a tepee erected at the back of the Finlandia Hall, one of the biggest concert halls of the capital attached with plenty of national pride owing mainly to its designer, Finland's best-known architect Alvar Aalto. The tepee has been hosting discussions in an alternative meeting entitled "Democratising Globally"[26] in parallel with the Helsinki Conference[27] that is taking place at the Hall's classy conference milieu few hundred metres away. Our event is organised jointly by a bunch of Finnish non-governmental organisations. Subodh belongs to a delegation that consists of political and environmental activists, scholars and NGO-heads flown into Finland by Finnish government money to feed and facilitate the discussions. Part of the team also attends the Helsinki Conference. I have been hanging around, curious to hear what comes up in the discussions, and to get into talks with Subodh if and when his schedule allows. And here we are: The night is turning dark, the smoke of the fire is sticking to our clothes, and I do my best to operate my minidisk despite the darkness. As an answer to my inquiries, Subodh lists three main factors that have shaped the group's theatre work: getting familiar with people's theatre, learning more about the participatory approach in trainings provided by Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), and the example and influence of Badal Sircar, a Bengali theatre practitioner. I remember that the same issues are named as motivational breakthroughs in Natya Chetana's booklets[28]. On the basis of the booklets I had understood that Subodh learned the people's theatre approach in the Philippines, where I know was his first trip abroad. Now in the tepee behind the Finlandia Hall I get to know that actually Subodh learned about people's theatre in Calcutta (Kolkata) from a Dutch trainer who had been to Philippines:

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26   Democratising Globally took place 4-9 September 2005 giving the floor for discussions on various topics from cultural survival to global struggles for land, Gandhi's contemporary relevance, and media and democracy, to name a few. As a public statement the event produced "messages from civil society to Helsinki Conference". (The programme of the event should be available at http://www.demokratiafoorumi.fi/sept2005helsinki.)

27   Helsinki Conference (7-9 September 2005) "Mobilising Political Will" was part of Helsinki Process on Globalisation and Democracy, initiated by Finnish and Tanzanian governments in order to improve global governance. More information about the conference and links to the process at websites http://www.helsinkiconference.fi/HC2005/ and http://www.helsinkiprocess.fi/.

28   E.g. Natya Chetana 2001 a, 3-4, Natya Chetana 2004, 3.

SUBODH: This man from Netherlands, using van Erven[29], actually conducted a workshop, which really enlightened me about processes how to create theatre among non-artists. Then … there itself I got an idea about people's theatre, another organisation who was the organiser of this PETA[30] workshop there.

SATU: In Calcutta?

SUBODH: In Calcutta, called CCCA, Centre for Communication and Cultural Activity, CCCA. CCCA was promoting a kind of theatre; they say that we are doing people's theatre. Then the definition was theatre by the people, for the people and about the people, or of the people. That really gave me a little more clarity about a theatre, what kind of theatre we should move towards.

TAMPERE, FINLAND 8.12.2005: Another night few months later, this time in my home in Tampere. Subodh sits with me by our kitchen table. Others of the team include seven people, the women Sujata, Jayashree, Kanakalata, Ruksana and Kabita, and Subodh's father, who finally have free time and sleep on our living room floor, the space they have for themselves in our two-rooms and a kitchen apartment. The living room is divided into women's and men's sections, separated by a narrow patch of blank floor. My spouse, Mika, has withdrawn to read something in the bedroom. Natya Chetana's team has been touring for nearly a month, first in the Netherlands and then in Finland. After Finland they will still head for a few days to France. Earlier this year, Natya Chetana conducted a project in Orissa called "Women's experiences in leading theatre and puppetry". The main purpose of this journey has been to present the project and its results to its Dutch sponsors[31]. Extending the visit to Finland serves the purpose of meeting Natya Chetana's Finnish friends and collaborators. The team tries to earn its inter-Europe flight costs, and hopefully little extra, by running workshops

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29   Eugène van Erven is a Dutch theatre scholar, who has studied and written extensively on political and people's theatre in various locations, becoming closely familiar with a number of political and community theatre practitioners, for instance, in the Philippines and in South Asia.

30   The Philippines Educational Theatre Association.

31   Natya Chetana's project facilitated women's theatre making by providing training, financial and mental support for the women who undertook the challenge. Two organisations in the Netherlands, Mama Cash and IDEA Nederland, funded the project.

and holding performances[32]. The aim of the women's theatre project has been to support and educate local women to do theatre, either drama or puppetry: write scripts, direct plays and act. The women now sleeping on the floor took part in the project and did well. Subodh's father Pramod Chandra Pattanayak, a retired veterinarian joined the team "to see Europe", and has paid for his trip by his savings.

I explain to Subodh what I have so far written, a sketch dealing with theatre in India, and ask for his opinions on my views. As we discuss, Subodh recalls once again, this time to help me in my writing job, how the initial idea of Natya Chetana was to become a professional theatre group that sells its craft. When the social motivation became most important, that idea had to be sacrificed. The group felt deeply worried for its society and considered the applicability of the theatre and the number of the performances more important than artistry. Accordingly, Natya Chetana shifted to do quick performances on different issues, continuously and with little rehearsals. Wishing to find out what kind of social change will appear when they work more like normal social workers but do also performances, the group even "adopted" a region at countryside. The experiment failed. At that point, Subodh was able to participate in a short training provided by PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia), and learn about organisation and management. The training, not dealing with theatre at all, made miracles. It helped to clarify the vision, mission and strategy of Natya Chetana. I return back to the issue of learning people's theatre, and Subodh tells me that the trainer who taught him was Eugène van Erven himself. As van Erven has for long written extensively on people's and community theatre around the globe, I no longer wonder how come some Dutch people had ended up in Calcutta to teach a Filipino style of community theatre. Surprised that the information had never reached me, Subodh added that van Erven's book "Playful Revolution" [1992] even has a chapter on Natya Chetana.

The two discussions referred to above illuminate the character of my research work, as well as the fact that sometimes clarifying certain genealogies or issues has taken time. Though they were occasionally referred to, in India we never found the time to discuss the early years of the group in precise detail. In real life, narrators aiming to be all-inclusive would make most of the listeners bored and mad, and have little time for anything else. Rather than in living in the past, Natya Chetana lives in the moment, di-

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32 The Natya Chetana team visited Finland 27.11. -11.12.2005, holding workshops at the Radio and Television Institute of Adulta in Järvenpää, at the Seinäjoki Polytechnic, and with the forum theatre group *Hovin Narrit* in Tampere. In addition, they had two performances, one in Hyvinkää invited by local association for developing countries *(Hyvinkään kehitysmaayhdistys)* and another in Kangasala hosted by local puppet theatre Hupilainen, presenting two plays, *Reboti* and puppet play *Abhayabara*. On the Finnish end the visit was organised and the practicalities taken care by Natya Chetana's friends in Finland, namely, the puppeteer Maija Keinänen, me, and a number of other people connected to Natya Chetana for the last couple of years through visits and workshops.

recting itself to cope with the present financial crisis, the next performance, or the up-coming festival. When I came to the point of writing up my version of the entire story, I realised that the details of the group's early years had remained vague to me – hence my repeated queries every time I met Subodh face to face.

In chronicling and constructing Natya Chetana's history for my purposes, I have at times been interested in different kinds of genealogies than what Natya Chetana's current needs are. In everyday situations of narration, Natya Chetana's accounts of its history have been coined from a perspective, and have reflected the time, place, and audience of the moment. For me, the fluctuating nature of such stories has left room for taken for granted or baseless assumptions, had I not noticed to ask again differently, or for a more definitive description. On the other hand, our long-term contact has allowed me to learn to ask the right questions as well as made asking them possible. From the perspective of continuity, the excerpts display how Subodh and I, coming from different backgrounds and assumptions, construct the narrative of Natya Chetana's early years together during the course of various conversations. Long-term fieldwork allows for long processes of learning.

Files and data

In ethnographic research 'the facts' are always to a greater or lesser extent constructed (e.g. Malkki 2007, 171), in other words "*made* and not "given"" (Atkinson & Delamont & Housley 2008, 52). As a researcher I decide what kind of data to collect, with what kind of focus, where and when. Yet, no matter what my attempts are, much of the field-work is in many ways unpredictable, beyond my control, multiply entangled, and difficult to interpret (Malkki 2007, 179). Participant observation takes place in the bustle of life, which results in that I cannot observe and write down everything. Mostly, I have to get by concentrating on aspects that are meaningful, feel important or just ring bells in relation to my research questions or the larger discursive and theoretical frameworks the study incorporates.

In ethnographic research 'data' and 'methods' form a "*repertory* of possibilities" (Malkki 2007, 180). Ethnography enables collecting a wide array of data. Moreover, almost anything that can increase understanding goes for data. So what is data in this research? I consider as my primary data all the material, added throughout the years, that I have gained from and with Natya Chetana, its individual members, or people knowing the group closely. This material alone makes an endless site to work with. My secondary data is much harder to define. In this category I would place much of my 'homework', for instance books on Orissa, theatre in India, articles and books on social work, my

experiences in other social work contexts in India, discussions and interviews with people who do not know Natya Chetana but who have anyhow been able to help me to understand and locate the group and its work, not forgetting a number of novels illuminating Indian culture and society. This secondary material spreads as a loose, highly unstructured and lively constellation without any strictly defined borders. It is like a sea with all kinds of fish. I am the fisherwoman, sometimes starving and desperate for a catch, sometimes fishing just for fun.

Considering the amount of data, I have often been afraid of sinking in my seas. Unable to explore all waters in-depth and equally, my solution has been to make a rowing trip, and fish in certain locations (that is, particular discussions) only. After all, my fishing has from the beginning been limited by my scarce resources – as much as I like rowing, due to the lack of an outboard engine rowing has indeed been also a forced solution. Nevertheless, my personal assets alone have not ruled my selection of fishing tackle and sites, or relevant theoretical and methodological approaches. Importantly, my rowing and fishing have been guided by those senior and/or more experienced in these matters, either in person or through texts. Once offshore, I have enjoyed a few lovely bays, where I have been able to rest and build up strength and enthusiasm to continue. They have been needed when I felt I was in more of a labour colony type of circumstances, which also have been part of my journey, such as facing simply too much fish in one go, or a powerful current about to make me lose the shore, and surely doubt my navigation. On occasions, my nose has told me to stop and try, while at other, seemingly obvious havens I either got nothing tasty, or I have known from the beginning that I have no appetite for the kind of fish the waters are known for.

To make sense of the data in a more conventional sense, I will next introduce my primary data, in particular those aspects of it that have a material form of some kind. This data consists of field diaries, minidisk recordings, video recordings, photographs and other material such as Natya Chetana's publications, posters, and so forth. The list of data is presented also in Appendix 2.

FIELD NOTES. I have written field notes since the very first trip to Natya Chetana. At the time of writing (2009) these around 15 exercise books and diaries, handwritten in situations in which I have been staying with Natya Chetana, make some 20-30 centimetres in my bookshelf, less Natya Chetana specific research notes making much more. In the beginning, my attempt was to keep separate field diaries for 'cold facts only' on one hand and more personal and emotional reactions and descriptions on the other. The attempt was doomed from the beginning. As discussed earlier, to me emotions and ethnographic facts just aren't that separate. In retrospect, proportion-wise fairly many pages of my diaries are filled with my personal musing and longing, rather than de-

tailed accounts of Natya Chetana's core activities, and as such have more to do with me than Natya Chetana. Though I was for the main enjoying my time, being away and living differently from my Finnish surroundings ushered me into personal soul searching and evaluating my life also back home, much of which got reported and resolved in the diary pages as well as through e-mails. While neither these things nor the fact that I was from time to time ill make my diaries particularly enjoyable reading, later on they give one perspective to evaluate my condition at the field, showing among other things how 'home' is present also at the field. Moreover, against the limited time available for note keeping, they illustrate how emotions and personal soul searching anyway claim due attention in the field.

As anyone who has ever tried knows, in practice recording the events and discussions of the day is tiring and takes time (e.g. Cerwonka & Malkki 2007, 102). Added to the above-described emotional work, that time was often lacking. Even though I had my moments for note keeping, they were seldom long or uninterrupted, in particular because for the main I wanted to participate in what was going on in Natya Chetana's often hectic life. Known and felt concretely already at the time of writing, my note writing suffered also from my lack of endurance and energy. Despite all these limitations I have anyhow also managed to write a number of lively accounts as well as reviews of discussions and daily incidents. These accounts have later been helpful when I have wanted to revisit those moments or simply check 'the facts'. Where my field notes are lacking, other kinds of data compensate.

PHOTOGRAPHS. I have taken lots of photographs ever since my first encounter with Natya Chetana, first with an ordinary inexpensive pocket-sized film camera and later with similar digital camera. As Natya Chetana is gifted in documentation, copies from Natya Chetana's photo archive also add to the entire number of photographs at my use, at the time of writing approximately 2000 pieces. Largely snapshots of daily life, the photographs have served me mainly as a photo diary, providing a visual journey of my time with Natya Chetana. Putting aside the photos with either poor quality or low informational value aside, I have organised approximately two-thirds of the photographs in sizable albums in chronological order so that they can be glanced through easily. Particularly well documented phases are for instance the processes around the plays *Boli* (October-November 2001) and *Biblobi Bihanga* (April-May 2002), the People's Theatre Festivals in 2002 and 2003, and the event Natya Chetana organised

at the famous Annapurna B theatre complex[33] in Orissa's former capital Cuttack to celebrate the World Theatre Day (27th March) of 2002, but also all kinds of occasions of daily life.

In the beginning, to reduce the costs I developed the photographs in Bhubaneswar, but as many of the local photo labs did not bother to take good care of the negatives (partly damaging them with scratches and so on), I later shifted to develop my remaining rolls in Finland. The digital photos I still have only in digital form. At the course of the study many of the photographs have served as items of exchange and further discussion (also one of the ways of utilising visual aids in ethnography, see Pink 2001). By and large, my gifts as a photographer lay in the documentary value and quantity rather than photographic quality of the photos. In this study report, the use of photographs remains at the level of introducing a small selection of the people, places and events in question visually for a reader. Even so, the visual material works as a hook into which I can occasionally hang more abstract claims (e.g. Banks 2001), for instance regarding the general aesthetics of Natya Chetana's plays.

MINIDISK RECORDINGS. Throughout the years I have recorded most of my interviews with Natya Chetana or other people that know the group by a minidisk recorder. A selection of these interviews, at times done in a combination of English and simple Oriya, is also transcribed into text. Though the idea of ethnographic research is not to celebrate, but analyse the data, I find many of the interviews delicious. In addition to talks with Natya Chetana team members, I have had a chance to discuss with some of their relatives, as well as local film stars and other esteemed people in the field of culture or social activism. While some of the material has only a limited use for the purposes of this study, it provides interesting angles on cultural and social life in Orissa. As the quality of the recordings is generally high, one of my dreams – not yet come true – is to have the time and skilled help to construct some radio documentaries[34] out of them. In addition, I have (audio) recordings of the group's plays, originally made to guarantee the quality of the voice should I have a chance to work further also with the video material I shot during the same performances. Few recorded everyday discussions and

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33 Annapurna Theatre was a pioneering Oriya theatre company active from 1930s until the 1960s. When the activities increased, the company was divided into two branches, A and B, stationed in Puri and Cuttack respectively. Both companies had a permanent stage, of which the B-building still stands, though not in regular use. In its time, the Annapurna Theatre created a dramatic tradition and had a leading role in the field of Oriya theatre. (The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre 2004, 14.)

34 Such documentaries could focus on the career paths and memories of certain Orissan film stars, or topical socio-economic problems of the state as witnessed by local social activists.

sound sceneries further add to the amount of minidisk recordings, making a total of 70-80 hours.

VIDEO RECORDINGS. I had a fairly good quality video camera at my use from the beginning of November 2001 until early February 2002[35], so that after Subodh and Sanjaya taught me how to use it I videotaped roughly 20 hours of that phase in Natya Chetana's life, most of all during the rehearsal period and performance tour of the play *Boli*. As occasionally either Subodh or Sanjaya also operated the camera, some of the shots display not only my informants but also our interaction and me. At the time of writing, I have not been able to utilise these videos as much as I originally hoped for, as the material itself could be constructed, for example, into a documentary of the making and performing *Boli*[36]. For this study the material has served me most of all as a rich and detailed documentation of two of Natya Chetana's plays, *Sapanara Sapana*, as performed at Natya Chetana's foundation day festivities 10th November 2001, and *Boli*.

MATERIAL PRODUCED BY NATYA CHETANA, consisting of Natya Chetana's play posters, a number of puppets, video- and audiotape recordings about the group's plays, tours and projects (on VHS, video-CD, DVD, or cassette form), publications such as books and booklets, reports (made for administrative purposes or for the financiers of specific projects), articles by Subodh, and so forth. Many of these I have got, and occasionally, as in the case of a few puppets, bought to update my personal 'Natya Chetana archive', and they provide me a rich source of both visual and literary material about the group and its work.

Though many of the above listed materials may be rather easy to grasp, I would like to say a word on Natya Chetana's publications. Throughout the years Natya Chetana has been writing and making publications about the work the group has done, the writer being mostly but not solely Subodh. The aim of all this activity has been to inform interested outsiders as well as to document and bring out the group's work. The publications include scripts of the group's plays (published so far only in Oriya) as well as booklets and brochures that explain the group's theatrical approach and achievements. In addition, Natya Chetana keeps publishing "the only" regular Oriya language theatre magazine, *Natya Swara* (Voice of Theatre). One proof of the group's interest in documentation and research is a bilingual (English and Oriya) book on local folk music

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35 The camera I had thanks to the generosity of Frank Kappas, who lent his camera to me.

36 At the time of writing, the plan is that Natya Chetana will edit the videos to make a documentary on the play Boli and the process around it for its own purposes.

instruments (Natya Chetana 2002), based on years of documentation and adaptation of local music to theatre making. The publications have often a central role in the group's events as the custom is that a new publication is ceremoniously announced by literally unwrapping it, followed by a speech by some distinguished theatre person. Whenever Natya Chetana performs or organises events, there are publications for sale, and so the publications bring a bit of money and not only cost to Natya Chetana. Further, they are important in informing present and future sponsors and benefactors of the group. Even if making the publications would not be directly beneficial in financial terms, they serve as medium to promulgate the group's stand in the fields of theatre, culture and politics.

Finally, before and simultaneously with this study, Natya Chetana has interested many other scholars and theatre people, Indians and foreigners alike, who have then written either chapters or whole books about the group. These writers (in English) include Eugen van Erven (1992), Doug Holton (2006), and Sharmila Chhottaray (2009). The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre (2004) also has an entry about Natya Chetana. In Finnish, Natya Chetana's work has been discussed by Jouni Piekkari (2002) and Pieta Koskenniemi (2007). In addition, Subodh has written articles about Natya Chetana for different venues a number of times (such as Pattanaik 2000).

So what should one think of all these masses of data? It is clear that present technology allows collecting huge amounts of varied and interesting data, leaving the researcher with indeed wide repertory of possibilities. Another thing is that such a wide array of data cannot, even with help of technology, be easily coded and analysed in its entirety; that would just take too much time. As is evident, my strategy has mostly been to document and grasp what I can, an approach that has left me stunned when I have later come across ethnographers who are decisive and strict about all the matters they do not want to document or even know. Having embraced rather than limited the data, I have then needed to utilise another kind of a roadmap.

Analysis – questions, answers, insights, feelings

My way to survive my data has been to go through it with my research themes and questions in mind. This is where theory, fished from the ocean of all kinds of useful texts and other things, has been at best indispensable. Theoretical texts, be they ethnographies, pieces of South Asian studies, social work books, theatre introductions, or accounts on postcoloniality, have helped me little by little to organise, understand, and selectively analyse much of my sea of data. Meanwhile, my encounters with theory have been guided by the learning gained at the field. Furthermore, learning best in interac-

tion and discussions with others, equally many if not most insights have been born in seminars as well as in informal talks with other people.

All this is actually typical of ethnographic field research. A veteran Indian social scientist Joshi (2002, 75) points that the dual challenge of fieldwork-based social scientific research is the need to view the social system under study from the outside in terms and categories of social science, and simultaneously from inside, which can further contain a number of viewpoints[37]. Moreover, ethnographic fieldwork, or for that matter most scientific work, is seldom linear progress only. More often, it consists of rushes and lulls, confusion and euphoria, and moments of intellectual disorder. (Cerwonka 2007, 5.) Much of analysis takes place while living with the research in the field and after. My choice of study and my first steps at the field were guided more by hunch, wonder and curiosity, than strictly theoretical starting points. After I had made my way to the field and survived my initial adjustment troubles among other things in the form of certain illnesses, I was truly in love with Natya Chetana and the wonders of fieldwork. The ten week high was, however, followed by an equally long, sudden and deep low, as it was for many unlucky incidents as well as severe financial troubles for Natya Chetana. Towards the spring and summer 2002 I nevertheless grew more determined and insightful in my study, including what and how to ask, a process that has despite certain setbacks in my personal life continued ever since. Natya Chetana also started to construct its way forward. Back home, I was however lost again for a long period, unable to neatly command the study. My bewilderment with the study, as with myself, was annoying and gave me no quick relief. I felt that the time during which I could do nothing much but try to bear my own incompleteness, keep transcribing my tapes and write various thematic working papers helped me gradually progress further. So did finding relevant books to read. Some of my early papers have grown into chapters in this book, the actual writing and finalising of which, in the midst of other duties and assignments, has then taken a couple of years.

Part of my confusion at the course of the study is due to the multiple positions I have had in relation to Natya Chetana. How to be at the same time insider and analytical outsider, friend and researcher? How to think and write critically when also

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37 Once in the field as a young Ph.D student with highly theoretical Marxist starting points, Joshi tried first putting his observations in neat, ready-made conceptual/analytical boxes. However, the complexity of the social reality in the field "had such an overpowering impact" on his mind that he lost his allegiance to his concepts and was left uncertain and overwhelmed, as if having lost the wood from the trees. In retrospect, Joshi sees this as surrender to empiricism. As a way out, he needed tools to help him in distinguishing essential from non-essential facts, and was led towards formulating his theoretical concepts in the light of the data provided by the inquiry. This was also the peak of excitement of the research, and pulled him out of his earlier despair. The teaching to be generalised is that in ethnographies fieldwork directs theory. (Joshi 2002.)

the 'disciple' or group member remains strong in me? Living with Natya Chetana has brought about intimacy, bonds and interdependence with the group and its individual participants. To me managing closeness and distance, both needed and valuable, during and after the fieldwork have been largely instinctual and at times emotionally powerful processes – while those with whom I have become close at the course of the study continue to live their lives in India, I am not unchanged either. My intimate knowledge of Natya Chetana invoked in me also a need to protect the group from inimical or aggressive others that do exist. The call turned however somewhat inhibitory when I came to the point of trying to write 'scientifically' about the group. Both time and thinking these matters aloud have solved much of my troubles, and made me better able to write. Later visits have no longer shaken the situation but rather turned my relationship with Natya Chetana and its team members, past and present, into a new form.

As a writer, I have not utilised any one analytical scheme that would structure my thinking and writing. Instead, the periods of fieldwork, analysis, and writing have been entangled into each other, my hold on the data being all the time fairly comprehensive. On the basis of my fieldwork I have had an instinctual relationship with the data and preliminary ideas of the main themes interesting from the perspectives of my research questions. With these thematic insights I have then revisited the data. In other words, rather than doing systemic coding and content analysis (though I did try that too), I found it more meaningful to focus on and discuss fairly large thematic entities relevant for my approach. In brief, at times I have been seeking answers for particular questions from the data, at others relevant material around broad themes for further organising and new rounds of questions. As an analyser I have not attempted to go systematically through everything I have for each question or theme, but have focused on the sections and pieces of data that I have understood to communicate or resonate best with the questions or themes in my mind. In addition, more random samplings of the data have occasionally brought me illumination; I have found documentation on the themes that have been occupying my mind also elsewhere in my data than where I have first pointed my ears. Though my aim has never been to cover everything I have, I have worked until I have been able to achieve a feeling of saturation, that different pieces of data keep conveying the same core content and that the general view to the matters I have been interested in starts to make an integrated puzzle. More often than not, my rounds with the data have also forced me to read more, to seek conceptual as well as contextual information, which has then again influenced my ways of thinking about the data and occasionally also my own position. The sense of living with the data has been further added by my possibility to continue discussions with Subodh up until the last moments of writing.

2.6 NATYA CHETANA IS NATYA CHETANA

Research ethics is entangled in the everyday acts and processes of research, therefore many of the issues I have discussed earlier in this chapter convey on their part aspects of the ethical concerns and choices of this research. My gravest ethical brain teaser throughout the study has been the fact that from the beginning my decision has been to write about Natya Chetana with its correct name: Natya Chetana is Natya Chetana also in real life. This is against the general principle of social sciences to guarantee the anonymity of the researched, based on the idea that if one cannot trace the research subjects, one cannot harm them either (e.g. Hallamaa et al. 2006).

The reasons why I decided, and have despite constant deliberation remained in my stand not to hide Natya Chetana under any code name, are both practical and principled. Starting from the latter, Natya Chetana is an articulate and well-established team in its own right, able to publish books and magazines and speak out through its plays, posters, puppetry and songs, as well as Subodh's keynote addresses in international festivals and conferences. The group has plenty of friends in local and global theatre and academic circles, many of who have been also keen to publish about Natya Chetana. I am by no means the sole narrator of Natya Chetana's story. By making a study on Natya Chetana, I am nonetheless documenting a specific history of artistic work, to be precise certain aspects and moments of it. Should I hide the group and its location, I would not, in a way, take the group's theatre seriously. Theatre is made for public, and Natya Chetana's very aim is to generate public discussion. Referring openly and directly to Natya Chetana, I hope on my part to contribute to the discussion about and around Natya Chetana. This provides also greater chances to test my thoughts - there may be people knowing Natya Chetana who want to challenge or disagree with my views.

I have discussed the issue of writing about Natya Chetana by its real name with the group from the beginning. Natya Chetana's original opinion was that they want a book that tells about them and their work by their very name, as from the group's perspective it would be meaningful to get a book which documents their work and which could be used as a reference. As the study has proceeded, Subodh's message about the policy of using names has been that I should do as I find it best in my academic context. In the end, the responsibility for the decision to talk about Natya Chetana directly, without code names, relies on me: The researched cannot be expected to be able to fully foresee what possible risks may follow from being identified. Yet, the risks are there. Natya Chetana has both enviers as well as enemies, often people whose wishes the group has decided not to fulfil. The only antidote against these, at the time of writing, to some extent unimaginable harms is twofold. First, I have tried to keep Natya Chetana informed about the content of the research. Secondly, my study is only a partial account of select-

ed aspects of Natya Chetana and its work. In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, the practical reason for not hiding Natya Chetana's identity is that the group cannot be easily concealed behind any fabricated name and location; the group's approach is just too unique for that. As I have wanted to discuss the work in detail, as well as the cultural parameters of the work (such as it is located in India), a number of people knowing Natya Chetana in India as well as abroad could have immediately guessed and figured out whom I am talking even behind a code name.

Finally, one may wonder what kind of limitations talking directly about Natya Chetana has caused to my writing. Have I been limited by need for polite speech, courtesy and other such reasons? Again, one of the general rules of research is respecting the researched. In my view, rules of politeness control researchers even when they do not expose the names and locations of their informants. Then there are of course the questions regarding the accuracy of my interpretations. I have discussed this issue already in detail with the ethnographic approach, my solution being to try to open up also my own perspective, experience and reasoning when relevant regarding the matters at stake. Conscious of the challenges to talk about the case of Natya Chetana in a tremendously huge and diverse country like India, and in relation to equally infinite field of social work, I cannot but be both humble and do my best to depict the woods where I orientate. That is the topic of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 3
MAPPING WORLDS OF SOCIAL WORK

In this chapter I piece together different contexts and approaches to social work, as they come together in my research design. I start with an overview of the discussion concerning international, increasingly termed global social work, thinking about whether and how the discussion could link the two locations of this study, Finland and India. Of the connections that I try, the most distinct is outlined through postcolonial reading. I conclude the section by discussing the position of postcolonial analysis and indigenous social work within the wider framework of international/global social work.

My second task is to provide a broad-brushed summary of social work in India as well as some central cultural and social parameters, such as the role of social institutions like caste and joint family[38]. Furthermore, as I have wanted to understand the postcolonial situation of India and Indian social work, my summary also contains a brief overview of colonialism and some of its consequences in India. Even so, I had to simplify and condense multiple histories with heavy hand (so as not to overly expand this book). Although my section of colonialism and its civilising mission is sill rather long, a brief history of colonialism in India should give grounds for thinking about international/global social work now and earlier. Moreover, it adds to the kind of social work histories (common in many Northern/Western countries) in which the role of colonialism as in its time an important shaper of the world is either forgotten or silenced. An elementary understanding of colonisation and its consequences is helpful also in order to understand Natya Chetana's work, priorities and argumentation in contemporary Orissa.

The chapter continues by discussing social work and economic and political developments in India. In the end, utilising a critical stance towards the idea of modernity as well as the paradigm of development I conclude by considering the approaches of social

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38 In the Indian context, joint family is a term for an extended (patrilineal) family consisting of many generations, and/or possibly male siblings and their families living under the same roof. The joint family institution is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

development, development aid, and the modern professional project of social work as parts of the greater continuum of modernity.

3.1   INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

Origins and definitions

As often pointed out, social workers have always been international. Indeed, the formation of the field of social work in Western Europe and North America was not without connections to other processes and events of the times, including colonialism and colonial philanthropy[39]. At any rate, the historical narratives of international social work usually start from the developments that took place after social work started to emerge as a field of its own in the late 19th century in Western Europe and North America. In this perspective, social work is recognised as a modern, social (scientific) domain of modern, industrial (Western) society, separate from religiously inspired charity. The first international social work conferences took place in the 1920s and 1930s, gathering mainly European and North American participants. People from other continents started to participate in greater numbers in the 1960s and 1970s when air travel became more affordable, and people from the newly independent nations of Africa and Asia were willing to participate. (E.g. Payne 2005, 199-200.)

Through the course of time, there have been a variety of opinions about what international social work should be, and whether the discussion is on the whole useful. James Midgley (2001) has compiled the common definitions of international social work from various resources as a practice adhered to by international organisations such as the Red Cross or the United Nations; cooperation and exchange between social workers practicing in different countries; an umbrella term for basically anything that concerns social work in more than one country; a vantage point to look at social work (its role, established practices, challenges, etc.) around the globe; comparative research on social work in different countries; and social work with immigrants or refugees (sensitive to different cultural backgrounds). (Ibid. 24-26.) In addition, for instance Lyons et al. (2006) and Kuruvilla (2005) emphasise the need and capacity of social workers to be aware of global issues and to conceive their own role globally. On my behalf, I hope that the discussion on international social work could provide a platform to negotiate different

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39   The question that remains partly unanswered is how much the criticisms that the colonial philanthropists faced because of their concern for the distant subjects in the colonised lands gave impetus to efforts to take hold of domestic social problems in Europe.

social work approaches, many of which are culture or area specific, others separated by their theoretical, political, or practice stands, in relation to one another. Perhaps one of the most nuanced models for international social work practice is suggested by Cox and Pawar (2006). They call for the integration of four perspectives, namely global (as the overall context of the practice), ecological (for the importance of the natural world for human life, until today blatantly overlooked in most social, economic and political models), human rights (as the key value base, to be constructed in process of dialogue, not of unchangeable static notions), and social development (as a guide of action based on understanding a local situation within its broader national social development context). In their view, in international practice it is necessary to consider every problem and its response options from the point of view of each of the four perspectives. (Ibid. 25-43.)

A common ground for social workers around the world is provided also by the International Federation of Social Workers, which has formulated the following definition of social work:

> The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (IFSW 2000.)

While in some form the discussion about the kind of relations different social work approaches have to each other has, of course, been going on for a long time, nonetheless, even with the above definition a number of issues deserve more attention. What kind of implicit assumptions does the discussion nurture about social work? On what basis do certain things pass as social work but others do not? Despite their global concerns, for the gandhians of the GVVS or the Natya Chetana volunteers international social work is not a discussion they would find easy access to, nor would it on the whole be very interesting from their perspectives. Yet, despite their strong identification with volunteerism, both Natya Chetana and my gandhian social worker friends could by and large sign IFSW's definition, and are involved in international collaboration by receiving foreign funding for their activities.

Core themes and challenges of the discourse

As with many other social work discussions, the trouble with attempts to discuss social work from international or global perspectives is that it all too easily starts to cover

everything. Cultural competence and anti-oppressive practice, or globalisation, development and human rights (Healy 2008, 25) are surely matters related to international social work. The other side of the coin is that social work deals with issues that are not only its realm. Many of the issues at the heart of international social work today, such war and violence, transnational mobility and immigration, global environmental problems, or global pandemics (e. g. Lyons et al. 2006) concern many other professional fields and even industries. Like social work in general, international social work has an endless list of concerns but a monopoly over nothing.

Perhaps the most singular realm has been the development of professional education, international curricula and standards for social work. How desirable these attempts then are, raises again a variety of opinions. My aim is not to indicate that the whole discussion is hopeless, but to note its complexity, as is social work in general. As a consequence, international social work is not a discussion easy to outline. Within the broad field of social work it nevertheless makes a distinct layer of its own, being interested in social problems within the wide and variable global context. Interest in the themes of international social work also seems to have mounted. In 2008 alone, several books (Askeland & Payne 2008; Healy 2008; Mapp 2008) were published in English that included 'international social work' in their title. These books along with others stress that though part of border-crossing social work activity continues to be genuinely international in nature, taking place between two or more nations, 'international' is no longer necessarily the most accurate term to differentiate the discussion. Concerned about social work's role in relation to globalisation[40], many prefer to talk about global social work, or the 'glocal' (McDonald 2006, 196-197), to address the impact of global processes on local communities and thus local social work practice. From a social work perspective, acknowledging globalisation has meant waking up to new consciousness about the interdependence of people, as well as people and nature. On the one hand, globalisation seems to increase inequality of resources as well as other forms of inequality; on the other hand it has opened avenues for social movements and international/global advocacy and lobbying. Social work, by and large, has a van-

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40 Globalisation, again, is a term widely used but often loosely defined. It is used as an umbrella term to refer a number of processes, be they economic, political, technological, cultural, or environmental. Emblematic of globalisation is that the rapid expansion of interaction has exploded earlier political, spatial and temporal confines. Yet, the world did not become global yesterday. If globalisation is understood as the movement of goods, services and information across borders, India can be considered to have been one of the first global economies already thousands of years ago; the Indian subcontinent has been well connected to other parts of the globe for centuries through trade relationships (e.g. Tenhunen 2007a, 23-24). The present process of globalisation differs from colonisation both by its volume and its driving forces. While colonisation was largely a national economic enterprise for the colonising nations, globalisation has, to great extent, been driven by global companies and global capital.

tage point to weigh up the individual and collective costs of globalisation when it turns something else than a bed of roses. Accordingly, globalisation brings forth the need for macro analyses of marginalisation and oppression, as well as figuring out the relationship between the macro level and international and national policies and action plans. (Lyons et al. 2006.) Some global organisations, such as UN with its various sub organisations, are actually doing this kind of work from their own perspective.

So far international/global social work is no success story. Considering the challenges, as well as the potential of the area, social work responses have been haphazard. Social work and workers are often missing from the hot spots of global/international social problems. As Swedish Thord Björk (2005) has pointed out, in refugee camps or huge urban slums people in distress have better chances to get help from local Pentecostals or radical Islamists than trained social workers. Another example is armed conflicts in which, as well as regarding related problems such as the use of child soldiers, social workers should have expertise to act constructively (Lyons et al. 2006, 87-111.) Moreover, social workers should have concerns to express as well as professional experience to speak in the global arena. This seldom happens. Midgley's opinion is that as a profession social work has failed to grasp the challenges of globalisation. The unsystematic and haphazard involvement of social workers has diminished the profession's chances of having an influence at the global level. Even social work education is for the most part lacking international/global content. (Midgley 2001, 23.) Another issue then is, what should this educational content be and why. All in all, it seems that the generic professionalism that has been the guiding ideal of professional social work education in Finland, as well as in Britain for example, assumes a wide knowledge base already from a social worker who works in a local/national context. As long as knowledge of global matters is conceived as something 'extra', it does not get space in tightly packed social work curriculums. While international practice internships have anyway become more popular, their problem is also that learning gained in another cultural context is not necessarily easily transferred to another, a fact that further challenges also the universal applicability of social work theories. As Midgley summarises, a fair amount of social workers appear to be poorly aware, if not indifferent to global matters, which has left global questions as the responsibility of a relatively small bunch of 'experts'. (Ibid. 24.)

If nothing else, it is clear that global social work is *not* about understanding and doing social work in a similar manner everywhere, in mediocre English. It is, however, more complicated to explicate, what social workers around the globe genuinely do share. As with other social work discussions, this one also has to take stands on the very matter of social work; what, why, and to whom social work is, what should it be, on what conditions, and what are the possible problems of the approach. Would it, for instance,

be meaningful to conceive social work as three spheres; remedial, developmental, and activist social work, as suggested by Midgley (2001)? What does international/global social work mean in each of these contexts and between them? In addition to the advocacy and policy tasks, one of the goals of global social work has to be acknowledging differences, and their importance, among social workers and between different social work approaches and contexts, and building up mutual understanding and solidarity. If anything, this is also the aim of this study.

Postcolonial and indigenous perspectives?

Discussing colonialism and its influences is sort of natural in the context of social work and its history in India, yet it is noteworthy that in western countries histories of social work rarely refer to colonialism. This is despite the fact that the origins of the profession are often located in Britain and the United States, both countries with their own particular colonial histories[41]. When colonialism is mentioned in 'Western' social work narratives, it serves often as an explanatory factor for present cultural influences (as, e.g., in Payne 2005). In view of Raewyn Connell, 'Northern' social science (to which social work at least from Finnish perspective belongs to) was built on

> ethnocentric assumptions that amounted to a gigantic lie – that modernity created itself within the North Atlantic world, independent of the rest of humanity. Models constructed on the basis of that lie (…) were then exported to the rest of the world with all the authority of the most advanced knowledge. (Connell 2007, x.)

In my own social work education in Finland I never came across colonialism as a fact that matters for social work before I took up the issue myself. Having lived and studied in Southern Finland, up to the time of writing I don't for instance know how the Saami people (in Finnish *saamelaiset,* in English Lapps), the indigenous minority living in Finland, was seen and treated by early social workers or their welfare state successors. A study closest to the matter that I have got my hands on tells about Christian evangelising and 'social work' that took place in Northern Norway and Greenland in

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41   Originating from overseas colonies and trading posts established since late 16th centuries, the British Empire was for most of 19th century and early 20th century the largest empire in history and a major global power controlling a quarter of the land area on Earth. U.S. colonial relationships include for instance the histories of settling a continent, the genocidal treatment of indigenous peoples, slavery, as well as a colonial type of rule at the 20th century in certain locations, such as in Philippines up to 1950s.

late 19th and early 20th century (Wallin Weihe 1999). What I know is that for decades, Saami children were not allowed to use their mother tongue even amongst themselves in Finnish schools. Today there is a network (called NOPUS) collecting social workers from Norway, Sweden and Finland around Saami specific issues, and in the Saami area in Northern Finland few 'language nests' are established as part of day care services to support the survival of the language, and thus the culture.

Why, then, not to allow ourselves, as well as the peoples of the colonised lands, or 'minorities' whose ancestors were colonised, to enjoy, in Leela Gandhi's terms (1998), 'postcolonial amnesia' and let the past, in good and evil, remain in peace? The simple answer is that the past seems to be just too much present to be bypassed without effort or an act of denial. For example, during the course of the study I have on occasion invested in a particularly good and fast train connection between Bhubaneswar and Delhi on my way to or from Natya Chetana, marvelling every time at the sugar sachets that the train personnel brought with tea. The reason has been the text "refined to European standards" printed in them in clear, blue capital letters, meaning, 'of course', that the sugar is of particularly fine and white quality. Sixty years after India's independence such sugar sachets belong to the little artefacts that help to grasp how 'Europe' or 'the West', and the real or imagined preferences and appetites of Europeans continue to have weight in postcolonial India. From a social work perspective, then, many of the processes behind the emergence of 'Western' social work, such as industrialisation, remain de-historicised without connection to colonialism and processes related with it. Further, thinking of my casual encounters with local people in India, my experience is that many of them have been aware of the earlier colonial history of oppression and exploitation. Whether I liked it or not, I have at times been taken as the representative of Europe, or America, money and power. While many of the white-skinned visitors currently in former developing nations do their best to turn down such labels, I am afraid that professional contacts are not necessarily less burdened with such historical and structural baggage. Moreover, Kiernan (1995, 168-169) suggests that Europeans (or more broadly people in the so-called developed nations) are vaguely aware of such a postcolonial quilt: they cannot fully suppress the knowledge that their material affluence might not be solely to their own credit, however much they might fear losing it. Therefore, not reflecting colonialism and its consequences is no service for the discussion on international/global social work, whereas sensitivity regarding colonialism might allow a better grasp of a number of problematic assumptions and hegemonic positions within the very discussion.

One of the traces of colonialism in the contemporary world is the already mentioned phenomenon of Eurocentrism, reflected in social work as the global hegemony of so-called Western social work, its educational hierarchies and (locally established)

qualification criteria. My gut feeling is that in a country where professional social work structures as well as academic social work education are still in the process of creation, a local person, who has studied for his or her degree abroad in an esteemed university, preferably in English, surely has better chances to acquire high positions either in administration or local academy than a person who has relied solely on local ways to gain his or her insights and learning in social work. In other words, in the academic and professional sphere the safest way for one ambitious in these matters is to choose 'the conventional', 'Western' or 'West-originating' way to build one's career. Thus, when colonialism by and large attempted to match and manage the culture of the colonised within the concepts and frameworks of the colonisers, as discussed soon in the case of India, does education and cultural development still continue a similar process today? Askeland and Payne (2006) suggest that the educational hegemony is equivalent to educational neo-colonialism. The more the cultures in this sense strongly dominate, the more globalisation suppresses local cultures, including their economies and languages. Askeland and Payne identify several potential dangers of cultural imperialism within social work education. These are attempts to create global/area-based standards or competence requirements; the usage of the same study material in different continents (attempts to unify the curricula); difficulties to adjust issues to the local culture; and studying in global languages instead of local ones. (Ibid. 738.) Social work knowledge production is also part of global market. Those who have resources to produce and market social work research and literature are globally at the cutting edge to spread their views about social problems and the best ways to deal with them.

If I have painted a rather gloomy picture about the hierarchies that matter in the global, postcolonial social work arena, what about so-called indigenous social work? Discussion on indigenous social work is an emerging arena that could well provide grounded postcolonial insights and criticisms to social work at large. When starting this study, this is also the realm where I thought my work could best match. In brief, indigenous social work is a category for social work outside the 'Western' (welfare) states, and/or work with indigenous peoples and/or minorities (also within welfare states), recognised, for instance, in academic journals, such as International Social Work. In my view, it also marks a curiosity and willingness to learn from local, culturally or community specific social work needs and generate and argue for social work understanding that has not yet been recognised or given a proper foothold within 'mainstream Western', professional approaches. Therefore, so-called Africentric social work in the United States (e.g. Daniels 2001) can be placed within close proximity of the category of indigenous social work. From India, Mohandas Gandhi is regularly noted as an important formulator of popular social action (e.g. Ferguson 2005, 521), and an alternative model of social work (e.g. Kuruvilla 2005, 45). A particular genre within the discussion

is articles that deal with challenges of social work in the backwoods or other peripheries either with indigenous people, or people who have not yet fully absorbed the scientific-rational worldview of modernity. One of the issues raised is the importance to understand local ways of social organisation, such as the necessity to collaborate with local healers (e.g. Berman 2006).

According to Janette Habashi, in social work the discussion on decolonisation and postcolonialism has built a legitimacy for indigenous approaches, which partly originate from postmodern and postcolonial thinking. Thus, indigenous social work has challenged dominant paradigms and strengthened local indigenous identities and discourses. (Habashi 2005, 771.) Importantly, the discussion has helped to articulate criticism towards various practices of more mainstream 'Western' social work. According to Payne, the main criticism against Western social work are that it is overly individualistic, supporting independence instead of interdependence and providing services that substitute for family and community structures, and neglecting established traditions and cultures in non-Western societies. Furthermore, Western social work is said to be too non-directive and hence not able to obtain the balance between the rights and responsibilities of an individual. (Payne 1999, 252-253; 1997, 7-13.)

However, the discussion of indigenous social work is not without problems. As long as it is understood as the realm outside Western social work, it is in danger of remaining in the position of exotic Other – interesting and refreshing to hear about, but without real relevance. In Habashi's opinion, some of the problems are due to the nature of the discussion itself. As a discourse, indigenous social work opposes alien paradigms and relies on local or native ways of knowing. At times, this has resulted in as a sort of imaginary superiority of the alternative standpoint, which anyhow is, after all, built on the tradition of Western episteme. Habashi stresses that fine ideas do not work, unless oppressive structures of power, in knowledge production as well, are broken down. According to her experience from Palestine, for oppressed and silenced communities deconstructing colonialism and oppression is hardly possible. Nor is it enough to raise some individuals (researchers) to speak for their community, as has often been the case in Western academia. To be able to speak for the community or local culture entails that the speaker is part of the community and responsible for it. (Habashi 2005.) All in all, as Raewyn Connell who comments on the position of Southern theory in social science points, grounding knowledge in other than mainstream or hegemonic experiences is a fragile project. Alternative ways of thinking are "readily marginalised", "intellectually discredited, dropped from curricula", or treated "as 'traditions' (…) but not as sources of intellectual authority in the present". (Connell 2007, vii-xi).

In sum, within the wide field of social work both postcolonial analysis and indigenous social work face many challenges, to say the least. One possible way out from

suffocatingly ethnocentric positions could be adapted from Silvia Staub-Bernasconi (2008). Referring to human rights as the "general regulative idea for social work theory, ethics and practice", she stresses the importance to seriously reflect on what this means. Since the Declaration, the universality of human rights has also been questioned, one of the criticisms towards the way of their formulation being that although they seek to foster diversity, they do so only under the non-negotiable idea of Western political liberal democracy (Mutua 2002, 2, ref. Staub-Bernasconi 2008). Staub-Bernasconi's view is that it has to be asked, also with regard to calls for pluralism, who is actually making the plea, and who is going to benefit from the particular policies to be derived from it. The mere embrace of cultural diversity in the name of human rights tends to leave structural social problems such as the coexistence of extreme wealth and poverty untouched – although addressing that could be at least as crucial for the human rights of significant sections of people to come true. Moreover, diversity can all too easily be reduced to simplifications, as if culture would alone be an adequate explanatory factor for individuals and societies. Seeing individuals or groups only in cultural, ethnic or religious terms can be also politically misused.

Staub-Bernasconi asks whether and how it is possible to find an approach to human rights without having to claim superiority or to feel guilty about the history of colonialism or other horrors enforced by one's nation. How to identify and condemn violations of human rights if each criterion is only of individual-subjective or local-contextual relevance? Her suggestion is that in social work there is a need to differentiate both between hegemonial universalism and fundamentalistic cultural relativism and pluralism. She calls for more moderate, deliberative, and debatable forms of universalism and pluralism that also allow for critical questions. While the former approaches tend to act in favour of particular interests and even opportunism in the name of human rights, or equal tolerance as indifference, the latter are more open to questioning, criticisms, and revision. As a starting point, it must be recognised that individuals around the world do not necessarily share same wishes, preferences, nor have the same resources and practices to satisfy them. Further,

> truth, the good and the right are not given and absolute – neither objectively nor subjectively – but due to an ongoing process of giving voice to needs and entitlements, of comparing and matching ideas, values and norms with empirical facts (…) they allow the search for cooperation (…). Tolerance is not defined by *indifference* or acceptance of any behaviour legitimized by cultural or religious tradition, but by a *clear social respect inspite* of (minor) moral differences and *a clear demarcation, where tolerance has to end*". (Staub-Bernasconi 2008.)

3.2   SOCIAL WORK AND ITS CIRCUMSTANCES IN INDIA

> Social work in India has been influenced by several aspects of Indian socio-cultural ethos and political history. Some of these are: presence of voluntary social work since ancient times, caste-based social hierarchy, rich diversity in cultural and linguistic groups, experience of colonization, independence movement and birth of new nation about six decades ago. When professional social work was 'imported' to India from the West, it had been squeezed into the social fabric and forced to deal with all the factors mentioned above. Thus the experience of professional social workers is somewhat complex and requires a constant dance between different systems and cultural ideologies. (Kuruvilla 2005, 41-42.)

In what follows, I discuss social work and it circumstances in India in a fairly chronological order. While providing a catchall account is beyond my scope, the review should help a reader unfamiliar to India to get a basic understanding of the cultural institutions as well as historical processes that matter for social work.

The old tradition of voluntary social work

In India service for the needy has a long tradition. In earlier times the care of the needy was built into the structure of the central social institutions of joint family, caste, and religion (Gore 1965, 8-10). According to Gangrade, ideally traditional Hindu joint family

> is three-generational in depth; its members live under the same roof; and property, of whatever kind, is shared by all its members. The individual's contribution to the success of the joint family as a group is more important than his success as an individual. (Gangrade 1998, 113-115.)

In the land-owning sections of the society, the family[42] was (and is) the medium for holding and transmitting land rights. In spite of uniting a broad range of kin by blood, inheritance, and a possible inclusion to common patrimony, the family was an inte-

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42   Patricia Uberoi makes the critical point that the joint family is far from a value-neutral descriptive category. In her view, as a popular concept it seems to match best with "the collective imagination of the educated Indians". There is a need to investigate further the actual process of the 'invention' of an Indian tradition, including the joint family, in particular in relation to questions of national identity and civilisational self-esteem (Uberoi 1993/2005, 32-33). Unable to follow Uberoi's suggestions here, I limit my review to the level of the popular notions of joint family in India.

gral unit of the village community and a functional unit within its economy. (Gangrade 1998, 111-112.) Within patriarchal communities all of the sons were usually entitled to an equal share of the inherited property, and the joint family was a system of obligations between brothers. Girls, the sisters, were 'married off' to other families, marriage being above all else a union of the families of the two individuals[43.] If, as often was the case, the brothers continued to live together after the death of their father, they held the property jointly and equally. If one of the brothers died, his share of the ancestral property passed to his male children. In general, the joint family took care of the older generations, the widowed, as well as those unable to contribute fully for their subsistence because of disability or other reasons. In villages the task was further underscored by social norms. (Gore 1965, 8.) As Gangrade (1998, 112) puts it, "the community stood ready to make sure that the children were obedient, the parents were good, and the relatives were helpful to each other".

In Indian society the caste system is both a symbolic system and a set of orders that regulate social organisation, interaction, and power (e.g. Eriksen 2004, 191)[44]. The word caste comes from the Portuguese word *castas*, which has several meanings such as 'species', 'breed' or 'lineage' (Marriott & Inden 1985, 348, ref. Quigley 1995, 4). Ideologically the caste system has been founded and justified on ideas of ritual purity and impurity. Actually, the caste system refers to two quite different indigenous concepts, *varna* and *jati* (e.g. Quigley 1995, 4). First of all, it divides all Hindus into four *varnas*, categories that are in hierarchical relationship to each other. Highest in the ranking

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43 Women entered the groom's family and kin from an initially subservient position. Women's position in the patriarchal South Asian society is complex, and one of the stereotypical understandings has been to hold them as victims of oppressive cultural practices. At any rate, even within the patriarchal joint family women could have central roles, though often the condition was [sometimes still is] giving birth to son(s). In general, women had highly different statuses according to their phase of life, as daughters, daughter-in-laws, mothers, mother-in-laws or widows, as studied in detail in Bhubaneswar by Susan Seymour (1999). Furthermore, women's' lives in South Asia escape generalisations, as women form a highly heterogeneous group divided by caste, class, education, ethnicity, location, wealth, family situation, etc.

44 The caste system has been theorised in various ways. As Gupta (2000a, 2-3) points out, the scribe Brahman view is all too flattering to upper castes, and sets unbearable expectations of humility and compliance to those at the lower end of the hierarchy. Different interpretations of caste as a construct highlight different issues. Of the leading scholars on caste Louis Dumont did emphasise the systemic character of the caste system, whereas Gerald Berreman was more interested in individual and group standpoints, as well as comparisons with hierarchies of human beings elsewhere. As caste system differentiates people according to statuses attached to them by birth, in some respects caste system could be compared to class, another complex concept. Though in class society there is social mobility both in theory and in practice, most tend to inherit the rank of their parents. Caste, however, refers to (seemingly) 'natural' attributes in a similar manner as for instance sex or age. In theory, changing one's caste status is as difficult as changing one's sex. (Eriksen 2004, 190-198.)

are *Brahmins* (priests), then come *Kshatriyas* (kings and warriors), then *Vaishyas* (merchants), and lastly *Sudra*s (workers and craftspeople). In addition, there are the outcastes. The British started to call this category of people 'untouchables' after realising that the caste Hindus considered them to be polluting, and went through complicated purifying rituals in case they had had direct or even indirect contact with someone of this category. *Adivasis*, the tribal (aboriginal) people of India, are also located outside the caste system, and are commonly grouped together with the outcastes. All the *varnas*, as well as the so-called untouchables, are divided into thousands of *jatis*, small endogenous groups. The *varna* system functions so that members of local *jati*s can locate themselves in relation to other *jatis* in other parts of the country. (E.g. Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 62-64.)

In India non-Hindus, as with the approximately 138 million Muslims and 24 million Christians[45] who live in present day India, have their own caste system, some kind of 'kvasi-*jatis*' (Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 72; Kuruvilla 2005, 42). In the Indian subcontinent the caste system can thus be defined as a set of principles that compartmentalises the whole of Hindu society, including its non-Hindu members, into hereditary groups. These groups were – and to some extent still are – either separated or united by three factors: the regulation of marriages and interaction between the groups, the division of labour, and the hierarchy dividing the groups to low and high castes. (Eriksen 2004, 192-193; Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 62-74.) There have been caste conflict and mobility throughout the known history of caste. Furthermore, though different groups enjoy highly unequal statuses in the system, no low caste group considers itself as genuinely lowborn. (Gupta 2000a, 1-4.) Recently, the untouchables have started to call themselves *dalits* (the broken people) to remind people of the injustices done to them as well as the low position forced on them. (E.g. Eriksen 2004, 190-192; Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 61-62; Tenhunen 2007b, 43-50.)

In villages, the traditional caste-based division of labour was known as the *jajmani* system. It made occupations hereditary and joined groups of families belonging to the land-owning and service-giving categories. Every group had obligations towards other groups, and economic relations were further strengthened by social norms. (E.g. Eriksen 2004, 193; Gore 1965, 8; Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 66-67.) Within the framework of caste, voluntary social work meant that sometimes caste and community

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45 According to the 2001 census, Hindus made 80.5%, Muslims 13.4%, Christians 2.3 %, Sikhs 1.9%, Jains 0.4%, other religions and persuasions 0.6%, and those whose religion was not stated 0.1% of the that time population of 1,029 billion of India population. (Census of India 2001). Simultaneously, the all-India proportion of upper caste Hindus (= the three upper *varnas*) was approximately 29%, lower caste Hindus (*sudras*) another 29%, *Dalits* 16.2% and *Adivasis* 8.2% of the population. (E.g. Tenhunen 2007a, 35.)

councils took responsibility for individuals or families needing help. In times of distress, high caste land-owning families were obliged to help the economically related, low caste service-giving families. In small, rural communities social mechanisms with their customary sanctions were effective and relieved destitution. However, neither caste nor the joint family as social institutions were immune to greed and cruelty, and persons without land or hereditary right of giving service were not well provided for. (Gore 1965, 8-9.)

India was already in medieval times a multicultural entity in which four major world religions (Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity) were practiced alongside smaller local religions such as Jainism and Sikhism (e.g. Tenhunen 2007a, 24). Those without the principal forms of support by caste and joint family could still try to survive on the less reliable sources of provision through religious channels. The giving of alms and feeding and care of the destitute were acts of religious merit in all of the religious communities (e.g. Majumdar 1961, 22-23). Furthermore, as Gore points, "If giving was institutionalised, so was begging". One option was to become a mendicant. In addition of making a living by begging, mendicancy was a channel for establishing sanctioned social relations and achieving freedom from work. Occasionally, like in times of frequent and severe famines, some help was delivered also through the secular machinery of the state. In towns, to which political power was centred, kings and chiefs provided free kitchens, and temples gave shelter to the homeless. Sometimes, if novelist Gita Mehta (1993 /1989) is to be believed, kings provided for their subjects also as part of coronation celebrations or birth of a son. On a broad basis, however, traditional society lacked systematic means to take care of its disadvantaged people outside the caste and family structures. Up until the nineteenth century, "the only ways of handling the problems continued to be the traditional ones of individual philanthropy and religious charity". (Gore 1965, 8-11, 25-28.)

To summarise, the old tradition of voluntary social work refers to various kinds of arrangements of care and mainly non-monetary forms of social provision in times of need. The main institutions through and within which care and provision were organised were joint family, caste and religion. These institutions were strong in symbolically consolidating communal and individual duties; everyone was clear about one's place and related obligations within the system. On the one hand, the feudal-type of system contained scopes for fragility and inequality as there have always been people who do not hesitate to enslave, exploit, abuse or steal, if they have a chance, or who are indifferent to the suffering of others. On the other hand, the principals of righteous and decent behaviour were clear. There was a moral responsibility to provide for the needy, although for those in the lowest position in the Hindu society or its institutions this was not much. (E.g. Gore 1965, 8-11, 25-28.)

Experience of colonisation

India's first contact with modern(ising) Europe occurred in 1498 when the Portuguese Vasco da Gama worked his way to Calicut, today Northern Kerala, with four tiny ships. At the beginning of seventeenth century the Portuguese were followed by the Dutch, the British, and the French (e.g. Manshardt 1961, 27; Stein 2001, 197-200). For a while even Sweden and Denmark had a colony in India (Tenhunen 2007a, 25). As especially the Northern part of India was from sixteenth to early eighteenth century under Mughal rule[46], the European powers started their existence in India through trade licenses, not as conquerors. Soon, however, the policy changed, and the trade relations grew into colonial relationships with former trading partners. (E.g. Manshardt 1961, 27-28.) By 1850, the British had become both in name and in fact the paramount power in India. Once in power, they ruled India with the principle of "divide and rule", instigating hostilities between the local communities (e.g. Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 25-27). Unlike earlier non-European invaders they had no intention in settling the country: the officers served their terms and returned to England. To the British, India was a foreign country in which they succeeded, to a marked degree, in insulating themselves from the local people. (Manshardt 1961, 27-29.) However, unlike earlier conquerors, the British aspired to make India a political entity with a centralised administration (Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 25).

The fact that the British came to India first as traders coloured their relationships with the Indian people. An invader seeking political power could not have survived without paying some attention to needs of the people. The concern of the British was trade alone, the operations of the East India Company being geared to the demands of its shareholders. (Manshardt 1961, 28; Robins 2006.) In essence, this was neatly in line with the prevalent targets of colonialism, to create and control markets for Western goods, and gain and maintain access to labour and raw materials with low costs

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46 Babur, the great grandson of Tamerlane (Timur) and from his mother's side a descendant of Genghiz Khan, established the Mughal Empire in India in late 1520s. The empire was further expanded by his descendants Hymayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. At the height of its power by the seventeenth century, the Mughal Empire was "the largest and the most centralized state up to that time" (Stein 2001, 164), controlling most of the Indian subcontinent north of the Kaveri basin in the south. The imperial rule of the Mughals is reckoned to have ended in 1707 with the death of Aurangzeb, when many of his vassals established themselves as sovereign rulers: During 18th century the empire declined quickly by wars of succession, agrarian crises, growth of religious intolerance, rise of other Indian empires and finally British colonialism. While some remnants of the Mughal Empire survived until 1858, when the British Crown took over India, in practice its rulers were from the beginning of nineteenth century controlled by the British East India Company. For more about the Mughal rule in India, see e.g. Stein 2001, 164-189.

(McLeod 2000, 7). Under these circumstances India influenced the lives of Europeans in many ways. Finland, until 1809 an eastern county of Sweden and thereafter an autonomous part of Russia up to independence in 1917, supported herself by producing and exporting tar that was used for the maintenance of the wooden parts of sailing ships. In Europe, Indian cotton allowed many to afford several sets of clothes, which improved the level of hygiene[47]. Moreover, tea and sugar found ways to European mouths, and saltpetre, the ingredient of gunpowder, added to the firepower of European armies. (Tenhunen 2007a, 25.) India was also the source of raw materials such as jute, cotton, opium and indigo. Above all else, however, 'the crown jewel of Britain' enriched the British Empire by providing markets for industrial products of the mills in England[48]. In India, the flow of material to Europe was often contrasted by local shortages, heavy

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47 Though Britain in particular is famous for its cotton mills, in my hometown of Tampere, located in inland Finland but with good sources of hydroelectric power, a cotton mill founded by James Finlayson in 1820 left an enduring mark to the locality by starting the bigger scale industrialisation of the town and shaping the lives of generations of workers.

48 For the colonising states, colonialism was economically extremely profitable, and colonialism and capitalism benefited each other and were part of each other (e.g. McLeod 2000, 7). The economic history of colonialism is too vast an area to be given justice here. Suffice it to say that the economic and political processes in Europe and in the colonies were manifold and intertwined. In the case of India's main coloniser Britain, Harvey Kaye explicates that capitalism "required an accumulation and concentration of resources, but (…) the fundamental accumulation began not in colonial transfers but in transfers from poor to rich in Europe itself and was put to developmental and transformative purposes (…) by determined middle classes in England". India was an important market for the British mills, advancing also British cohesion and national identity by unifying the northern mill owners and southern financiers". Kaye summarises that in subsequent analysis the Westerners have tended to caress the idea that European colonialism liberated, modernised, and revolutionised Africa and Asia, whereas the of former colonial peoples have accused imperialism for exploiting and oppressing the colonised, creating formidable barriers to progress. While Kaye sees the balance sheet "heavily weighted against the former colonisers", he also reminds that Europeans treated each other as badly, that African and Asian peoples were similarly aggressive and violent toward their fellow continentals, and that there were also Africans and Asians with "vested interests and conservative instincts". In Europe "benefits of imperialism were most unequally distributed by region and class" and "the racism and violence of imperialism and colonialism "recoiled" and "barbarized" European life as well". (Kaye 1995, 16-18.)

taxation and famines[49.] (E.g. Kaye 1995, 16-17.) The situation was bound to engender deep economic, political, cultural and epistemological consequences.

In India, as elsewhere, colonialism provided a framework to comprehend the world and to understand one's own place in it. Emblematic of the situation, the British Empire in India (also called *Raj*) was only partly founded on physical power. Even at its strongest, the number of the British armed forces in India equalled no more than small percentage of the Indian population. The key to keeping the British in power and a common strategy of the colonial powers in general was that both the colonisers and the colonised internalised the worldview of the Empire, in particular the idea of the cultural superiority of the colonisers. (E.g. Said 1979; Chandra 1992, 11.) Thus, the people of the conquered lands were taught that the European worldview is the best and truest. At the same time, the approach constituted the colonised as 'uncivilised' and saw their culture as worthless. (E.g. Mann 2004; McLeod 2000, 19; Nandy 1988.) On the other hand, colonialism, at its worst propelling the slave trade and genocides, needed justifications also among the colonisers. The late Edward Said identified the mental and philosophical structure that made colonialism possible as 'Orientalism' in a book of the same name (Said 1979). For Said, Orientalism marked a European strategy of positional superiority in all practices and attitudes in relation to Orient, or non-Western world and its people in general. Orientalism was essentially about governing, a discourse that enabled Europe and Europeans to have an upper hand in all relations with the non-Europeans. Besides settling and conquering, the governance worked through statements, official views and descriptions about the Orient and its inhabitants. (Said 1979, 1-3.) In the late 20th century the approach has been re-named also as 'epistemic violence', 'colonisation of the mind' and 'cultural imperialism' (e.g. McLeod 2000, 8; Nandy 1988).

As the above conveys, colonialism was a self-justifying project, which can hardly be understood without paying attention to its inherent logic of self-legitimation. To a great extent, the justification was articulated as bringing modernisation and progress,

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49 For instance, Tenhunen (2007a, 28) describes that the stronger the hold of the British East India Company of India, the more frequent famines in the area became. In 1770, almost one-third of the local people died in a famine in Bengal, the stronghold of Britain, followed by another severe famine in Northern India in 1783. In Orissa, the shift of the rule from the East India Company to the Crown was accompanied by the worst Orissa famine in 1866 in which over a million out of approximately eight million people perished. This was at least partly because the administration did not take the famine seriously until it was too late, and even then many were eager to make profit with rising prizes of food grains. People died because they could not afford the grain that was available. Rather atypically, the British also admitted that the catastrophe was a monumental administrative failure. (Kalia 1994, 27.) As late as 1943–44 3.5-3.8 million people died from hunger in Bengal, unable to afford the grain in stock. More about famines and famine measures in India e.g. in Stein 2001, 260-264.

or "moral and material improvement" to the colonised, that is making the colonised more alike the colonisers. The approach is known as the civilising mission, carrying a share in which became a sign of being 'a respectable' European a country. (E.g. Mann 2004, 4-5; Kiernan 1995, 154.) The civilising mission was to a great extent linked with religion. Christianity was, or bent to be, a fit stooge to justify the imperial policies to the extent that civilising, often equalling spreading of Christianity, was elevated into a Christian obligation, "the white man's burden". Many of the civilisers were evangelical Christians, who promoted discipline and their own middle class values as means for morally pure life and salvation (Hall 1992; Mann 2004, 6-8). Among them were a number of active middle-class women, to whom the mission opened up opportunities to be active in the public domain, including social reform. In terms of women's freedom, this was a significant advance: women were able to travel, work outside the home, and fight for "good" causes. (Jayawardena 1995, 107.) Secular civilisers, interested in reforming India according to her old traditions, also believed in discipline and individualism: "men had to be educated until they could discipline themselves". (Mann 2004, 12.) In the view of Marxist historian Victor Kiernan, the British religious revival both at home and overseas was connected to the fear and confusion that the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution raised. Yet, neither domestic maladies, such as abuses in coal mines, nor abuses in the colonies were seen correlative of capitalism, nor was the slave trade contradictory to liberty. (Kiernan 1995, 154-166.)

In India, the civilising mission meant a variety of things from fighting smallpox to introducing games like football, 'liberating' people from 'Oriental oppression' and establishing 'the good government´, in other words Western institutions of governance. Indian medical systems, though treated by British administrators as irrational, superstitious and unscientific were, only gradually, replaced by Western medicine. Further, progress meant technological equipments and advances, such as "steamboats to India's rivers, railways linking her major cities". With India being the source of agricultural products and raw materials for the Empire, industrial development was never considered. After the First World War, and especially after the Great Depression in 1930s, it became clear that to cope with the needs of the rising population, British India would need "to improve her economic productivity". The need of economic development was turned into a further justification for colonial rule. (Mann 2004, 9-17; see also Cohn 2007, 80.) Yet, when India became independent in 1947, the area lacked the economic and social infrastructure to be a productive unit (Kuruvilla 2005, 43).

Colonialism and its civilising mission changed and shaped India in a number of ways, as they changed Europe and Britain. In India, as in other colonies, the European complacency was "fortified by the admiration for European ways that many in the colonies felt" (Kiernan 1995, 154-157). In other words, colonialism was seductive:

some of the colonised also admired the colonisers and desired to be like them (Gandhi 1998, 4; Kiernan 1995, 155; see also Fanon 2001/1961 and Nandy 1988). Within the framework 'set by the masters', most of all through Western education, in particular the (men of) indigenous upper classes could advance their position (e.g. Nandy 1988). In India, an important and far-reaching decision was to provide access to Western education to members of local elites only, and not to 'the masses' (e.g. Mann, 2004, 19-20; Manshardt 1961, 29). The educated members of the indigenous elite were to assist in the administration of the area. To many, access to new kind of knowledge and world view was genuinely revolutionary. Unlike all previous attempts of cultural penetration in the Indian subcontinent, Christianity and a Western education produced a new kind of ferment, having far-reaching effects on the social and political life. "More and more thinking Indians were introduced to a new sense of values, and felt uneasy supporting social customs which the new sense of values condemned." Accordingly, early Christian missionaries, who opposed practices like child marriage, polygamy, female infanticide, and *sati* (the widow burning practice) "found stout allies in awakened Indians themselves". Together, they called for reforms within the Hindu social structure, such as remarriage of Hindu widows and betterment of the situation of the outcastes[50]. (Manshardt 1961, 29-30.)

In retrospect, however, the British rule solidified the caste system, and strengthened the position of the Brahmins. Though caste in India is a social and historical fact, "an all-India caste system derived from the British imagination of India's population as a strictly divided society", a notion at least partly based on the British experience of class society in Britain. In India the British recognised the Brahmins as their counterpart, and adhered to the Brahman understanding of the local society. Further, in order to better identify their objects of the civilising mission, "the British separated their colonial antagonists into classes, clans, castes and various communities", thereby increasing the role of caste as a point of reference. (E.g. Mann 2004, 18-19.)[51]. In the end, the civilising mission of British India was unclear and lacked perspective. Moreo-

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50   Of these, sati and widow remarriage had direct relevance in the lives of female upper-caste Hindus, among whom sati was actually considered to have been a relatively rare occurrence at the time. Lower castes, or men of any caste, had no restrictions for remarriage. Michael Mann (2004, 17-18) notes that the most spectacular issue, sati was a good target for the British. "Sensationalism, combined with sexuality, violence and the desire to abolish the atavistic practices" guided reform politics more than concerns about the state of women or human rights in India.

51   The same classification continues to have political influence in the politics and administrative and educational sectors of contemporary India, one example being state reservation policies that guarantee the groups at the lowest ranks of the caste hierarchy a share of government jobs, parliamentary seats, and university admissions. (E.g. Jenkins 2003, 1144.)

ver, the civilising project was contradicted by the fear of the colonised becoming civilised and equal. Had the mission been considered fulfilled, there would no longer been justification for colonial rule. (Mann 2004, 19-24.)

Significantly for social work, colonialism was not, however, a totally black and white affair. Despite its oppressive and exploitative character, colonialism also contained idealism and attempts to improve the situation of the colonised. Aspects of the civilising mission, as well as colonial philanthropy, can be seen also in this light. Although they did not question imperialism, the philanthropists – as well as many of the civilisers – wanted to make colonialism better serve both the colonisers and the colonised. (Lambert & Lester 2004.) However biased, together with some like-minded locals, they were identifying social problems and justifying the need to intervene. Some of their attempts come already close to what we today conceive as social or societal work. Another connection to emerging social work in Britain was that neither the civilising mission nor philanthropy was restricted to the colonies. Both inside and outside Britain 'betterment' was regarded as a legitimate mandate to civilise the 'masses'[52] (Mann 2004, 8). In particular the colonial philanthropists, active for instance in the campaign against slavery, did connect the suffering of the colonised and the social and economic changes taking place in Britain, and tried to further their causes by political work at home. Their critics were quick to adopt their political discourse and turn it upside down, blaming the philanthropists for being concerned only about distant others in the colonies, but not the poor and oppressed at home. (Lambert & Lester 2004, 330-336.)

In addition to, and in spite of the above discussed influences, through the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century social reform was often on the agenda in India. As Mann writes, Indians "searched for independent and indigenous sources for their modernising initiatives." Several religious reform movements emerged within Hinduism, such as the *Brahmo Samaj*, the *Arya Samaj*, and the *Ramakrishna Mission*. Despite their religious character, sometimes combined with political agitation, these movements also held to the need for social reform, and introduced new kinds of thinking and practices, pursuing for example national education. From 1870s onwards, in India "a multitude of educational institutions was founded, which endeavoured to combine the best of East and West" (Mann

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52 Examples of the upper/middle class civilising the lower/working class people can found also in Finland. When the independence in 1917 was followed by a bloody civil war in 1918 in which 'white' non-socialists fought and won against 'red' socialists, the red mothers were easily considered as unfit for parenthood because of their political opinions and suspected class-related immorality. While many of them were left with at best meagre survival assets, their behaviour was under scrutiny and they had to fear that their children would be taken into white custody. Later, the *Marttaliitto* (the Martha Association), a women's association specialised in home economics, brushed up the household and parenting skills of the lower middle class women educating them to take 'proper' care of their homes and raise healthy, strong citizens.

2004, 20). The Theosophical Society also gathered both Westerners[53] and Indians, some of whom worked actively for social reforms. (E.g. Manshardt 1961, 31-32.) On the political front, a retired British officer founded Indian National Congress in 1885 to function as a safety valve for loyal Indian gentlemen to practice civilised dialogue with the British rulers. However, the party soon developed into an engine of the Indian Independence movement. (E.g. Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 26.) As the Congress platform was increasingly dedicated to political topics around the independence, discussion on social reform was funnelled into a separate movement. This movement had its first session in Madras in 1887 under the name the Indian National Social Conference. (Manshardt 1961, 32.)

Throughout the nineteenth century ideas of social reform were firmly linked with religious change. In the beginning of twentieth century "men and organizations arose looking at social reforms from liberal, intellectual and humanitarian point of view" (Manshardt 1961, 32-34). The Servants of India Society, founded in 1905 by Gopala Krishna Gokhale, laid the foundation of secular social work in India (e.g. Billimoria 1961, 61). Moreover, social welfare organisations following the British model found their way into India. The nature of these early social work attempts was largely ameliorative. (Manshardt 1961, 34.) The little preventive work and institutional planning that were practised centred on metropolitan areas like Bombay. With individual and organisational attempts to tackle social problems being predominantly voluntary, they further contributed to present perception of the 'old' tradition of voluntary social work.

The independence movement

The independence movement of India is the topic of numerous volumes alone. In brief, the Sepoy Mutiny in India in 1857 can be considered as a major starting point (e.g. Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 25). After the Mutiny it was no longer possible for the British to cherish the idea that the Indians loved to be ruled by them (Kiernan 1995, 151). The independence movement was persistent, and contained both violent and non-violent resistance. In the end, various kinds of processes led to the disruption of the British

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53 Focusing on Western women in South Asia during the British rule, Kumari Jayawardena (1995, 107-134) writes about the Theosophist women Helena Blavatsky and Annie Beasant as "the two most outstanding women rebels of their period" (ibid. 114). They each combined spiritualism and feminism in their own unique ways. In India Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875, adhered to the principle of cultural relativism, limiting her feminism to the West. Something similar happened to Beasant, who before turning to Theosophy had been an active socialist, strong supporter of female factory worker's strikes, and member of the executive committee of the Fabian society along with Bernand Shaw and Sidney Webb. While supporting the militant women's rights movement in Europe, in India Beasant championed a restricted, traditional education for local women.

colonial rule in India. According to a common though also challenged interpretation, to hamper the Congress-led independence movement the British tactically privileged Muslims, with the consequence that the Muslim elite, fearing the supremacy of Hindus, founded the Muslim League in 1906 to guard their interests. The Congress launched a protest campaign in the name of unity of Indians, and so forth. In a way, the independence movement conveyed and replayed the hostilities and violence between the religious communities that British rule had on its part affirmed, anchoring communal violence deep into the Indian sub-continent. (E.g. Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 29-30.)

In relation to the independence movement, Orissa makes a story of its own. According to Ravi Kalia (1994), from the beginning of the occupation of Orissa in 1804 by the British, the administration of the province was characterised by alternating rebellions, droughts, floods and famines (see fn 49). While the hardships provided the Oriyas with a common cause to rally around, they lost their political unity when the British divided the area and thus the Oriya speaking population under the administrative units of Bengal, Madras and Central Provinces. Though Orissa had experienced political and geographical dismemberment already under the Mughal and Maratha rules, it had earlier managed to retain its linguistic and cultural identity. The British administrative experiments stirred nationalist feelings and established a view of the British as the worst tyrants ever. Moreover, British rule broke "the unity of the old land-controlling kin groups (…) and created a new "intermediate" classes throughout the subcontinent." In Orissa this was felt as exploitation by "Bengalis, Tamils and Hindi-Speakers of the Central Provinces". Therefore, the central concern of Oriya political consciousness was the unification of Oriya territories under a separate province to safeguard the Oriya language and identity against the onslaught of Bengali, Tamil, and Hindi. Equally important aim was to protect local administrative jobs from slipping to the English-educated *babus* from non-Oriya backgrounds. To achieve these goals, cooperation with the British was seen essential despite the unpopularity of their rule. Finally, the Oriya movement for a separate province on a linguistic basis culminated in the creation of the new province of Orissa in April 1936. (Kalia 1994, xiii-xiv.) In other words, rather than adhering to the main front of the independence movement, the Oriyas prioritised moves that secured their linguistic and cultural identity.

Concurrently, the incongruity of the civilising mission and the racism of the imperial rule disintegrated the fortitude of colonialism not only in the eyes of the colonised, but also amongst a number of white people. The two World Wars, the first being a European civil war in nature, further functioned as eye-openers to many of the colonised. Around one million Indian soldiers fought with the British troops in the First and two million in the Second World War. Like their European counterparts, they returned home with changed ideas about themselves and their world. Nonetheless, after the war

imperial policy recognised them neither as equals with Europeans nor fit to govern their lands. (E.g. Kaye 1995, 17.) As a response to increasing opposition in India, the British increased the role of Indians in administration, but the speed of reforms was no longer fast enough for the Congress (e.g. Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 27). Therefore, 1920-1947 was a period of non-cooperation with the government. The non-cooperation was by and large led by Mohandas Gandhi, who became a major player in Indian politics and a leading figure of the nationalist movement for more than two decades.

One of the strengths of Gandhi, also for the global process of decolonisation, was that he was among the first able to formulate and articulate resistance against the hegemonic and pervasive worldview of imperialism. What's more, he was able to make his views and politics accessible to the general public (e.g. Chatterjee 2006, 14). The words of the Indian independence movement were to great extent written by Gandhi, culminating in demands for *swadeshi*, 'self sufficiency', and *swaraj*, self-rule. Skilled in mobilising, Gandhi opposed the Empire in a way that could be described as a massive consumer movement in favour of local production. In practice this meant the promotion of revival of cotton spinning and weaving for household and local use, which was combined with a boycott against the factory-made cloth produced from Indian cotton in British mills and shipped back to India for sale. To begin with, spinning and weaving were far from easy, and in the eyes of many in the first place absurd choices, and many who were determined to make their living from it struggled on the edge of starvation. The point of the struggle was that the tax-free imperial production subjugated local production in India and made the Indians dependant on the British for their basic needs. The best-known non-violent civil disobedience act of Gandhi's political career was the "Salt March" in March-April 1930 against the British salt tax. Gandhi was jailed several times, and used fasting, which he was determined to continue until death if necessary, as a political tool. His politics turned the general opinion in India and elsewhere to accept the independence of India (Tähtinen 1970, 22)[54].

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54 In the latter part of his life, Gandhi invested his efforts in limiting communal violence and the massacres that took place as part of the process of the partition of India into India and Pakistan, which he personally opposed. Gandhi was shot dead in January 1948 by a Hindu extremist. Although an ambiguous figure, for many too human to be a saint and overly charismatic for a politician, Gandhi has stood the test of time. While in India he was a target of a rather limited range of iconic representations (Markovits 2004, 13), that were used and misused to justify a variety of issues, his value should not be underestimated. Gandhi continues to live in people's minds, often as someone "not read but only heard" (Nandy & Jahanbegloo 2006, 36), demonstrated also by the fact that most male politicians still find it safest to use *khadi*, the cloth quality attached to the independence movement, as their political uniform (e.g. Tarlo 1996, 320-322). Gandhi personally disliked all 'isms' and refused to found any movement in his name. In this sense "there are no direct heirs to Gandhi" but a whole milieu of activists who claim inspiration from him. (Markovits 2004, 62.)

Importantly, Gandhi's political ideas challenged British and Indians alike. Essentially a critic of modern civilisation (e.g. Parel 1997), Gandhi saw colonial structures of power based on aggressive masculinity as well as local hierarchies of caste and class as a homologous phenomenon. He tried to dissolve them through highlighting the civilising value of femininity, as well as de-intellectualising Indian politics by taking advantage of the mass movement, and demanding that everyone practice a coherent, collective ethics. These tactics also worked as countermoves against the high rank and ritual purity traditionally attached to intellectual duties seen largely as the realm of the upper caste (*Brahmin*) men. (Nandy 2006, 47-50.) Gandhi was also strongly opposed to untouchability (e.g. Tähtinen 1970, 30), albeit his strategy of trying to alter the nature of the system rather than abolish it also raised criticism. The most fierce of his contemporary critics was B. R. Ambedkar, who demanded the total abolition of the caste system on the basis that as long as the system is alive, it gives licence to oppression.

Social work at the end of British rule

As part and parcel with his political work in India, Gandhi was a focal initiator of voluntary work with communities. In retrospect, his contribution is undisputed to the extent that he is recognised as 'the most sincere social worker' of India (see, e.g, Billimoria 1961, 61). Gandhi's ideas on social work were in line with his conceptions of the kind of politics India should follow. For Gandhi, the reason for poverty was the greediness of the wealthy and the exploitation that inevitably follows. The core of his message was that the rich have to volunteer to live with less so that everyone can get what is necessary for a livelihood. (E.g. Iyer 1973, 35-36.) The same thing is expressed in the saying "the earth can sustain everybody's needs but not anyone's greed". Gandhi dreamed of India consisting of self-sufficient independent villages, and in them egalitarian villagers, who have work and a dwelling place, but also time, and the right, for thinking, spirituality, culture, and conversations (Tähtinen 1970, 55). In other words, though Gandhi favoured ascetism and lived himself like a hermit, he recommended neither poor education nor poor aesthetics. (E.g. Parel 1997, lvii.) Instead, he did advocate issues such as communal unity, removal of untouchability, local production to cover everyday needs, well-functioning village sanitation, improving the position of peasants, workers, *adivasis*, people with leprosy, and so forth. (Gandhi 1941.) He did not, however, speak of social work and social workers as such; rather his point was that any work for the community is valuable. He was also generally against all kind of frippery through one's know-how or utilising one's education or professional expertise for making money or emphasising one's speciality. Therefore, for Gandhi social work

cannot be a profession; it is a duty (e.g. Tähtinen 1970, 54). In social work, Gandhi left behind a strong legacy. Emphasising simplicity, voluntary poverty, and a community orientation he set the standards for voluntary social work.

On the professional front, the Sir Dorabji Tata[55] Graduate School of Social Work (later Tata Institute of Social Sciences) was founded in Bombay in 1936 as the first educational institute of social work in India to prepare students for the profession of social work. The school "made a major departure from the established traditions in the country". Until then, social work had been synonymous with "voluntariness" and although there were paid workers in individual agencies, they were not called social workers (Gore 1965, 38). Directed by the American Clifford Manshardt, "the curriculum was built closely along the lines of British and American schools of social work, and the bibliography was prepared by the University of Chicago library" (Kuruvilla 2005, 45). In retrospect, Gore was of the opinion that the scientific approach of the school clearly contributed to the understanding of the causes of social problems but the "failure to provide a local social context to the social sciences and techniques is one of the weak spots in their development in our country" (Gore 1965, 37-38). The concerns of the suitability of Western social work theories to the circumstances of the Global South is returned to later in the chapter, as well as the chasm between voluntary and professional social work in India. In a sense, the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work was a forerunner in the development that followed after the Second World War, when education in social work, following the Western style of services, expanded to the formerly colonised countries. (Payne 2005, 80.) One of the first writers on the topic, James Midgley (1981), called this professional imperialism, and wondered what good can a practice based on values such as liberalism and individualism, and theories and methodologies that originate back to capitalist Western societies, do in the so-called

55 Sir Dorabji Tata (1859-1932) was the eldest son of Jamsetji Tata, who in 1868 established a trading company in Bombay. The company expanded quickly and, as David Ludden (2006, 156) condenses, the "Tatas became India's greatest industrial dynasty". Today, the Tata Group, a multinational Mumbai-based conglomerate and, in terms of revenue, India's largest private corporation group, has interests e.g. in steel, automobiles, information technology, communication, energy industry and tea. The Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, established in 1932, is one of the oldest philanthropic organisations in India, "known for promoting and setting up pioneering institutions of national importance", such as Tata Institute of Social Sciences (1936), Tata Memorial Hospital (1941), Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (1945), National Centre for the Performing Arts (1966), The National Institute of Advanced Studies (1988) The J.R.D. Tata Centre for Ecotechnology (1998), and the Sir Dorabji Tata Centre for Research in Tropical Diseases (2000) (Sir Dorabji Tata Trust 2009). While The Tata Group is known for its professional and coordinated corporate social responsibility activities, and ranked among the most reputable companies of the world, it is also accused of disregard of and even violence towards local people and environmental and nature conservation demands if they stand on the way of the group's interests. In India the latter are centred around local disputes for instance in Kalinganagar and Dhamra in Orissa and Singur in West Bengal.

Third World. Interestingly though, around the time of founding social work education in India, the Tatas also funded a trust that provided "the early beginnings of social work education at the London School of Economics". In London the funds were used for a chair in Social Administration. The Tatas' funding was motivated by a desire that methods to be developed on poverty elimination in Britain could be then adapted to Indian conditions. (Report of the Second Review Committee 1978, 11.)

Developing the nation

Overnight, on 15th of August in 1947 the British India and the hundreds of formally independent kingdoms turned into the independent states of India and Pakistan, which then consisted of West and East Pakistan[56]. Despite the generally non-violent aura of the Indian independence movement, the Partition of the British India into predominantly Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan was a process that contained plenty of violence and atrocities (e.g. Das 1995, 55-83; Butalia 1995; Rikkilä & Ranta-Tyrkkö 2000, 24-27). The traumas and hostilities it left behind are far from solved even today, and have served as a root cause for several wars between the countries. The new nation of India had around 370 million inhabitants (Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 12). In 2009, the figure is almost 1.2 billion, which makes on average every sixth person on the Earth. The estimation is that the population growth might reach its peak somewhere at 1.5 − 1.6 billion, making India the biggest nation in the world long before that (Säävälä 2007a, 109-115). India had its first 'non-violent' nuclear test in 1974, has the third largest military force in the world, and despite many problems in industry and agriculture, one of the fastest growing national economies. By the same token, in the beginning of 21st century almost half of the children are malnourished (compared to 16% in China), and India's share of the world's illiterate is 40% (Säävälä 2007b, 149, 153). The multiple histories of independent India being, for the most part, beyond my focus and reach, in the following I make just a few rough notes about economic developments, the joint family and caste, and the all-pervasive paradigm of development. A selection of figures that help to outline India and Orissa in proportion to each other each other, are provided in Appendix 3.

In post-independence planning, the figures of Jawaharlar Nehru and Mohandas Gandhi symbolised two alternative strategies (e.g. Kuruvilla 2005, 44) of developing the nation. The choice of the leading politicians, with Nehru at the head, was to mod-

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56 In 1971, the eastern part of Pakistan became independent after a civil war with West Pakistan, and took the name Bangladesh.

ernise India with an emphasis on industrial development. Gandhi, who had rejected the notion of India as backward country and who had argued for economic concepts and visions set within the context of rural India died soon after independence, and his approach was to large extent pushed aside. In Chandra's view (1992), Nehru and others did not dismiss Gandhi's vision due to a lack of regard for him, but because his vision of developing the nation according to moral principles was thought to be absurd in a rapidly modernising world. To Chandra the decision evidences that traditional categories of Indian thought had already disappeared beyond the reach of the leading politicians; the imperialist discourse of modernity had taken them over. (Ibid. 9-12.) The country adopted a centralised command economy inspired by the example of the Soviet Union, and started to develop industries of its own. The command economy developed gradually into a mixed economy that consisted of a strong public sector, state-owned businesses, state regulated private enterprises, and a so-called informal sector that covered small enterprises and small production plants freed from state regulation. Multinational companies were allowed to function in India only if they adjusted to state regulation. The planned economy was meant to reduce dependency on foreign investments and technology, and create a strong foundation for indigenous industries. Instead, in the long run it led to isolation in world trade, while domestic development stumbled because of inefficiency in production, low economic growth and widespread corruption. (Tenhunen 2007a, 19-20.)

In economic policy, the state of India made major reforms in 1991 by taking a turn into neo-liberal economics (e.g. Kuruvilla 2005, 44) after the economic crisis and witnessing the collapse of the Soviet Union. So called 'licence-*Ra*j' that had obstructed investments and the functioning of companies was put to an end, the currency of the Rupee was devalued, and the loss-making state-owned companies privatised. Foreign trade was made easier and the regulation of foreign investments diminished. (Tenhunen 2007a, 20.) The changes boosted the Indian economy, and together with it the blossoming of the 'haves' of India, the solvent and educated section of the nation, fit to compete in world-class. If this super-India composes around one-fourth of the population, the 'have-nots', depending on the estimate making up the remaining two-thirds or three-fourths of Indians, find it much harder.

According to Gosh (2004), India's seemingly good economic growth has been characterised by a low employment generation, greater income inequality, and the persistence of poverty: on the whole the process of global economic integration has done little to improve the material conditions of most of the population. Analysing the Indian political economy, he finds several continuing contradictions that have crucially inhibited economic growth and reduced the spread of its benefits across all the citizenry over most of the second half of the twentieth century: First of all, the state has carried two differ-

ent, and in the long run, incompatible roles. On the one hand, it has tried to maintain a growing investment expenditure to keep the domestic market expanding, on the other hand, it has simultaneously been the medium through which large-scale transfers have been made to capitalists and proto-capitalist groups (through tolerance of widespread and growing tax evasion, reductions in tax rates and incidence, subsidies and transfers, lucrative contracts, even privatisation of public assets). This dual agenda of the state has worsened its fiscal position. Secondly, the state has been unable to impose a minimum measure of discipline and respect for the law among the capitalists. Thirdly, India has suffered from social and cultural milieu typical of developing countries: There has been "an imbalance between the possibilities of domestic production and the patterns of demand emanating from the relatively affluent sections of society who account for much of the growth of potential demand for consumer goods". Fourthly, "social policy which ensured the provision of basic needs to the entire population was never a priority, nor were provision which focused on improved work conditions in most workplaces". Instead, there has been "a high level of social tolerance for high and growing asset inequality, persistent poverty and low levels of human development among a vast section of the population, (…) growing urban rural divide" and inadequate creation of productive employment relative to the expansion in population. (Ibid. 291-293.)

One of the alarming indicators suggesting that life has become more wretched especially for the people who depend on agriculture, approximately 65% of the population (Tenhunen 2007c, 177), has been the wave of suicide by farmers particularly in the state of Andhra Pradesh (neighbouring Orissa in to the south), but also elsewhere, during the first decade of the millennium. Still, agriculture is not the only traditional livelihood hit hard. Kuruvilla's (2005, 47-50) example from the fisheries sector and traditional fishing communities from Kerala shows that the rapid industrialisation process of the fishing sector, mastered from outside, has excluded local fishermen from their profession and made fish an expensive source of nutrition for local people, contrary to the earlier state of affairs. On the other hand, more and more children go to school, especially after the schools started to offer one free meal a day for every child (middaymeal scheme) (Säävälä 2007b, 156), and information technology provides new opportunities for transparency, diminishing scopes for corruption (Tenhunen 2007d, 199).

Despite changes and modernisation, basic social institutions like the joint family and caste have not become insignificant. In rural areas, where the majority of Indians still live, the joint family is common. As earlier, the joint family continues to be the main source of care and social provision. According to Gangrade, even for many who live in cities and in nuclear families, the family is still larger than that. So-called nuclear families are usually united by a complicated network of consanguinity and affinity into the larger joint family kind of units. If they find their position threatened or face a

crisis, they hang tight together. "Though each nuclear family usually maintains a separate household, it does not conceive of itself as a unit apart from the larger kin group". (Gangrade 1998, 111-112.)

If family is still highly responsible for care and provision, the situation is not quite the same with caste. Officially the caste system was abolished in 1950. In practice this meant abandoning caste-based discrimination by law, but cultural institutions simply cannot be abolished that easily. In the beginning of 21st century, for instance, quotas in education and the public sector continue to be defined in caste terms, securing seats for 'the scheduled' tribes and castes (*adivasis* and *dalits*), which has also made way for the politicisation of caste. Through the democratic system the low castes have been able to improve their position also in reality, making a 'silent revolution' especially in North Indian politics (Jaffrelot 2003). Further, the caste system has been prone to change for several other reasons, as have been the obligations of care and provision it once contained. When people are increasingly employed on the basis of their competence, not caste position, new occupations, urbanisation and monetarisation complicate the division of people by *jati*. Again, rural areas make a different story than urban, and there are differences amongst the states with regard to the pervasiveness of caste: "In some regions caste hierarchies, now mixed with class differences, have an overwhelming influence on people's lives, whereas in some other areas, class, rather than caste distinctions, governs social relations" (Kuruvilla 2005, 42). The connection between one's *jati* and profession is not necessarily totally blurred even in metropolitan cities, but it is more frail, ambiguous and prone to conscious rewriting. On the other hand, there are also fronts like the matrimonials[57] as well as many ritualistic and social functions where the caste system is still going strong. All in all, caste remains a site of constant negotiation and power struggles. (Eriksen 2004; Tamminen& Zenger 1998, 75; Tenhunen 2007 b, 46-52.)

Social work in independent India

On the social work front, the new constitution of India required the state to promote the welfare of the people. Consequently, the Central Social Welfare Board was set up in 1953 to assist voluntary organisations, and the five-year plans had provision for social work. The main focus of the work was "on the Gandhian heritage of commitment to community welfare programmes, self-help, developing local resources, economic and

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57 Matrimonials are advertisements casting around for potential spouse candidates. They are often posted by someone (a trusted match maker, possibly a parent or other close elder relative) on behalf of the man or woman whose marriage is to be arranged.

cultural improvement", not on Western social work (Kumar 1994, ref. Payne 2005, 81). Moreover, different civic movements arose to improve the situation of the poorer sections of the society. Following gandhian ideals, the Vinoba Bhave led a movement demanding land for the landless (the *Bhoodan* movement) (e.g. Krishna 2004, 31). Bhimrao Ramji (/Baba Rao) Ambedkar was the first untouchable, or *dalit*, as he preferred to identify himself, major leader of the untouchables. He helped to establish the identity of the *dalits* as an articulate, self-aware group, and set goals for the movement, no less than abolition of the caste system. Eventually, after having used political means and been one of the writers of the constitution of India, Ambedkar felt that his attempts for equal rights, respect and opportunities for the *dalits* succeeded only in form but not in substance. Disappointed in politics he, and a number of his followers, converted to Buddhism. Important, though not the sole reason for the conversion, was his opposition to the oppressive nature of the caste system. (E.g. Gore 1993.)

Meanwhile, a footing for professional social work was also being built. In the beginning the programmes were oriented towards a professional and scientific approach along Western examples. Therefore, they "took up the cause of assisting people in their adjustment to an industrial, urban, and metropolis dominated social milieu rather than identifying the causes of poverty and working for its removal". Being based on an individual, urban based model, social work education "did not relate to training of social workers to meet the needs of (…) vast rural populations living in poverty." (Report of the Second Review Committee 1978, 12-13.) For the obvious reason that social work models developed in more individualistic Western societies with a different social and economic structure did not quite meet the situation in India, the approach was soon followed by conscious attempts to indigenise professional social work. In India it has been bound to contextual factors such as such as local demographic and social scenarios, the hierarchical class and caste structure, and the scale of poverty among the population. (E.g. Kuruvilla 2005, 41-45.) While the example and ideas of Gandhi did not as such have much influence on the development of professional social work in India (Nadkarni 2007, 56), they brought in notions of social action and social change more strongly than in the Western social work practice of the time (Kuruvilla 2005, 45). From my perspective, when compared to Finnish social work practices, today social work in India also appears strongly community-oriented and far more political than in Finland.

Nonetheless, professional social work in India "forms part of the modernisation endeavour, its general orientation being to integrate the marginalised into the mainstream". It "fills the gaps of traditional social work, enabling the transition from social systems based on traditional values to the 'modern' society". (Kuruvilla 2005, 45.) The learning I gained during a brief teacher exchange period in Mumbai in December 2007 was that in India there actually are a number of state-level welfare programmes target-

ed to alleviate the situation of the people in structurally disadvantaged positions who have difficulties to survive. At the grassroots level, a common strategy is to identify responsible key persons in families and communities. Much of the family support takes place through the women, providing them with means and skills to earn income, often through getting organised as women's groups. However, a common problem addressed by different practitioners is that the welfare programmes seldom reach exactly those they are targeted for. The money disappears to other pockets on the way, or the programmes help those already with survival assets. Therefore, an important task for many social workers is to make the programmes and the intended beneficiaries meet. This requires both finding creative ways to either reject or bypass corruption, and working closely with the very people the programmes are meant for, mobilising them for the cause.

Voluntary versus professional social work

As noted earlier, from the beginning of professional social work in India, social work has been divided into two distinct spheres, which almost form enclaves of their own. In 2007 there were more than 200 social work programmes going on in Indian universities, and it has long been possible to defend a PhD in social work. In addition, there are short courses available for 'paraprofessionals'. So, on the one hand there are university educated professionals, on the other hand voluntary social workers, some of whom may be totally without education and to whom social work may be either an honorary service, another name for unsalaried work, a service aspect of their political ideology, religious obligation, or a source of income in the lack of better options. If the starting point is that that the work is not even meant to provide a living wage, the term social worker qualifies most of all the character and attitude of a person.

In particular at the grassroots level of the vast NGO-sector, most 'volunteers' receive a small monthly compensation (according to my experience during the first years of the 2000s commonly around INR 1500, i.e. approximately Euro 30) for their often long and intense work contribution, a sum that barely covers basic needs and gives no security in times of illness or other sudden personal or family disaster[58]. The situation, and the terminology used, can today be described in largely similar terms as Billimoria did in early 1960s:

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58 As far as I understand, such salary structures are owed at least partly to donor policies, for in some foreign funded project proposals minimising local personnel and infrastructure costs are considered an ideal. This would be a fertile topic for further discussion on the principles and ethics behind such choices, but that is beyond the limits of this text.

Social services may be grouped into two divisions: State services and voluntary or private services. In the old days, voluntary service was synonymous with honorary or unpaid service, and the paid worker did not have the respect that was his due. At the present time, the term 'voluntary' is used for all organised social work, paid or unpaid, which is under private management and free from any external or State control. (Billimoria 1961, 63.)

One of the burdens of professional social work, not least in the imaginations of people, has been its attachment with the state that in India has had a number of problems of its own. This was noted already during last minutes of the British rule[59]. Based on experiences in Gurgaon, the realisation was that social work, when conducted by the government, had various problems: "programmes were imposed from the top, there was little feeling of community", the programmes relied mainly on cash, and when their dynamic leader left, the programmes collapsed. The conclusion was that government programmes, "though often headed by able and conscientious officers, did not succeed in meeting their stated objectives and left little behind that was lasting." (Manshardt 1961, 36-37.) If the earliest state social work attempts were exhausted by the general distrust felt towards the colonial rule, in independent India the people's lack of confidence towards the state has been reinforced by corruption cases, malpractice, and a complicated bureaucracy combined with often high level of inoperability as well as indifference to the needs of the poorer sections of the society. For instance, the Emergency[60] left long lasting wounds. In general, the ordinary citizens of India have not had much to expect from the state what it comes to social and health care. The distribution of services, or access to them, has often followed the logic of patron-client relationships, the former patrons having been replaced by politically elected men and women of power (e.g. Gupta 2000 b, 135-153).

The conception of voluntary social work as ideological by nature and academic professional social work fond of either government jobs or positions of (neutral) expertise has further contributed to the reputation of these approaches. In contrast to the long lasting general malfunction of public services, people's movements, and later voluntary

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59 Lectures sponsored by the then Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work (lectures "Social Services of the Government of Bombay" held in 1936-1937 (Manshardt 1961, 36).

60 The Emergency in India in 1975 was the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's (who was the daughter of Jawaharlar Nehru, not Mohandas Gandhi) answer to civil unrest and questioning of her politics. She used the Emergency to silence opposition through arrests and censorship, as well as to introduce a new reform programme not shy about using means such as slum clearances and forced sterilisations. (Tamminen & Zenger 1998, 45-47; Tarlo 2003.)

organisations, have often been better inclined to the needs of the people[61]. Reflecting the role of social movements from a social work perspective, Desai and Narayan (1998) note that social movements are political in nature, whereas professional social work aspires often to be non-political and take only a marginal role, if any, in social movements. On the other hand, professional social workers "who are active in people's movements and campaigns, often do not like to identify themselves with the profession. As a result, reorientation from within has been a slow process". (Desai & Narayan 1998, 540-541.)

With the quality of a social worker being measured against Gandhi and other great souls, university educated social workers wanting a living wage from their work have needed to justify their stand both for those who work in paid positions without prior training and those "who are engaged in social work in a purely voluntary capacity" (Gore 1965, 81). In a situation in which social work has for long been associated with the idea of personal sacrifice, and many do not know of any qualification demands for social work, professional social work has emphasised "that a readiness to sacrifice is in itself not a sufficient qualification for a social worker" (ibid. 62). Again, some voluntary social workers "feel that since their services are honorary, they need not to worry about training" (Billimoria 1961, 62). Like the professional, voluntary social workers also stand up for their values, calling and commitment. Understood like this, social work is not about degree-based competence requirements; rather the competence is based on a vocational approach combined with political, spiritual and/or social motivation. It is also important to note that not being professional does not mean that a social worker would necessarily be without a solid theoretical and practice foundation. For some, the base is the Gandhian ideology (tight or loose), to others, another kind of social, political or spiritual calling. Furthermore, many are supported by a community of colleagues with whom to share, negotiate, and learn about whatever they come across in their work. As Chapters Five and Eight illustrate, this is largely the case of Natya Chetana.

The barrier between voluntary and professional social workers has concerned social work educators since independence. All the same, various attempts to bring the approaches closer to each other to join forces have not reached very far because both kinds of social workers tend to defend their position. Some of the university-educated workers might feel as one Indian social work doctorate depicted them: "Once you have your master's degree, you feel you are the master of the world. You don't want to work

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61 On the other hand, mushrooming of voluntary/non-governmental organizations (among other things because of the funding opportunities available) has also been criticised. The expansion of the ngo-sector has meant also increased bureaucratization, and corruption and mismanagement have found their ways also to organizations.

in some remote villages." Though this might be extreme, Desai and Narayan explain, referring to Siddiqui (1984), that professionalisation has led to elitism in social work education, beginning from "who joins the profession as students, who trains them, at what level they are trained and who funds their practice". Rather than having a developmental orientation, schools "are anxious to offer courses which provide better job opportunities (…) and select students who possess the qualities needed for the existing jobs". (Narayan & Desai 1998, 543.) Related with the above, the professional-voluntary division in social work equals to great extent with rural-urban division, though there are voluntary social workers also in urban settings. Professional social workers remain mainly in the cities, with best of them being employed in top positions of social work on a policy level.

The split into two realms has challenged the unity of social workers and generated various interpretations for its causes. Kuruvilla (2005, 42) goes as far as to state that the two co-existing work styles correspond "to the social systems of pre-modern and modern", voluntary social workers matching to a pre-modern and professional to a modern context. While also I connect professional social work with modernity, I would not, however, buy the idea that the voluntary social workers are always somewhat old-fashioned and pre-modern. For instance Gandhi, while rejecting and disliking aspects of modernity, was revolutionary and visionary perhaps beyond modernity. Although the idea of voluntary social work has in some form been there before modernity, it gained further strength from the reformists of the nineteenth century as well as the social and political ideas and exemplary figures of the independence movement. Many of the voluntary social workers are not less modern or postmodern than their professional counterparts. Another thing is that their political stands and ways of life might not exactly match to the ethos of the time, be it the hype of capitalist globalisation, wonders of high technology, or competing with others in the wage work market. However, if they can use modern or post-modern facilities or strategies to further their political and ideological causes, many of them do not hesitate to do so.

One approach somewhat between volunteerism and professionalism, that is to say professionally mastered voluntary work for future professionals, has been the National Service Scheme, the NSS. Launched in 1969, the programme has engaged students of universities and colleges to do social service on a voluntary basis, having similarities with students' internships or credits given against learning through voluntary work elsewhere. In India, the aim has been to prepare the (in relation to the entirety of the population relatively privileged) students to empathise with people, to "nurture social consciousness" and gain "a sense of involvement in the tasks of national development". Periods of voluntary work through the NSS have been backed up by facilities for training, orientation and supervision, tasks which have often been carried out by social

work educators. In a country with the volume of India, the achievements are impressive. Sekhar counted in 2002 that since the inception of the scheme more than 10.5 million students have taken part in it. (Sekhar 2002, 99-103.) Interestingly, one of the students participating in the NSS scheme was Subodh Pattnaik, Natya Chetana's founding member and director ever since. For Subodh, the NSS experience was instrumental, as it made him more familiar with village life in Orissa. The NSS framework was also constitutive to Natya Chetana. The play *Bana Manisha* (The Wildmen), which then gave the impetus to found Natya Chetana, was made first time as part of the NSS scheme. There are also congruencies in the principals of the NSS and Natya Chetana: Both talk about volunteers, the enhanced competence of group life, and developing leadership qualities. Sekhar (2002, 108-109) reminds, however, that the NSS is not only a success story but has problems common to similar attempts elsewhere. It has suffered from bureaucratisation, inadequate documentation, and discontinuation because of changing students and staff, which also disrupts the continuity of the work in the target communities. Finally, the highly competitive educational environment makes it difficult for the students to spend time in social work.

In addition to the troubles discussed earlier, it is important to note that Indian social work has plenty of strengths, one of them being the strong tradition of voluntary social work. Moreover, despite the low professional status and often-insecure livelihood, a remarkable amount of people have been and are ready to engage with such work. Moreover, one of the intrinsic issues of Indian social work is coping with diversity. Both the voluntary and professional spheres have plenty of sobering, down-to-earth analysis to offer about present social problems, their causes and cures. One of the topics often discussed is development, or the absence of it.

From civilising mission to social work?

To conclude the section on social work and its circumstances in India, I briefly elaborate how both the notions of underdevelopment and social work are connected with the idea and paradigm of development. As Lynne Healy (2008) summarises, "Development, whether a process or end result, is seen as the avenue to alleviation of poverty and its associated ills." The starting point of early definitions and strategies on development after the Second World War was that development "occurs along similar trajectories in all societies" and that the key for development is economic growth. Over the course of decades, the understanding of development has grown more nuanced, and development is today seen as a complex set of processes, advancing which requires a variety of strategies. (Ibid. 52-63.) With its complexity and problems, development nonetheless

continues to be a core concept to think about societies and their change, as well as for example the main aim of a variety of programmes targeted for poverty alleviation from the level of the United Nations to regional and national action plans.

From the critics of development, then, Theodor Shanin (1997) reminds us that the ideas of progress and development (inherent also in the ideology of the civilising mission) originate from the Enlightenment and the departure from the conception that everything can be explained by God's will. For Shanin, modernisation or development are just other names for progress, a belief according to which "all societies are advancing naturally and consistently 'up', on a route from poverty, barbarism, despotism and ignorance to riches, civilization, democracy and rationality, the highest form of which is science" (Ibid. 65). As the case of the civilising mission attests, many of the colonisers preferred to think that the virtues listed above were manifest best in their own societies. The European sense of superiority and faith in progress was not shaken until the "two world wars and the nightmare experience of fascism, the eruption from somewhere in Europe's own depths of worse barbarity than it had ever encountered anywhere else". The situation was however soon again brightened by the golden years of welfare state development. (Kiernan 1995, 166.)

Arturo Escobar argues that development started to function as a discourse, creating "a space in which only certain things could be said and even imagined". As a discourse it involved and legitimated institutions, socio-economic processes, and forms of knowledge and technology. The discursive practice became a space for the systematic creation of concepts, theories and practices, and defined "who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise". Moreover, it set the rules how to name problems and how to build a policy or plan to cope with them. There was no shortage of challenges, starting from poverty, rapid population growth, and inadequate public services. Among the targets, "introduced with more caution", were also cultural attitudes and values associated with backwardness. For where development created abnormalities, such as the "illiterate" or "underdeveloped", it created also new objects for observation, intervention, and control. All in all, development was not considered as a complex cultural process, but as a system of universally applicable technical interventions capable to deliver "badly needed goods to target population". Development became so important that in its name it was possible to cause and accept things, and practice power and control. (Escobar 1995, 39-44.)

In the opinion of Kuruvilla (2005, 44) "India was pulled into the train of development from its birth in the global situation of World War II and its aftermath". In the political climate of the Cold War, India, identified as a 'developing' 'third world' country, (a notion that the competitive and economically growing 'super-India' section of the nation is now on its part acutely challenging) became one of the countries to be

'developed' with foreign assistance. Mann, cited earlier for his insights on civilising mission in India, connects the urge to "develop the 'underdeveloped'"[62] to the ethos of the civilising mission and claims that in India development became the modern term for civilising. Like the civilising mission, development operated on the principle of imagined differences and hierarchies, continuing to constitute non-European ways and circumstances as hierarchically lower. Also many Indians internalised the idea of the 'backwardness' of their country and its economy and held economic development a central issue in the debates of modernisation and nation building. "While some political leaders surrendered to western models of modernity, others tried to reconcile them with eastern values and Indian culture", stands not so unlike those taken in the context 'the improvement' of India a hundred years earlier. (Mann 2004, 16.)

In India – as elsewhere – professional social work, generally conceived as a product of modernising Western societies and an integral part of the development of welfare states (e.g. Payne 2005), can be placed in the context of the modernisation endeavour. Reviewing modernity, institutional change, and the developments that have brought growing instability into contemporary world, Catherine McDonald (2006) reminds us that social work is not a creature of its own making, but influenced also by processes outside its terms of reference (ibid. 7.) In relation to modernity, she points that

> we can think of the rise and entrenchment of social work as the archetypal example of the optimism of the 20th century – the embodiment of the belief that we, as a society, could improve the conditions in which people live their lives, and, in which we could maximize people's capacities to live those lives to their fullest potential. Ultimately, this optimism is what social work offered and potentially continues to offer to the societies in which it was and is practiced. (McDonald 2006, 20.)

In India, professional social work has been "an integral part of the post-World War II development discourse that emerged with respect to Third World countries in the context of modernisation." However, when social workers in both the 'developed' and 'developing' countries have come closer to each other under the banner of social development, "the problematic biography of 'development' as a practical concept and the modernist background of social work are apparently out of discussion." (Kuruvilla 2005, 41-45.) One reason for this might be Lynne Healy's (2008, 52) observation that development "is still not a widely understood concept among Western (or Northern) social workers."

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62 As such, the concept of 'underdevelopment' was introduced into the political and economic discourse after the Second World War (e.g. Mann 2004, 16), in tandem with the new division of the world into the first (=rich Western states), the second (=the communist regimes) and the third (=developing economies) worlds (e.g. Payne 2005, 49).

In India, the connection of social work and development is rendered visible for example through the practice of development aid and cooperation. Both have plenty of similarities as well as an overlapping field what it comes to 'target population' or 'clients', foundational theories and ideologies. In principle, both social work and ('grassroots') development cooperation are commonly practiced to benefit people who are poor and vulnerable. Often the actual work consists of attempts to provide first aid and rehabilitation strategies in problems that are structural and political in nature. Likewise, many social and development workers are fully aware that in a larger scale neither approach has the tricks to solve the problems that keep them busy. Though social or development work can make a difference at the level of individuals and communities, and be highly meaningful for the workers, eradicating poverty, marginalisation and vulnerability on a larger scale would require political and economic restructuring.

In relation to development, there are apparently two main approaches within social work. According to the more dominant approach, remaining inside the development paradigm, social workers should acknowledge the importance of (economic) development and learn how to make it work. One of the most well known advocates for developmental approach in social work and social policy has been James Midgley, whose point has been that it is necessary to pay more attention to the root courses of underdevelopment as well as the strategies needed to generate income and employment opportunities for the people (e.g. Midgley 1981, 1996, 1997; Hall & Midgley 2004). Focusing on development has also made the understanding of development more nuanced. For instance, Cox (1998) has written about distorted, misguided, and people-centred development. Distorted development is development, which is biased, that is favouring urban areas over rural, men over women, dominant groups over minorities, and so on. In misguided development the goals of development are not consistent with people's real needs, whereas people-centred development represents the development process gone well. The idea of these authors has been that exclusion from development is a matter of leaving people behind and creating situations of both relative and abject poverty. Therefore, to hamper such negative development, social work and social policy should gain greater relevance within the paradigm of development (e.g. Cox 1998, 513). One reaction has been to call for indigenous approaches. Another solution has been to focus on the work done on the lines of community and/ or social development. According to Midgley

> Social development is an approach promoting the well-being of people that differs from other approaches such as philanthropy, social work and social policy (…). It's key characteristic is its emphasis on using development as a means for enhancing people's welfare. This requires harmonization of social interventions with economic development efforts. (…) social devel-

opment transcends conventional debates between residual and institutional social welfare. Unlike these approaches, developmental social welfare seeks to replace consumption-based remedial and maintenance-oriented social programs and interventions with interventions that promote economic development. (Midgley 1997, 180.)

Social workers, then, can contribute to development by addressing the problems of poverty and deprivation, for instance by (1) assisting in the mobilisation of human capital for development, (2) fostering the creation of social capital which also contributes to economic development, and (3) helping low-income and special-needs clients engage in productive employment and self-employment. (Midgley 1996, 20). In community development the aims are largely similar but the focus is strongly in communities and their participation in the attempts to increase their welfare, and in general that communities have a say on things that impact their lives. Often at stake are issues such as group determination, developing leadership in the communities, as well as a sense of citizenship at large. (E.g. Healy 2008, 248-249.)

Another possible approach to development is to take a critical stand towards the whole paradigm including the idea that development can be readjusted 'right' both as an end and means, we only have to learn how. Though Mohandas Gandhi did not speak about development, he opposed modernity, most of all because of the greed and violence it contained. While Gandhi's ideas were seen as eccentric already in his own times, they sound not that odd in contemporary world, affected with a wide possibility of natural and thereby human disasters, as well as an increased knowledge of the drawbacks of neo-liberal globalisation. As Ferguson, Lavalette and Whitmore (2005, 1-5) argue, neo-liberal globalisation, even when done with best interests of governments and international financial institutions such as International Monetary Fund or World Bank, the key formulators of global development policies, has often caused more misery than promised growth. This is especially the case with those in vulnerable situations to start with. In sum, development can mean very different things for different people, and different things for individuals than for governments. Essentially a set of matters negotiated by unequal parties (Pandey 2006, 173), the disadvantaged have only marginal chances to influence such decision making.

All said, it is clear that a country like India has joined modernity, postmodernity, and the paradigm of development through a different path and with different assets than, for example, Finland or Britain, whose experiences in these matters make different stories too. In connecting the civilising mission, development, and modernisation, one small part of which forms the story of professional social work, my idea has been to point that each of these discourses has been used and has functioned as a dominant rationale for quite some time. Respective vocabularies of progress have left little if any

eligibility to other kind of priorities and ways of being in the negotiations about good and desirable life and the means to achieve it. That is, those established as uncivilised, underdeveloped, pre-modern, or having multiple social problems have had and continue to have a far from favourable footing to get their views articulated, heard, understood, and having impact. In this sense, tracking continuums such as the one suggested here can act as a healthy reminder of the fact that possibly well-meaning intentions may also serve both conscious and unconscious exercises of power (see also Spivak 2008). Critical examination of past and present practices may help to deconstruct or destabilise (Fook 2002) positions of power, or help in gaining understanding in relation to their legacies. When Kuruvilla's writes that there is an acute need "of a global interactive discourse on the practical and realistic function of social work in the world today", it is in this sense that I read her call. She further points that such discussion has to acknowledge "people's experiences in the context of post-colonialism, development, industrialization and globalization". (Kuruvilla 2005, 41.) Also in my view, these very issues should be more strongly on the agenda of global social work discussions.

CHAPTER 4
LOCATING TRADITIONS OF THEATRE

The task of this chapter is to outline a number of theatrical locations that matter for this study. In once again mapping different contexts, theatre in India, the global movement of socially committed theatre, and more generally theatre and other arts as social work, my aim is to provide a sketch that helps to understand Natya Chetana's location(s) and premises of work. As in social work, issues of (post)colonialism and ideas of indigenous and other origins also have significance in theatre.

I start with a condensed history of theatre in India. It is a history still strongly present within the form, aesthetics and content of a variety of performances. Knowing of it helps to understand ongoing debates on theatre and cultural politics, including the conceptions and strategies that are used. Natya Chetana is organically part of this picture, and many of the group's activities can be interpreted as active efforts to have a say on what Indian theatre is, what it should be, and what are the histories that matter. Accordingly, my experience is that the more I have been able to grasp the multiplicity of theatre and related debates in India, the better I have been able to understand and locate Natya Chetana's stands and positions.

The second part of the chapter presents a sketch of the various global movements for various types of theatre united by their social and political concerns and emphases, by which Natya Chetana is also influenced. Such theatre is commonly both curious and committed to highlight local voices and topical issues, and welcomes the opportunity to participate in the process of social change, for instance, in the form of strengthening civic dialogue. The chapter ends with a discussion regarding the points of departure to think about theatre and art in relation to or as social work. When and how can theatre, and more generally art function as social work? More than particular forms, I am interested in the kinds of orientations that bring artistic work close or abreast with social work.

4.1 THEATRE IN INDIA[63]

Multiplicity

India is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, perhaps best compre-
hended through plurals, contrasts, and continuums. This applies also to theatre, with
the spectrum of performances corresponding to the linguistic, cultural and religious
diversity of the country. In my case, though my preliminary reading and earlier experi-
ences gave me some scope to knowingly recognise and locate certain aspects of the per-
formances I ran across, my understanding of the field remained narrow for a long time.
During my major period of fieldwork Natya Chetana was my perspective and reality, the
theatre I lived within. During the course of daily events I was fed with plenty of allu-
sions to both similar and different approaches to theatre in Orissa, India and abroad,
and got a bit of a taste of certain disputes within or between them. Yet, I felt often un-
easy with many concepts that seemed to be attached with theatre rather straightfor-
wardly, like "tradition", "Indian", "folk", or "British", torturing Subodh, in particular,
with my disbelief about some of the terms. The rest I nonetheless accepted willingly,
without problematising the reasoning behind their use. Being a learner in the world of
theatre, I was able to recognise that in the everyday talks of Natya Chetana a number of
theatre makers were esteemed on the basis of their artistic quality and colour of their
work, whereas others were viewed rather indifferently or mockingly, if their work was
taken to defame either theatre as art form or the intelligence of the audience.

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63   Throughout my study I have come across various source books on Indian theatre, some more
and some less accessible to me. Most of them have received both praise and criticism, mainly
due to either their partiality or occasional superficiality, which I anyhow consider inevitable.
One of the first books to guide me in my inquiry was A. C. Scott's (born 1908, an authority on
Far Eastern drama) *The Theatre in Asia* (1972). As my understanding of the available literature
developed, I tried to read depictions of various folk theatre forms, but soon found the more gen-
eral and often better historicised outlines of contemporary Indian theatre more helpful. What it
comes to the overall picture, my dearest works so far have been Ralph Yarrow's (writer, director
and performer, and professor of drama and comparative literature in Britain) *Indian Theatre:
Theatre of Origin, Theatre of Freedom* (2001) and a set of writings (1993–2001) from the Kolkata
(Calcutta) based writer, director and dramaturge Rustom Bharucha. *Indian Theatre: Traditions of
Performance* (1990) edited by Farley P. Richmond, Darius L. Swann and Phillip B. Zarrilli, all of
whom with long involvement with Indian theatre or dance, as well as the introductions in two
relatively recent volumes reporting contemporary drama in India, *Modern Indian Drama* (2000)
edited by Marathi playwright and professor of Chinese studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in Delhi G. P. Deshpande, and *DramaContemporary India* (2002) edited by Erin B. Mee, who
teaches Indian drama and is the founder of ARK Ensemble (theatre company) in New York, have
been useful. My latest finding is Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker's *Theatres of Independence* (2006)
and *Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre* (2004), edited by Ananda Lal. With regard to Finnish au-
thors, the one and only what it comes to theatre has been theatre and dance critic and researcher
Jukka O. Miettinen.

By choosing what to leave out and what to give importance to, any account trying to summarise theatre in India is partial and takes a stand in relation to the manifold past and present histories about the subcontinent. My account is limited also by my necessity to rely on resources available in English. Either bound or loyal to my background in social sciences, I have been most drawn by those discussions that deal with continuums, controversies and concurrencies between constructs such as tradition-modernity, rural-urban, purity-degradation, and politics-ethics. Again, even these discussions make small universes in themselves, and do have meaning, with material and political consequences, aesthetically as well as in the lives of the performers.

In India, the term theatre covers a wide range of performance events from ritual performances to 'classical' dance-dramas, 'folk' performances, educational theatre, political theatre, commercial plays, musicals, puppetry and so forth. As Mee describes:

> Theater is performed in fields, market places, and temples, in private living rooms, in front of government offices, and on proscenium stages. It is performed as part of religious festivals, for secular entertainment, and for tourist consumption. Modern drama is a subset of "theater" but is nonetheless connected to, and influenced by, many of these other performance forms. (Mee 2002, 1.)

What follows is the argument that traditions of Indian performance cannot be categorised in any absolute terms, nor placed neatly into Western categories, especially when the term theatre (*natya*) has generally referred to dance, acting and music. Richmond, Swann and Zarrilli (1990, 8-12) suggest that Indian theatre could be mapped under five broad interlocking spheres: the classical, the ritual, the devotional, the folk-popular, and the modern. None of the categories is autonomous, and any one genre can combine features of several spheres of influence. In the following, I focus on the categories of classical, folk-popular and modern. Of these, Natya Chetana can be located at the intersection of folk and modern, whereas classical theatre deserves some attention for the reason that the concept and ideas linked to it seem to determine much of the talk concerning of the origins and sources of 'Indian' theatre.

Traditional theatre: classical and folk

Most of the traditional forms of Indian theatre as well as other forms of art are integrated with religion. In essence, the arts have been seen as one way of spiritual development and service to the gods. Thus, an important aim of the arts has been representing the universal stages of existence as well as visualising myths and deities. The stories and

characters of most plays are from the Hindu epics the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, or from the *Puranas* or the *Gitagovinda*[64]. (E.g. Miettinen 1987, 14; Richmond, Swan & Zarrilli 1990, 6-7.) Indeed, as earlier only the few were able to read and had access to writings, transmission of these stories from generation to generation relied largely on storytellers, puppeteers and other performing artists.

Yarrow (2001) observes that *Vedic*[65] epics do not necessarily open up easily for a Westerner: It can be extremely difficult to make sense of the narratives within narratives, or their structure or hierarchical relationship to one another, or to find a coherent meaning at the level of the whole epic. Often the stories appear to offer either very similar lessons or no lesson at all. The performances based on epics also hold the possibility of multiple levels of meaning. Yarrow suggests that the challenges of comprehension are further expanded by the fact that Hindus do not consider the epics to be 'myths' in the conventional Western sense of the term; the forces they depict are experienced as part of the web of life. For instance, the gods Krishna and Rama are not just print picture heroes or abstract principles, but felt tendencies within the field of experience, or they can suffice as role models. (Yarrow 2001, 41-44; see also Shearer 1993, 9-10.) Richmond, Swann and Zarrilli (1990, 7) explain that all forms of Hindu performances share common religious and philosophic assumptions, such as the assumption that life is characterised by illusion (*maya*), or that life is part of a repeated cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Getting out of the cycle is understood to be possible only by finding a way to liberate one's soul from bondage so that attachment and illusion are broken, and the soul becomes free. The three paths that can lead to liberation are the way of action, the way of knowledge, and the way of devotion, and all of them contribute to Indian theatre. (More on the religious-philosophic landscape of Indian theatre in Yarrow 2001, 1-31.)

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64   *Mahabharata* is the oldest and most extensive of the Indian epics, formed around 400 BC-200 AD, most probably by various authors during many generations. It consists of a main plot of a power struggle between groups of cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and numerous subplots. The other epic, *Ramayana*, was created some time between 500 BC - 200 AD and remains the most popular source of themes for Asian dance and theatre as it diffused also outside India and turned into various versions. The story usually focuses on Prince Rama and his beautiful spouse Sita, who is then kidnapped by the demon King Ravana, being finally rescued with the help of Hanuman, the white monkey, but needing then to prove her chastity during the long imprisonment. *Puranas* got their scripted form around 300-1600 AD and combined *Vedic* material, other ancient stories and practical knowledge. They are often presented as a dialogue between a student and a master and focus on the mythology of Vishnu and Shiva. *Gitagovinda* was supposedly written by the saint Jayadeva in 12th century AD, and focuses on the love between the god Krishna and his beloved Radha, and is the source for many dance and theatre traditions. (Miettinen 1987, 28-32.)

65   *Veda* means the process of knowledge, and *Vedic* literature refers to a particular selection of ancient texts, considered to represent oldest literary productions in the world (e.g. Yarrow 2001, 37), forming the literary core of Hindu philosophical thought.

The term traditional theatre in the context of India refers most commonly to both of the categories of court/classical theatre and folk theatre or either one separately. Classical Indian theatre is usually defined as Sanskrit theatre and refers only to plays written during a limited period in the subcontinent's history, supposedly from the last centuries BC until around 700 AD. (Richmond 1990 a, 21, 53-63.) It was a form based on music, song, dance and vocal expression. The plays followed a formal pattern, and like the folk forms, they were non-naturalistic: scenery was used sparingly, dance was more interpretative than representative, and costume and make-up were stylised and symbolic, not replicas of everyday life. Theatre had a sacred significance, and was accompanied by numerous rituals from the construction of the playhouses to the consecration of the stage before performance. (Ibid. 33; Scott 1972, 29-30.) Accordingly, the performance technique had a high degree of refinement, which, to be appreciated, assumed good knowledge and expertise from the audience's side. Historically classical traditions relied on continual patronage, most often provided by courts, which made developing and refining the art possible. (Ricmond, Swann & Zarrilli 1990, 8-9.)

Aesthetically, classical Indian theatre refers back to *Natya Sastra*, which is a comprehensive manual that deals with all aspects of performance from the size and composition of stage to symbolic hand-gestures[66]. According to legend it was handed down from the deities through the sage Bharata, the more mundane guess is that the name Bharata may cover one or more authors (Richmond 1990 a, 37; Yarrow 2001, 113). Though *Natya Sastra* is commonly dated between 200 BC and 200 AD (e.g. Yarrow 2001, 37; Richmond 1990, 35), the estimations regarding the time of writing of the text vary from 450 BC to 1200 AD. The assumption is that before its written form the epic or major parts of it relied on oral transmission and that it was developed in connection to practical theatre work. *Natya Sastra* is claimed to be the 'Fifth *Veda*' that unifies the other four, and like rest of Vedic literature, contains 'everything' (that there is to know). The present day judgment is that various aspects of *Natya Sastra* do form an exhaustive presentation of semiotics of theatre, predating Western works by one millennium or more. Moreover, *Natya Sastra's* status as the honoured Fifth *Veda* within Indian thought is noteworthy in the sense that a theory of performance is given such respect, a situation unheard of in Islamic and Christian societies. (Yarrow 2001, 113-117.) As discussed in Chapter Six, Natya Chetana makes constant references to *Natya Sastra*, especially what it comes to stage structure, lighting or rasa.

One of the best-known and central issues in *Natya Sastra* is the theory of *rasa* and *bhava. Rasa* has often been translated as flavour, sentiment or essence, whereas

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66 The hand-gestures are called *mudras*. In the performance they form something like a parallel text; they are symbolic codes from which a spectator familiar with them can 'read' the story.

bhava means state of mind or emotion. To put it simply, the aim of the performance is to create *rasa*, to cultivate the receptive faculties of the receivers. This happens by manifesting *bhava*, emotions such as love, joy, sorrow, anger, courage, fear, disgust, astonishment or indifference. The corresponding *rasa*s, also explicable as moods or atmospheres in the audience are erotic, comical, pathetic, atrocious, heroic, frightening, disgusting, fabulous and peaceful. In other words, the theory of *rasa* attempts to explain how a spectator perceives the performance. Optimally, the experience should lead the spectator into a comprehensive sense of wholeness. (Miettinen 1987, 17-19; Richmond 1990 a, 80; Yarrow 2001, 114-116; Rangacharya 1998, 73-81.) Richmond explains *rasa* with the example of tasting and eating fine foods. Like the different dimensions of a top-notch meal, a performance may be best understood in its proper context by those who are learned, wise, skilled in the arts (of tasting) and sensitive (ibid. 80). Yarrow emphasises that the concept of *rasa* refers to "a psycho-physiological condition in performers and receivers" and that in this sense performance has essentially a physical and practical function for all parties. Yarrow stresses the importance to address the psychological and physical qualities of *rasa,* as well as other Indian concepts, otherwise their physicality remains often invisible to Western thought. (Yarrow 2001, 115-117.)

The decline of Sanskrit theatre and drama is estimated to have taken place around the ninth and tenth century AD due to a combination of factors. At that time, India was divided into small princely states fighting with each other over supremacy, making it easy for warlords to invade the area and loot its wealth. It is likely that courts and temples were no longer able to afford the luxury of Sanskrit plays, and touring village to village for a livelihood was not an option because Sanskrit was not spoken in rural areas. One reason for the decline can be seen in the theatre itself. The plays had turned to emphasise poetry at the expense of the progress of the story, and strict adherence to the rules of *Natya Sastra* suffocated aesthetic innovations. (Richmond 1990 a, 83.)

Out of the traditional theatres in India, folk theatre refers to a variety of theatre forms performed to rural masses (vs. court/elite) up to and including today. They still depend on the rural masses for their patronage. Richmond et al. (1990) characterise folk-popular traditions by their immediate accessibility, vitality and exuberance and by readily communicable modes and messages of the performance. Commonly, the performances (1) are regional[67] and belong to a specific language area, (2) their impact is primarily secular and (3) they appeal to the masses, that is, appreciating and understanding the artistry of the performers does not require expertise. Nonetheless, though less tied to set aesthetic principles, many folk-popular forms are extremely complex and difficult

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67 Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker (2006, 23) stresses, however, that in the case of India 'regional' is basically a misnomer. The tradition of each linguistic region is really a 'national' tradition.

to master. (Richmond & Swann & Zarrilli 1990, 9-10.) Though the origins of folk thea-
tre forms are not known, they are believed to have a connection with the elite Sanskrit
theatre (e.g. Swann 1990, 239). Most of the present forms have been known for at least
the last 300 to 400 years (e.g. Richmond et al 1990, 14-15). However, they were ignored
by scholars until recently, and were often depicted as crude, degraded and vulgar, a dis-
cussion that to some extent still continues. Even Balwant Gargi (1991, 3) a well-known
author in the field, portrays folk theatre as "impolite, rude, vulgar. It shocks prudes."

In particular, folk theatre has had the tradition of featuring only male performers. Men
have represented women of all kinds from the goddess Kali, or Rama's wife Sita, to ordinary
mothers, wives and daughters. Sanskrit theatre is also known to have been a dominion of
men, albeit both men and women did perform in the plays and even entire companies
composed of women presumably existed (Richmond 1990 a, 37). Female actors, suppos-
edly temple dancers and prostitutes[68], or sometimes courtesans are considered to have
performed mainly in entertaining roles as singers and dancers (Scott 1972, 31-37; Yarrow
2001, 88)[69]. Associating women's acting with prostitution has prohibited women from be-
coming actresses until today and has marginalised and de-voiced women in Indian thea-
tre. The fact that men have largely represented women, in stories conveyed by men, has
often resulted in the fact that the female characters in the plays have been diminished into
either submissive or comical stereotypes. (Yarrow 2001, 88.) As Yarrow claims:

> traditional forms have suppressed, marginalized, and regulated the representation and par-
> ticipation of women, to such an extent that, (…) the term 'woman' becomes both a site of
> male insecurity and a sign licensed by a male prerogative. (Yarrow 2001, 134.)[70]

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68   For instance, Scott (1972, 31) notes that dancing was an essential element and a preoccupation
in the process of (Hindu) temple ceremonies. Dancing in the temple and religious processions
was the duty of a group of women called *devadasi*. While Muslim rulers gained more influence
in the subcontinent the *devadasis* gradually fell into disfavour and in part the practice declined
into prostitution. The British considered the dance indecent and forbade the temple dance
by law. New life was breathed into it by the revivers of Indian classical dances, in particular
Bharatanatyam and *Odissi*. Like temple dance, both the forms conform to the principles stated
in *Natya Sastra* (Miettinen 1987, 41-45).

69   Scott explains that dramatic art, music and dancing were a necessary part of the education of
court courtesans and concubines who made up a large proportion of palace societies. A number
of these women were literate and learned to move in men's circles. As a consequence, Scott
claims that ordinary women of high birth once held it not respectable to be literate. (Scott 1972,
37-38.)

70   Yarrow traces the practice into male insecurity that has its roots in fear and that easily leads to
violence. Women, considered as 'other', threaten the boundaries of the world known to men, as
well as its masculine order. Hence "the forces of 'order', both indigenous and colonialist, have
either suppressed women or marginalised them." (More on the issue in Yarrow 2001, 133-141.)

In general acting, especially being a folk theatre artist, was and for the main still is a poorly paid profession in India. In the past, travelling troupes usually worked for food and basic amenities. For any better income they were largely dependent on local wealthy landowners who from time to time hired companies. When the patron class disappeared in modern India, the old style folk theatre faced severe economic difficulties. (E.g. Scott 1972, 44.) Nowadays performers may be full-time professionals, depending mostly on the market. As many folk-popular as well as devotional performances are seasonal, many performers are employed in agricultural work during the off-season at least in Orissa.

The impact of colonialism in theatre

As discussed in Chapter Three, the impact of colonialism on India has been complex. Theatre makes no exception. G. P. Deshpande (2000, xi) points out that the colonial period marked a new phase on the history of Indian languages and art forms. It meant both discoveries, like the rediscovery of Sanskrit plays, as well as getting accustomed to, and learning to create totally new styles of writing, like prose and novel. Indian languages and drama came under processes of standardisation. All in all, the colonial time made its mark on what kind of theatre has been appreciated in different periods of time, both during and after British rule, and how these appreciations have been conceptualised and articulated.

Even though the British did not have a generally high opinion of Indian performing arts, in the case of India colonialism meant not only repression by the colonisers but also partial and by no means unproblematic appreciation of local arts, including theatre and dance. When Khalidasa's ancient Sanskrit play *Shakuntala* was translated into German, French and English by late 18th century, it was treated with great enthusiasm. In India, the European recognition backed up the tendency to understand and claim Indian theatre as ancient, eternal and civilisation-specific. Deshpande argues that for early Indian nationalism it was quite pleasant to know that ancient India did not need to feel any inferiority in comparison to Rome or Greece. In a process in which Indian theatre was equated with the advances of ancient civilisation, the drama of antiquity turned into a cultural asset "in a subject society (…) eager for such legitimation by the colonizer" (Dharwadker 2006, 7). The idea inspired a search for authenticity and au-

thentic Indian theatre, which has continued until today[71]. However, the emphasis left a heavy classical heritage to be resolved for those who wanted to justify their theatre in more contemporary terms. (Deshpande 2000, ix–x.)

In India the British did not confine themselves to local theatre but systematically promoted British theatre. On the one hand, the effort served as a way of making a difference with locals and taking care of English social life. On the other hand, theatres were important instruments of the Empire. For the European superpowers of the day, theatre contributed to the maintenance of law and order, and was seen as a good tool to educate as well as to domesticate local people. Instead of giving value to the supernatural or transcendental, European theatre praised the human king, queen, or country. (Byam 1999, 4.) Colonial grandeur, like coronations, the army and Empire day parades served the same purpose (Kerr 1995, 19-32, see also Cohn 2007, 83)[72].

In Calcutta and Bombay, English theatres started to function after the mid-18th century, being in the beginning, like their equivalents elsewhere in the Empire, determined to insulate themselves from the natives and serve white audiences only. Theatres had a role to play in both entertaining and comforting Europeans, as well as in accentuating European values, creating solidarity and a sense of togetherness. Sports clubs and other leisure activities also united Europeans of otherwise diverse class and other backgrounds. This was important, because the colonisers themselves were fragmented, and there were many ways of seeing the colonised. When in Europe "us" and "them" had meant the upper class and the working people, in the colonies differentiation was based on race: "us" meant *all* whites, rich and poor, including *all* white women. Kumari Jayawardena (1995, 3) writes that the unwritten rule of colonialism was that there should be no breach in the ranking. The Empire was keen to control its poorer white subjects from intermingling with locals also in practice. White male agitators and communists, as well as gamblers and prostitutes,

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71 Maria Eriksson Baaz (2001, 7-9) describes a kindred process in Africa: "two central representations in the colonial discourses that are also embedded in contemporary discourses on cultural production in Africa are *otherness* and *evolution*". In the colonial dichotomy, the colonised people were situated in an "evolutionary hierarchy" as "contemporary ancestors", in other words given the role to remind the West of whom they once were. Later on, the African Other has also served as an object of desire and celebration. From 20th century onwards "several Western artists and critics have turned to Africa in search of "true" and "untouched" cultural expressions", and so "played a central role in promoting an image of African cultural production as Other and authentic."

72 The practice was not exclusive to India. For instance, in Africa Britain and France harnessed Western theatre and media to support their colonial projects. (Kerr 1995, 19; Mlama 1992.)

were quickly expelled from the colonies as undesirable Europeans.[73] (Jayawardena 1995.)

Gradually, elite Indians entered into the sphere of Europeans, and became associated with theatres. Yet, as Jyotsna Singh (1989) underlines, by allowing elite Indians access to theatres and introducing them to English literature the colonial rulers were *not* being egalitarian. Rather they were engaged in "hegemonic activity", securing the consent of the governed through intellectual and moral manipulation. In the process of cultural colonialism, reproductions of English plays, Shakespeare as their privileged signifier had a crucial role. In line with the civilizing mission, liberal education further represented Western literary knowledge as universal, transhistorical and rational. It served the project to maintain control over the natives by idealising the Empire and hiding its exploitative effects. (Singh 1989, 446-450.) In retrospect, however, the quality of European drama in the colonies can be questioned. The late nineteenth century was no golden age for Western theatre, on top of which the Western dramatic accomplishments in the colonies were mostly utterly second rate, usually school or foreign communities' amateur club performances. "As a consequence, new Asian theatre lacked high criteria by which to measure its achievements." (Scott 1972, 23.)

Modern Indian theatre originated in Bengal in the mid-nineteenth century, when the educated Bengalis started to imitate Western productions. These first modern theatre makers admired English plays and felt distaste for local folk theatres. According to Singh, the irony of the development is that it revealed Indian gentry's desire for a stronger cultural presence and identity in the city. (Singh 1989, 449-450.) Possibly because of the Shakespearean start, Deshpande (2000, ix) notes that the modern drama in India was marked by 'Anglo-native prose style', recognisable by its long, flowing sentences and ornate and sanskritcised speech. The other gift the British introduced to Indian theatre, according to Subodh, was the prompter with the consequence that the actors no more bothered to learn their lines by heart.

Towards independence

The transition from a colony to India and Pakistan did not happen all of a sudden. In the beginning of twentieth century ideas of self-rule and independence had already

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73 Harald Fischer-Tiné and Friedhelm Hartwig (2004) exemplify white pirates, vagrants, 'pauper-pilgrims', prostitutes, Anglo-Indian 'half-castes' convicts and distressed seamen as the people who often created problems for, and came into conflict with the privileged European as well as non-European elites, and even with other 'subaltern' layers of population, causing disorder in the Empire.

germinated and Indian society was in a state of transition and intellectual conflict. Social and political issues were reflected also in theatre. Once 'English' drama started to be written in Indian languages and performed by Indian actors, theatre was soon taken over as a forum to influence opinions on social and political causes. The British were afraid of theatre's potential to contribute social unrest to the extent that strict censorship rules were imposed on theatre as early as 1876[74]. Political and social protest in theatre was forced underground or to take the guise of historical and mythological subjects. (Richmond 1990 b, 388-389.) On the other hand, new forms like cinema challenged theatre, providing spellbinding escapism from everyday life. The rise of sound film during the 1930s changed ideas of popular entertainment. Song and dance appealed to a mass audience, and female stars provided a new allure. In a way, cinema took over the business that folk theatre had always been concerned with: presenting comedy and religious mythology through music, dance, and acting. (Scott 1972, 62-63.)

In the 1940s the village-oriented politics of Mohandas Gandhi as well as the concerns of the communist party turned the focus back again to villages and folk theatre as a source of adaptation. In 1943 and 1944 a group of amateur actors, musicians and dancers toured together in the famine-hit Bengal as the People's Theatre Group in support of famine relief. Their performances were widely popular, and the sense of community that was engendered in the group gave warmth and intensity to performances. In Bombay another political (communist) performance group, the Indian People's Theatre Association, attracted famous artists like Uday Shankar[75], until it became increasingly subject to communist party directives (Scott 1972, 64-65). These two groups

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74 The Dramatic Performances Act of 1876 was and is a law enabling the control of theatre and prohibiting "scandalous, defamatory, seditious or obscene" plays. The law has remained in effect after independence and it has been also used for its original purpose, though since 1993 it has been considered as one of the 'obsolete laws'. (The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre 2004, 110-112.)

75 Uday Shankar (1900-1977) was the son of an administrative official and the elder brother of musician Ravi Shankar. Before his coming to study arts in England in 1920s he had no prior training in Indian dances, but it did not exclude him from performing as an Indian dancer, indeed he enraptured his audiences hungry for exoticism. Famous ballerina Anna Pavlova employed Shankar on her team, and in 1924 they performed the highly successful Krishna-Radha ballet together. Shankar developed into a dancer-choreographer who first took Indian music and dance to Europe. "The Uday Shankar Company of Hindu Musicians and Dancers" made its breakthrough in 1931 in Paris, raising respect for India's dance culture and its dance gurus in Europe. As a choreographer Shankar drew upon many styles. His popular ballets combined gestures and movements from both Western and Indian repertoires and "suffered a great deal of criticism in India from the purists, who argued that his art was neither traditional nor pure in any one technique". Today Shankar is considered as one of the prime movers of a revival of Indian dance and music. Shankar returned to India in 1938 and founded a cultural centre of the performing arts. (E.g. Miettinen 1987, 65; Scott 1972, 64.)

formed the basis for Indian people's Theatre Association (IPTA) that functioned from 1943-1964 and that has been an important source of inspiration for a number of theatre practitioners in India up to today. Natya Chetana also considers itself first and foremost to be a people's theatre group, but in a different manner than IPTA, as discussed in Chapter Six.

The Partition of the British Raj into India and Pakistan in 1947 was a painful process and resulted in mass migration and atrocities in which neither Hindus nor Muslims were innocent. Moreover, the assassination of Mohandas Gandhi was a traumatic experience for many Indians. The sense of insecurity also hit theatre. People were disorganised and unsure of their identity:

> …independence confronted the Indian theatre with an acute sense of its deficiencies at many levels. Though there was a burning ambition among many groups, and a deep sense of dedication to the national cause, the total means to move forward were lacking. In many areas the old classical dance and drama was still surrounded by the prejudices and ultra-conservatism of the past. (…) Theatre in a western professional sense was practically nonexistent. (…) Personnel lacked technical knowledge and professional status and there were scant means for acquiring these. A majority of those who were involved in a new theatre were without systematic training and there were few who could regard theatre as their regular means of livelihood. Theatre buildings were notoriously lacking. (Scott 1972, 65.)

Still, as Scott further observes, in spite of the difficulties there was no lack of activity, plans and ideas. (Ibid. 65-66.)

Tradition or modernity?

In the beginning of twentieth century Indian identity was far from obvious in India. In theatre, Yarrow (2001, 143) sees that colonialism set the need to define what 'Indian' theatre was. In the field of theatre, the cultural and political elite of the newly independent country was looking to the past with a definite drive to uphold the Indianness of Indian culture. The approach meant the "sanctification of the past", important elements of which were "inventing the folk"[76] as well as the "theatre of roots". The approach itself was unique. Folk theatre had not yet become popular anywhere, and the

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76 As an example of this, Bharucha refers to discussions in the First Drama Seminar held in 1948. Sanctification of the past as well as inventing the folk are dictions borrowed from Bharucha (1993).

modes of professionalism in theatre were European. Later on the process was criticised by, for example, Rustom Bharucha (1993) for the lack of serious effort to put the idea of 'folk' into a wider historical perspective or to understand it conceptually. As a consequence, folk as a category of describing Indian performance is blurred and has become a nomenclature for a wide range of supposedly non-urban performances. (Bharucha 1993, 197-200.)

When the founders of independent India advocated folk culture and ancient origins as building materials for contemporary Indian arts, they actually carried on a process of establishing 'the traditional'. Bharucha finds the very establishment problematic, and claims that "the history of 'traditional theatre' in India has been represented primarily by orientalists and pundits" who have harked back to Sanskrit sources but forgot to address the role of the performances in relation to their immediate social, political and cultural realities. Often the immediate realities have been such that they have challenged static understanding and integrity of tradition, appearing hence as 'unaesthetic'[77]. Bharucha notes that tradition is always invented in response to larger political, economic and social factors, and wonders if the need to invent a tradition is a sign that the inventors are actually no longer in direct touch with it. Indian 'tradition' was mediated through the colonial machinery, however thoroughly it has since then been 'Indianised' again. (Bharucha 1993, 7.)

Over the years, interest in authentic Indianness has time to time meant different kinds of purification attempts. On many occasions the urban intelligentsia (elite and middle classes) has been keen to control the rural stage, one such instance from Tamil Nadu being narrated by Hanne de Bruin (2000). In Tamil Nadu, as elsewhere in India, the rural performers are mostly illiterate and have a low status in terms of caste, income and formal education. Possibly because of their class status, the intelligentsia of the state has considered them as immoral, using improper language and degenerating to 'the Tamil stage'[78]. de Bruin observes that the fact that many rural performance troupes tour and can set up their show easily in different places was interpreted by the urban elite of the state as potentially disreputable. The reasons behind this could

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77 For instance, the use of modern technology is often considered to corrupt traditional folk performances. Bharucha (1993, 196) asks, whose aesthetic sense is ultimately jarred if the performers and majority of the audience seem to be perfectly fine with more efficient lighting and sound production, or the use of 'Western' electrical instruments: Is it merely the critic's cultural conditioning that is hurt?

78 According to de Bruin (2000, 103-104), the disrespect for the rural stage and its representatives was especially strong during the first half of 20th century, but has remained alive till today. 'Bruin's' rural performers find the disregard of rural stage and performers frustrating as it makes it very difficult for them to gain government recognition and to carve a respectable niche for their art in the competitive field of Tamil theatre.

be the undefined nature of the performance space (anyone can join), and the mobile nature of the troupes. On the other hand, having conceptual links with the nationalist Tamil movement and pan-Indian ideas of a modern, indigenous theatre form, the local intelligentsia has been willing to find an 'indigenous' Tamil theatre form. Looking at the relatively high number of rural performers as unqualified, the intelligentsia has maintained *kattaikkuttu*, one of the existing rural theatre forms, as increasingly vulgar, nearly extinct, and therefore in need of being rescued. de Bruin sees the intelligentsia's fervour to define tradition as 'proper' to be both an indication of fight for scarce resources and, significantly, a fear of something well-established being threatened by change. She concludes that the idea of tradition seems to serve the urban middle classes as an insurance against change, counteracting the anxieties of modern life. The problem of the approach is that it holds tradition as something static and well defined. (de Bruin 2000, 104-109.)

A systematic attempt to incorporate traditional elements into modern performances in a mainstream way was the movement of the "theatre of roots" that took place mainly from late 1950s to 1970s (e.g. Bharucha 1993). One of the prime movers of the approach was Suresh Awasthi[79] who encouraged modern artists to incorporate traditional genres in their theatrical productions (e.g. Schechner 2005). In view of Mee (2004, 12), the theatre of roots movement was the first conscious effort to create a body of work different both from modern European theatre and from traditional Indian performance. It could be best understood as a politically driven search for an indigenous aesthetic and dramaturgy and a way of decolonising the theatre. The critics then, among them Bharucha (1993) and perhaps also Deshpande (2000), point out that instead of having been interested in postcolonialism or postmodernism, Indian theatre has harkened back to tradition and the ethnic, all those things Indian that 'the Western world' is still mainly interested in.

A different, though not necessary less enthusiastic approach to Indianness has been using folk forms as a media of communication. In particular, theatre that uses local linguistic and expressive idioms is recognised as an effective way to reach rural, often illiterate people. Similar interests backed up already IPTA's work, and were among the reasons why I started this study. Today, 'traditional folk media' or elements of it are used for the aims of participatory communication, health education and so forth[80], as well as for educational purposes and delivering party-political propaganda. Same

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79 Suresh Awasthi (1918-2004) was in 1965-1975 general secretary of the Sangeet Natak Academy, the first National Academy of the arts, in particular music, dance and drama, of the Republic of India.

80 About traditional folk media in India, see for instance Parmar 1994.

token, usage of indigenous performance idioms for contemporary purposes has been criticised for instance for idealizing and romanticizing tradition[81].

One of the critics of the traditional cultural heritage was Safdar Hashmi, a determined leftist political street theatre practitioner who was beaten to death when he was performing for workers in an industrial town near Delhi in 1989. Hashmi was of the opinion that the traditional forms carry inescapably along them also that part of traditional content that has to do with superstition, backwardness, and the promotion of feudal structures. He sensed "a complex cooperation between Indian upper-class bureaucrats and Western development agencies behind the upsurge of promoting traditional Indian performance arts". For Hashmi, India was still ruled by alliances of capitalists and feudal lords despite the surface democratic structure[82]. However, even Hashmi did not reject traditional performing arts, but wanted to be careful not to vulgarise or to exploit them. He believed that a different kind of tradition lived in him and found expression in his songs and theatre. (van Erven 1989, 33-34.) As it has become clear, tradition and folk are highly political and politicised issues connected to other sensitive and disputed matters, such as class and caste[83]. Folklorist Sadhana Naithani observes that often it is ruling elites who popularise folklore for the establishment and consolidation of power or as a tool of nation building. In doing so, they tend to conform their perspective on class, or the nation, as universal. (Naithani 1996, 74; see also Pandey 2006.)

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81 The criticism cuts through the field of community/popular theatre discussion. David Kerr (1995) argues that African societies have often been represented as community-oriented and participatory, qualities seen also as the antithesis for "disagreeing individuality" of Westerners and Western theatre. According to Kerr, focusing on community-orientation in the aesthetics belongs to the same origin with political theories that foment a return to pre-colonial communal values. These approaches tend to belittle the scope and dynamics for social change inherent in pre-colonial cultures of Africa. Kerr believes that in pre-colonial Africa theatre served as an arena to consider economic and social issues, changing power relations and ideological disputes. It displayed controversies between classes that were otherwise concealed into and under the structures of kinship, age-based hierarchies, gender positions and religious rituals. (Kerr 1995, 4, 14-15.)

82 Similar stands are taken also by Tanzanian Penina Muhando Mlama in her book on popular theatre in Africa (1992). Mlama sees most of "development" as applied to Africa, Asia and Latin America as another name for capitalism. In Mlama's book there is also a brief evaluation of Indian popular theatre.

83 The political nature of folk and folklore is well known also in the West. An example from Finland: The establishment of nationalism was fuelled by the construction of the epic *Kalevala* as well as formulations in costume ("national" costumes for provinces), figurative representations of nation and its epic past (e.g. Gallen-Kallela's paintings), and the "battle of languages" in favour of Finnish against Swedish, the language of the elite and former rulers. Naithani (1996, 74) notes that Soviet Union and various Eastern European nations used folklore for the establishment of political power during twentieth century, whereas National Socialists in 1930s Germany used it for the assertion of political identity as a nation against others.

Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker summarises that "Since independence, theatre practitioners in India have both embraced and rejected the colonial inheritance in terms of form, language, ideology, and conventions of representation." Whichever the case, their work remains deeply connected to modern and postmodern Western practices. "This multifaceted engagement with the West coexists with a complicated relation to the classical, postclassical and colonial Indian past, both as a cultural possession and an object of knowledge." (Dharwadker 2006, 11.) Yarrow argues that the debates on Indianness are part of ongoing, extremely complex cultural crisis, which encompasses much more than theatre. The crisis is essentially a crisis of modernity, and involves a general process of cultural and political questioning which has been going on since 1947. In theatre, the debate has been largely dominated by issues of identity, and its main themes as (1) the attempt to detach theatre from colonialist models; (2) the relationship between traditional performance forms/origins and contemporary needs; and (3) nationalism versus regionalism. All of these issues conceal further levels of argumentation, and indicate ways in which theatre has functioned as an arena to be concerned and deal with these issues. (Yarrow 2001, 143-144.)

Contemporary modern drama in India

The division into traditional and modern theatre has often been a synonym for rural (folk) and urban (modern) performance. Broadly, modern drama follows a loosely realistic ('Western') mode of expression, and is fundamentally urban. It is mainly created by and for people who may be regarded as middle and upper middle class. The modern drama is commonly divided into the subcategories of commercial, amateur, experimental, and school and college drama. (E.g. Richmond 1990b, 387.)

Though some of the participants manage to make a part of their living from it, modern theatre in India can be considered largely amateur in the sense that majority of those doing it cannot expect to gain a livelihood from theatre. Anyway, people partake in theatre for reasons such as just loving theatre, wishing to gain self-confidence, meeting people, or hoping theatre to be a stepping stone to cinema and TV. Much of the amateur activity takes place in schools, colleges and social groups, and is boosted by regular competitions. Certain cities like Mumbai and Kolkata are known for their large number of amateur theatre groups. On the other hand, the term "professional" is used freely on both commercial and amateur theatre. As Richmond (1990b, 391) writes, sometimes professional refers to commercial theatre and indicates that the performers can make their living by it. On the other hand, amateur theatre practitioners scornful of commercial theatre may call themselves professionals in order to distinguish their

work from it as artistically more ambitious. Village (folk) actors touring to earn a living can also be thought as professional in a sense that theatre is their craft and main source of income. (E.g. Richmond 1990 b, 387-394; Yarrow 2001.)

As noted earlier, women are a relatively new phenomenon in theatre in India, and to a great extent bound to the sphere of modern theatre. The first women appeared on the theatre stage during IPTA's time, and remained for long as mere exceptions. The social and political transformations of Indian society throughout the twentieth century and women's general claims for more status, visibility and access in so-called democratic society have slowly paved way for women in theatre, as in other art forms. In the performing arts this has raised provocative questions about the perception of women throughout Indian history. Still, as Yarrow lists, there is lot to do what it comes to status, range of roles, position within the performance economy and its artistic, political and social organisation. (Yarrow 2001, 86-94, 133-141.) In Orissa, Natya Chetana has done a lot of pioneering work by promoting women's participation in theatre as playwrights, directors and actresses[84].

Contemporary drama is most often written in Indian languages, not in English, and it deals with Indian problems and perspectives (Yarrow, 2001, 47; Dharwadker 2006, 10). As a consequence, the field of Indian contemporary theatre is in essence multilingual rather than monolingual, a fact that has also forced theatre criticism to develop strategies to deal with (ibid. 12)[85]. Most descriptions of modern drama in India pick a small group of male playwrights, such as Vijay Tendulkar (in Marathi), Badal Sircar (in Bengali), Mohan Rakesh (in Hindi) and Girish Karnad (in Kannada), who were among the first to raise themselves to national consciousness and whose plays have become landmarks of modern Indian drama (e.g. Mee 2002, 1). At the same time, it is also recognised that there are many more good playwrights that can be next to unknown at least on an all-India level. The lack of recognition is often a due to one or more factors such as a peripheral location, in other words writing in less widely spoken language and/or living in a state thought of as minor or insignificant in contemporary theatre; writing in Oriya in Orissa fits into this kind of picture all too well. Furthermore, because of the long marginalisation, there are still only a handful of recognised women in the business.

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84 In 1990s Natya Chetana ran a project called Women at the Front (Natya Chetana 1994), and has since then continued training and supporting female theatre makers in Orissa.

85 My experience from the Nandikar Theatre Festival in Kolkata in December 2008 is that plays from different parts of India are not translated for the audience. All in all, not grasping everything of the dialogue seemed to be something that didn't concern people. At any rate, in such multilingual circumstances the plays also better function at other levels rather than only dialogue.

Modern drama writing has also been connected to social movements, for instance to the already mentioned theatre of roots movement as well as street theatre, women's theatre movement, and *dalit sahitya (dalit* literature) (Mee 2002, 2). According to Dharwadker, much of oppositional energy in contemporary theatre is directed "against the oppressive structures of nation, patriarchy, caste, class and tradition". While these can be seen as "aspects of the "postcoloniality" of Indian theatre", it is clear that the primary concern of the playwrights has been "to use all available resources for the creation of theatre that is adequate to their own complex historical and cultural positioning" rather than writing 'back' at the West. (Dharwadker 2006, 12-13). However, according to van Erven's observations (1992) "India's mainstream theatre artists, cultural administrators, and even those who consider themselves political theatre artists either ignore or dismiss" what he calls theatre for liberation. Such political, socially committed theatre "operates almost clandestinely in the slums of the metropoles and in impoverished rural areas". Though it is not primarily focused on producing outstandingly original plays, "its social effectiveness is sometimes stunning". Women's groups are also involved in such theatre work, often connected with agendas of social work or social change. But, as Anuradha Kapoor reflects, the challenge is that

> You can't do social work and theatre at once. Women have only a limited free time in the afternoon and they have to do urgent things like health education during that period. So, often there is no time to sustain a women's theatre group. (…) Other concerns take over it. (Kapoor cited in van Erven 1992, 120.)

Nonetheless, a fragmented network of potentially hundreds of groups engaged in this kind of theatre exists. At the same time, the lack of cooperation between mainstream artistically oriented theatre and theatre for liberation activists is common and obvious, and in van Erven's view, typical of Indian political theatre in general. For artistically ambitious theatre makers adhering to the mainstream is the safer choice. As van Erven states, though there are well established "political theatre makers who realise that the answer lies not with Brecht in saris, nor indeed with any of the other attempts at fitting social criticism into Western or traditional forms" they find it hard to divorce themselves from the mainstream theatre. (van Erven 1992,114 -139.)

Theatre in Orissa

Orissa "boasts a rich variety of traditional performance", that is a variety of folk performance forms from puppetry to balladry, devotional ritual, diverse forms of Lila,

mythological presentations, masked dance drama, folk dance and satire[86]. However, these forms are fast receding because of rapid urbanisation and other influences, and the traditional elements in them are disappearing. (The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre 2004, 320.) One reason is that mastering a particular folk theatre form may require years of committed practice but bring in only modest and partial income. Thus, younger people are no longer necessarily able, or interested, to learn them[87]. A peculiar combination of an originally 'traditional' form deeply transformed to function as contemporary entertainment is commercial *jatra*, the only form of local theatre in which a successful production can bring big money for the troupe owner. Today, the *jatra* shows, essentially "bollywood films on stage", sex, violence and 'record dancing' making much of their lure, are commonly performed in huge tents at the outskirts of towns, gathering at times thousands to their whole night shows (more on modern *jatra* in Chhotaray 2002, 2009).

Modern Oriya theatre dates back to 1875, when Jaga Mohan Lala established the first permanent stage and wrote the first Oriya 'social drama', *Babaji* (The Holy Man) in 1877. In the first part of twentieth century, a number of professional touring theatre troupes emerged, but mostly without any permanent theatre house. In 1940s two professional theatres arose in Cuttack and third in Puri, Orissa Theatre (Cuttak) and Annapurna Theatre (Puri and Cuttack), in addition to which there were few other more short-lived companies. The Orissa Theatre closed down in 1949 but both Annapurna Theatre branches continued. The existence of these theatre companies encouraged playwrights and created "a rich and healthy tradition of staged drama", identified later as the 'golden age' of modern Oriya drama. However, catering to the demands of their middle-class viewers and being totally dependent on cash-flow, the companies did not have much scope for experimentation, and had to finally close down both due to the gradual alienation of their audiences from theatre as well as some mismanagement. In 1950s the dramatist Manoranjan Das started a group theatre movement in Orissa, "which soon occupied a prominent place in Oriya theatre". The movement, in particular some of the theatre groups that were part of it, changed the taste of the audiences and made young writers interested in the movement. Reflecting the changing lifestyle, Oriya theatre es-

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86 The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre (2004, 320) lists these forms as *Kundhei Nata, Sakhi-kundhei Nata, Ravana Chhaya, Daskathia, Pala, Danda Nata, Bandi Nata, Yatra, Dhanu Yatra, Rahasa, Bharat Lila, Prahlada Nataka, Suanga, Chhau, Desia Nata, Chaiti Ghoda Nata,* and *Mughal Tamsha.*

87 In one of the discussions held at the Natya Chetana's people's theatre festival in 2003, two boys belonging to one of the performing teams reported that the combination of late night rehearsals and school work is taxing, and during performance tours attendance at school is bound to suffer. Moreover, the boys performing female roles are sometimes ridiculed by the classmates.

tablished for the first time a direct and strong bridge with Western drama. At present, in the absence of professional theatre in Orissa, amateur theatre groups form the "only source of hope for theatre lovers", but suffer from constant financial problems. Many of the groups finance their shows mainly from their own pockets, and most groups fail to cross the borders of their own locality, which makes them unknown outside their immediate surroundings. However, annual competitions, arranged by the Cultural Academy of Rourkela and other theatre groups, boost the theatrical activity as well as the state-level recognition of some groups. (E.g. The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre 2004, 320.)

In the field of Orissan theatre, Natya Chetana has a special position in many ways. Though not exactly professional, Natya Chetana has for long been a rare case in the sense that it has managed to organise fairly long 'full time' sessions of uninterrupted practice time for its productions in a workshop-form. Furthermore, though the group cannot be located within the realm of primarily and only artistic theatre, it is significant that the group has nonetheless succeeded in establishing itself also in that sphere. Moreover, Natya Chetana is active in organising discussions and dialogue about theatre and cultural politics at large, and strives to annually organise a people's theatre festival (since 1996) that brings together folk and amateur theatre practitioners.

Western seekers

As mentioned before, for Westerners Indian theatre has been a target of interest and even wild orientalist projections. Still today, it is often the ethnic and the exotic that appeals to Western spectators, but is no longer the only approach to Indian theatre. Many Western theatre practitioners, amongst the most well known Eugenio Barba, Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook, have been looking to Indian theatre for something that they felt was missing. Many Westerners have been particularly interested to learn from physical and mental capacities of theatre that were marginalised in the West with modernism and post-Enlightenment thought[88]. As Yarrow stresses, even if the search has to some extent been spiced by orientalistic fascination, it is significant that it has been fuelled by the sense of lack. (Yarrow 2001, 1-16.)

What have the Western seekers then found from India? Yarrow lists rather philosophical characteristics such as liminality, plurality, physicality and transcendence. Liminality is a term first used by the anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner to explain the function of performance in rites of passage. In the context of In-

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88   For those more interested in this issue Yarrow recommends Malekin & Yarrow 1997.

dian theatre, Yarrow explains the term to identify the 'betweenness' of the performance event, for instance when the participants are changing their role within a community (e.g. from childhood to maturity) and the change is validated by the performance. Plurality implies a passing across borders in a different sense. As discussed earlier, Indian performance is often plural in the respect that it does not make sharp distinctions between dance, theatre, and music, or between the sacred and profane, and it is often multi-layered as well as open to a wide variety of interpretations[89]. The physicality of Indian theatre has attracted Westerners on the basis that it does not separate the body from the psyche, but rather sees the body an essential prerequisite for transcendence. Indeed, these kinds of things have interested and have been increasingly explored by contemporary performing artists everywhere. For Yarrow, the above-mentioned qualities constitute a model of theatre as a site of change, a place to learn both of the self and the world. Yet, the fact that Indian performances do not recognise the same boundaries with which the West is familiar does not necessarily mean that their understanding of the reality that they reflect is less compartmentalised. Rather, it is compartmentalised along different lines. Moreover, Indian practice and Western needs do not automatically form a neat match. (Yarrow 2001, 11-15, 21.)

Dharwadker observes that in independent India "the continuing influence of orientalist epistemology has secured unusual privileges for classical and premodern Indian traditions of performance among Western scholars", as well as avant-garde theatre theorists and practitioners. In her opinion, Euro-American approaches to Indian theatre have been dominated by anthropological and intercultural perspectives (such as Schechner 1983, 1985; Barba & Savarese 1991), and grasping the ancient wisdom in surviving theatrical and other performance traditions. However, the interest has been "marked by a radical disengagement from modern cultural forms and narratives". (Dharwadker 2006, 7.) Further from the critical side Rustom Bharucha (2001) has pointed out that the encounters of Indian performers and First World 'interculturalists' are prone to unresolved contradictions. In his view, with their "glittering array of cameras, zoom lenses, videos, and projectors" the "interculturalists" signify all too easily an image of Western technology and power. He is worried about intellectual property rights and possibility of cultural piracy, and asks:

> When does the 'fair use' of resources from other cultures, even in the least commercial of endeavours like academic research in the non-western performing arts … become an alibi for the production of a new expertise at the expense of acknowledging local knowledge? (Bharucha 2001, 30.)

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89 In this sense, it can be claimed that performance in India has for long had qualities that are only recently tried in experimental (/progressive) theatre globally.

As Dharwadker claims, "postcolonial studies could be expected to offer a corrective to the neo-orientalist indology and theatrical interculturalism that make modern Indian theatre invisible". So far this seems not to be the case. First of all, as postcolonial studies originate from literature studies, there is still a strong emphasis to focus on the discursive and textual, whereas theatre is performative. Moreover, theatrical performances are necessarily local, rooted in specific places, and depend on "indigenous languages and precolonial performance traditions wherever they are available." For these reasons they have not fitted in well with the recent tides of research interested diasporic genres and migration. Lastly, and importantly, theatre in India is easily bypassed in research because it is seen as too vast and complex of a topic to be considered "in a text other than devoted to just India". (Dharwadker 2006, 8-9.)

4.2 THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT OF SOCIALLY COMMITTED THEATRE

As pointed out earlier, Natya Chetana identifies itself as a people's theatre group. Natya Chetana's emphasis on "doing theatre with victims of social exploitation or injustice", "with non-artists" and "with common but interested people" "with a participatory method" (quotations from Natya Chetana's brochures) connect with a particular, globally known theatrical tradition known with many names, such as people's theatre, community theatre and popular theatre. Other labels for somewhat similar approaches are street theatre, political theatre, theatre for development (TfD), theatre in education (TIE), liberation theatre, participatory theatre and grassroots theatre. Theatre of the oppressed and forum theatre developed by and known through the work of Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal (1931-2009) also share similar ambitions. Though some forms, like Boal's techniques, are better established in the sense that people making performances by and large know about and agree on their special characteristics, in general both those practising this kind of theatre and those writing about it seem to use the term they for some reason like best. Broad and open to various interpretations, the terms can refer to ideologically and practically relatively similar approaches, or then not.

Of the above terms, popular theatre (in French *theatre populaire)*, associated "with democratic, proletarian and politically progressive theatre", was referred to already by Jacques Rousseau in 1758 (Schechter 2003, 3[90]). Eugen van Erven (1988) specifies the term to mean decentralised and antiestablishment theatre in alternative spaces. In the

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90   Schechter's introduction to Popular Theatre, a Sourcebook (2003), a collection of articles originally published in The Drama Review, provides a brief history of popular theatre tracing further back than my summary here.

sub-Saharan African context, David Kerr (1993) defines it as common sense, antiracist and anti-oppressive theatre, and L. Dale Byam (1999, 9-12) as political cultural activity, that enhances ethnic and class-consciousness and can be an agent for change and interaction, awakening individuals into an historical and social sense of responsibility. To Tanzanian Penina Muhando Mlama (1991, 5), then, popular theatre signifies an approach "towards incorporating people's view on development" through a process in which amateurs and whole community identify and examine their development problems. The process continues by analysing the problems collectively. On the basis of the analysis the community builds up and stages a performance, followed by post-performance discussions and charting out possible actions to take.

In Latin America, Weiss, Damasceno, Frichmann, Kaiser-Lenoir, Pianca and Rizk (1993) place the origins of the movement in strands of workers', university and Brechtian art theatre, and see that internationally the movement reached its peak of activity between 1965 and 1975. When the movement grew, it incorporated elements of commercial popular theatre, street theatre and folk drama to support its artistic and social purposes. A central theme of the genre has been the problem of hegemony in its various nuances, leading to critical and complex questions of class and the partiality of historical narratives. (Ibid.) However, despite the apparent similarity of various definitions, the term remains ambiguous: While others deploy it to the working class, to others it means things "intended for the general public" (van Erven 1988, 5). Likewise, though the writers tend to emphasise the political and participatory nature of this kind of theatre, popular does not necessarily refer only to "progressive" meanings (e.g. Byam 1999, 11). In Subodh's opinion this is the case of India; the word popular connotes cheap escapism. As Schechter (2003, 8) summarises, "not all popular theatre is anti-capitalistic or subversive of the status quo". Though the writers and practitioners want to stress the difference between mass culture and popular culture, in reality drawing the line can be difficult.

Overlapping with the above, van Erven locates the roots of *community theatre* "in the various forms of counter-cultural, radical, anti- and post-colonial, educational, and liberational theatres of the 1960s and 1970s". His claim is that despite the broad range of performance styles, community theatre is united by its emphasis on local and personal stories that are then collectively processed through improvisation and shaped into theatre. In the first place, community theatre "privileges the artistic pleasure and sociocultural empowerment of its community participants", not art for art's sake. Its material and aesthetic forms are connected to 'the' community whose interests it tries to express. (van Erven 2001, 1-3.) On the other hand, as Nellhaus & Haedicke (2001, 3) observe, the accommodation of revolutionary politics and lack of professionalism have occasionally reduced this kind of theatre to either direct political propaganda or third-

rate entertainment. Nonetheless, sticking only to such images does not allow for a due understanding of this kind of artistic practice.

On the basis of his observations of British alternative and community theatre from 1960s to 1990s, Baz Kershaw sees the mushrooming of "a riot of subcategories" on one hand to speak of healthy cultural and theatrical experimentation, on the other produce fragmentation and confusion about the movement's identity. Furthermore, it causes difficulties to relate the work to earlier theatre traditions. (Kershaw 1992, 56.) To me reading about the ideas linked with each theatre form has been both interesting and confusing, not lessened by the fierce protectiveness and openly stated political stands of many of the writers in favour of the kind of approach they act as spokesperson for. The categories of theatre referred to are anyhow loose to the extent that Natya Chetana's work could be located within any one of them. As Pekka Korhonen notes, this kind of theatre with context and country specific names is essentially spying on one's own thoughts, the common genres being community oriented, educational, and therapeutic. Respectively, such theatre is mostly done outside of an arts context: in communities, institutions, classrooms, even war zones. Different forms are united by their aspirations for change towards something better at the societal level, and their interest in joint and collective stirring rather than finding quick solutions. The actual performing usually either involves the audience members as actors, in some forms to the extent that finally everyone participates in the drama, or the aim of the performance is to create discussion. (Korhonen 2007, 112.) Natya Chetana's pursues the latter option: the audience can follow a play in peace; the intention is not to get the spectators to turn into actors during the course of the performance.

As Nellhaus and Haedicke (2001, 4) point, "The internationalism of community-based performance work is all the more remarkable because, at the same time, the activities tend to have a decided commitment to localism." As the definitions of popular and community theatre established, a common aim in different socially committed theatre forms is to anchor the topics discussed in and through the drama into the culture of the audience/participants, so that the topics would be directly meaningful to the people for, or with whom, the theatre is made. In Kershaw's study on British alternative theatre groups, different groups tailored their constitution to enhance their chances of addressing the needs and meeting the demands of the community in question. To achieve this in a non-patronising way, the groups had different approaches: an ethic of openness, keeping no secrets, making the aims of the performance clear to the community, enabling participation of non-professionals, ensuring the accuracy of documentary material used in the process, demystifying professionalism, and involving the community in the project. For Kershaw, another name for such processes is ensuring "identification with the community"; reassuring "the community that the company

had its interests, its needs, demands and desires centrally at heart". (Kershaw 1992, 244-245.) As Chapters Five to Eight show, similar issues also inform Natya Chetana's practice. Worth noticing is that the above listed approaches could as well be followed by many social workers, in particular those doing community work.

4.3   THINKING THEATRE AND ARTS IN RELATION TO SOCIAL WORK

Art for art's sake or for social change?

While social work typically is an activity that takes place among people and in which speaking, or language, play an important role, art and artists typically deal with issues and expression that the ordinary use of words cannot convey or can convey only partially. (Perhaps this is one reason for the legion of terms for possibly very similar theatrical approaches?) Austin Harrington (2004) is of the opinion that in the cognition of the world art is an equal partner to social theory. In other words, art is not understood properly if explained "exclusively in terms of social conventions, social institutions and social power relations"; doing so would be reductionism and methodological imperialism. Art can tell us things about the world that social science cannot, and further there are "*ways* in which art can tell us about things in society that a social-scientific way of telling us about these things cannot replicate and cannot claim to supersede". (Ibid. 3.)

Nonetheless, art is not without forceful connections to time, culture and expected (learned) ways of perceiving. While they capture much of what many also today expect from art works, for example the conception that art should be something that elevates human minds by its beauty, or the idea that beauty in art should reflect the original beauty of nature, date back to ancient Greece. Of more recent origin is the idea of beauty as "relative to changing historical contexts of perception" or that "conceptions of beauty change over time and different cultures construct different ideas of nature that reflect changing frameworks of perception". (Harrington 2004, 9-12.) Similar ideals of beauty and naturalistic representation have had relevance at different periods of time also in the context of performing arts, as does the explosion of possible aesthetic choices and experiments during and after modernity. In India, aesthetic philosophies and preferences form a case of their own, as touched in the case of Indian theatre in the beginning of this chapter.

Leaving aside traditional aesthetic ideals and sort of meta-theoretical approaches of art, art could be differentiated as expression, communication, and sharing, or sim-

ply as a relationship with the world. The artist shares or communicates something of his or her own perception, posture, and questions. If the sharing is successful, it may enable others to see the world, in smaller or bigger scale, in a new light or from a new angle.[91] That art might open the world in a new way for a perceiver is something that may happen, but surely does not happen every time. Still, even if the artwork creates mainly only confusion, it can give food for thought, and an experience of beauty can be nourishing and elevating as such. As an expression art can be, but it does not have to be, expressing opinions. Moreover, all art is not necessarily seeking beauty or harmony; the artist might be concerned with other qualities of experience.

In the case of community-based performances, the 'ownership' of the performance, which further includes aspects like control, authority, and authenticity, is often a truly challenging question. While working together with communities entails possibilities for democratisation of culture and increased agency for the community in question, it also has potential dangers. Though the cultural exchange is not predestined to fail, "the stance, assumptions and motivations of those involved, the discourse surrounding the event, and the relationships between the groups and between language and issues of knowledge and power must be constantly interrogated". (Nellhaus & Haedicke 2001, 13-15.) For Natya Chetana, whose plays and scripts are mostly constructed collectively during the course of a rehearsal process, the demand to be able to name the author of the script, posed by the rules of certain local theatre competitions, has been problematic. After being ruled out because of the inability to name the author, the decision has been to give Subodh's name (as the director of the group) as the author in cases in which naming an individual playwright has not been possible.

As already implied, at present theatre as an art form can be divided into two main lines, theatre done in an art context (consisting of proscenium-style contemporary theatre or 'classical' theatrical styles), and applied theatre that is interested in and identifies itself also with orders of importance outside the arts context (e.g. Korhonen 2007, 111). While in strictly artistic contexts art is often conceived as the highest

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91 There have however been times and genres of art in which the subjectivity of the artist has not been considered worth stating, as for instance in various genres of religious art. Indian art, in particular before modernity, is usually anonymous. As Shearer points out, the artists were not particularly interested in individual innovation. Their role was to faithfully transmit forms which preserve and continue inherited structures and beliefs of society, not to be isolated geniuses in the style of the romantic Western tradition. (Shearer 1993, 16-17.) Still today, many forms of art, including local genres of folk and/or religious theatre and dance, are based on learning through imitation (from a master), rather than addressing the creativity of individual artists or craftsmen; the very aim can be keeping the form unchanged.

ideal that allows no compromises (art for art's sake[92]), the multifariously named and defined socially committed art forms aim being art for life's sake. (Haapalainen 2007, 223.) Correspondingly, as Marjatta Bardy (2007, 28) writes, art philosophy debates that accentuate the intrinsic value of art tend to view any instrumental or applied practice of art negatively. Thus many of the applied theatre makers, like socially committed and community artists in other fields of art, have realised that the art world does not willingly count them as artists proper. In the words of Nellhaus & Haedicke (2001, 7), "Community-based performance sounds like a great form of community development or social work – but is it art?" Noting the centrality of the social functions in the approach, they conclude that

> Community-based performance stretches and challenges the customary boundaries and definitions of art. In it aesthetic considerations must go hand in hand with those of social activism: (…) rather than an aesthetic of sublimity, community-based theater pursues a *grounded* aesthetics. (Ibid. 7-8.)

In part there are justified suspicions against instrumental use of art. In Finland many of the arts-based projects that have been carried out as part of public sector activities for instance in the fields of social and health care, education, and elsewhere, have been primarily focused on accomplishing change in the lives of the participants. In Bardy's view, the problem with such set-ups is that the projects have often been formulated largely by those at the centre, and not by the people whom the projects possibly try to integrate into 'the mainstream'. On the other hand, a common aim in community art is to convey experiences of life at the margins to the people at the centre, to the general public and the policy makers alike. In many projects the clearly stated starting point is that the aim is not to teach, evaluate, improve, change or voice the participants, but to "*bring forward what is significant for the group of people involved*". (Bardy 2007, 28-29, emphasis original.)

Socially committed artists of various sorts are usually keenly aware that it is problematic if art is reduced to a tool among others. As a tool, art easily loses its non-predefined potential, the possibility and space for non-ordered outcomes, and can turn into mere repetition of conservative ideas. This may take place particularly easily in artistic activities where the main aim is to experience beauty and refresh oneself. Yet, even the

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92 According to Riikka Haapalainen (2007, 223), in Europe the art for art's sake approach originates in 19th century France and a movement opposing the modern belief in progress, the overt emphasis of rationalism and commercialism of art. The movement cherished the idea of autonomous art, which further led to differentiation between artists and those loving and knowing art from ordinary people. Art was increasingly detached from the everyday and lifted above it.

most radical of techniques can lose its potential to call the state of affairs into question, if poorly internalised. In such instances, arts and artists may find themselves serving the interests of those already wealthy and powerful, as learned for instance from the early experiences of theatre for development in Africa (e.g. Kerr 1995, 159). Therefore, an instrumental use of arts or various means of expression does not necessarily equal with art, not to mention illuminating social tensions and challenging the status quo. Nor does all art need to be high quality. But where and when is art nonetheless art, and when does it turn into something else?

According to Bardy, when art allies with the everyday (as applied, community, or socially committed art forms often do), the perspective to think about both artists and spectators changes. Perceiving, experiencing, and possibly participating in art is no longer something out of the ordinary. As a consequence, the role of the spectators widens, and they are better able to construct a unique, personal relationship with the artwork. Correspondingly, the artist may lose something of the symbolic power that s/he might have otherwise been able to entertain in relation to the piece of work, spectators and the art world. The artist becomes one of many, not a person with special status. That is, rather than a creator of art, the artist becomes an initiator and catalyst of artistic processes, someone in a hybrid state between different kinds of processes, tools, doing and producing. (Bardy 2007, 224.) In practice, the condition for a community artist keen to practice his or her profession is first of all ability to move in a convoluted web of various networks, potential prospects, and equally potential dangers, and secondly a healthy amount of self reflection. While there are no ready-made truths or directions, every option is not equally meaningful. (Harle 2007, 249-250.)

What can theatre/art give to social work?

The importance and possibilities of art in social work have been highlighted from various angles. In his already classic book 'Social Work as Art', Hugh England (1986) states that the practice of social work belongs to the tradition of art: the real basis of good (and necessarily subjective) practice is the social worker's intuition, imagination and experience. In research, Danish social work researcher, teacher and drama practitioner Lars Uggerhøj (2006) calls for creativity, imagination, drama and role-play as important tools for constructing social work knowledge. Creative approaches allow paying attention to issues of complexity and power both in social work and social work research. Among other things, drama and role-play provide possibilities to discuss power issues by making them visible by staging them. Furthermore, in research creative approaches can provide space for uncertainty, in other words less control by the researcher, and

may thus bring in a bigger role for the people who are studied. Uggerhøj estimates that examining power, and ways to increase the agency of the people under study within the study processes, might prove important for social sciences on the whole, particularly if social sciences need to argue for their right of existence in relation to the more evidence-based natural sciences. While there has to be space for uncertainty within the process of inquiry, art and creative methods can benefit research by providing ways to be sensitive with this uncertainty. (Uggerhøj 2006.) Adrienne Chambon, who reflects her experience of the video installation 'Nut•ka•'a by Stan Douglas, also points out how "Art has no trouble speaking simultaneously to the real and to the imagination, the fantasy, the wishes, the troubled wishes." In her case, the installation made her question her own (troubled) location as the spectator of the installation, as well as taken-for-granted practices, issues of access and absences, and the unquestioned and implicit, in her own social work research. (Chambon 2005.)

The role of art within the field of social work is influenced by the local culture and the nature of social work. From a Finnish perspective it seems that artistic and cultural approaches have more taken-for-granted position in cultures and areas in which the tradition of social animation is strongly established, in particular in South America or in France amongst the European countries (e.g. Kurki 2000). Though the approach of social animation has not really made its way into 'mainstream' social work in Finland, at the fringes of the field, socially committed theatre, and other forms of art are neither new nor rare phenomena[93]. Moreover, there is an increasing consciousness of art as a human right, and realisation that access to it is a social justice issue. As Liikanen (2007, 13) reminds us, according to the Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27 (1) "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits." If access to art is conceived as a basic need, then society should be obliged to take care that also those who are ill, old, insolvent or marginalised, have opportunities to experience it. On the other hand, participating in the cultural life of the community is surely an issue that evokes highly context-specific and deliberate interpretations, starting from the idea of community. Anyway, in India theatre and drama are natural allies of social work to the extent that university curricula can contain courses on theatre or puppetry, and different social work colleges compete annually in the art of street theatre plays. This is because of the

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93 For instance, temperance societies and youth associations made edifying and often also entertaining plays for their own membership and general public from early on, artistic or arts-based activities are a common part of the work with specific client groups, such as in youth work, work with the aged, or group work in various institutions, and in the societal work done by church and various organisations. One example of a socially committed theatre project is Tampere-based *Legioonateatteri* (www.legioonateatteri.fi) that "sets itself against marginalisation, unemployment, and all-day passivity".

usefulness of drama in promoting social work goals and spreading information, such as the fact that the poor also do have rights. In addition to being a way to catch the interest of the public, theatre has a truly important role as a media of communication, as in rural areas and among the poorer sections of urban people illiteracy is still prevalent (e.g. Mohan 2004).

As noted before, socially committed theatre has also the capacity to generate participatory processes, joy and attachment. Moreover, it can help understanding and analyzing ideas, and the behaviour of one's self and others. (E.g. Kurki 2000, 140). This is because the observation of the differences between people, or seeking understanding about the causes and effects of conflicts beyond the surface level are in the nature of drama (e.g. Toivanen 2007, 125.) Art mirrors, interprets, and transforms our ways of perceiving, experiencing and feeling, as well as piecing these things together. It can move our senses, emotions and intellect in ways difficult to reach by other means. (E.g. Bardy 2007, 21.) This has significant implications for social work. So, to apply Marjatta Bardy's ideas of community art processes to social work, first of all we must realise that just like many artistic and arts-based processes, many social work processes entail examining attitudes, aims, behaviour, and different positions either individually or collectively (by service users and social workers alike). Secondly, community-oriented art forms provide opportunities to work with the collective and societal level, allowing connections also for participants traditionally distant from each other, as well as opportunities to examine not only one's own but each other's location. Thirdly, and most importantly, arts and arts-based working methods have the capacity to treat humans as socially and individually multifaceted and complex, holistic beings. (Ibid. 24-26.)

Marjatta Bardy writes that it is important to notice that many arts-based approaches are crucially more than self-expression, namely learning to listen to others as well as getting into and learning dialogue. The negative labelling of those at the shadows of what is established as the mainstream culture [for instance, young people, Muslims, *adivasis*, *dalits…*], can be avoided when individuals belonging to these groups are given opportunities to stand out as *"interesting persons"*. When the starting point is that the participants are corporeal, sensing, multilayered in mind and spiritual at the same time, also their experiences of reality make a necessarily diverse ground for examination. In such processes, combining fact and fiction can liberate the examination of emotions and experiences. Moreover, playfulness diminishes fear, and overcoming fear creates joy, which further supports fortitude and the spirit of critical questioning. When successful, such processes can act as an important counterforce for the general lack of respect, borne when the society at large treats a group of people disrespectfully. Moreover, without denying their responsibility and power, the professionals in charge of the process can also act as equal fellow human beings. Naturally, the precondition for

all these things to take place is a positive and respectful attitude towards other people. For genuine appreciation to take root, individual and collective political and social action, as well as events in which one's inner self is moved, are essential. "When emotions are connected with intelligence, chances for *culture of caring* increase. Even so, guarantees for it to come true cannot be given." Yet, art can serve as a sphere which is not *limited* (emphasis mine) by received ideas of rationality. As Bardy points out, presently a strong ethos founded on the principles of a simplified technocratic perception of the world, achievement orientation and consumerism is grossly over-attuned to the extent that it turns against its own premises, diminishing rather than increasing rationality. (Bardy 2007, 24-26.)

In my view, within the wide field of social work, art seems to raise interest and provide opportunities mainly in relation to three orientations: (1) the therapeutic and healing, (2) the challenging, social change seeking and (3) the communicative/community building orientation. These orientations can be but need not be overlapping. And, while art can be a useful partner, sometimes it might not be art per se, but activities related to art, that nourish processes of social work.

THE THERAPEUTIC/HEALING ORIENTATION. Art can weigh in positively in processes of healing. According to Hanna-Liisa Liikanen's study on art and cultural activities in hospitals and care units in Eastern Finland (2003), art and/or cultural activities provided experiences and meaning to people in care, had a positive impact on experienced health and quality of life, and generated a community orientation and networks that further helped the patients to gain and maintain control over their lives. What's more, they contributed to the cosiness and beauty of the care units. (Ibid. 43-48). Furthermore, Leonie Hohenthal-Antin (2006), who has studied the role of theatrical and other cultural activities in the lives of elderly people in Finland, points out that the activities provide participants ways to become visible (again) in their own terms. While it is valuable enough that something in art manages to bring joy into and improve painful, sorrow, or marginalised situations, it would be interesting to know what actually generates the change. Is it a moment of recognition, an exchange of ideas, beauty, or all these things together? In non-Western contexts (which is not to say that such examples could not be found in Western societies), practices that in social science terms could be located somewhere at the borderland between art, ritual, and spirituality, are known to be both socially and collectively powerful and positively healing what it comes to experienced health.

THE CHALLENGING AND SOCIAL CHANGE SEEKING ORIENTATION unites much of principally political or socially committed art and political, social justice seeking social

work – although all art and social work is political in a sense that it cannot escape having a political location. As Bardy (2007, 31) states, art and art-like activities have much to offer in situations in which the task is to create space for processing social change and different survival strategies. Further, in view of Catherine McDonald (2006) locally practicing social workers are actually glocal *cultural workers* (emphasis mine) in the midst of processes of global institutional change that does not leave local social work contexts unchanged. In the sphere of global social work (that cannot avoid re-examining the paradigm of development) such

> Cultural workers place themselves in a position of creating possibilities for social justice in the uncertain and ideologically fraught spaces where both mainstream and critical traditions of understanding of development confront challenges of the post-development critique. (McDonald 2006, 200.)

From the perspective of theatrical work, I conceive theatre educator Kathleen Berry (2002) as speaking from a somewhat similar angle when she describes the work she has done in the name of 'Theatre for Disequilibrium' in Canada. In the present situation of complexity, her interest has been in dismantling "modern Western cultural constructions that have reached the limits of creativity and innovation and continue to produce relationships of power that are unequal, socially unjust, homogenous and binary." Both for her and her students the process of such deconstruction has often meant finding themselves "in some discursive way part of the production, circulation, and maintenance of privilege":

> So whatever dramatic arts or realities we live in, we are faced with challenging a world that was produced and circulated through various socializing texts and processes by our ancestors and continue to be hegemonically maintained, in some way or other, by us. (Berry 2002, 33-34.)

The conclusion is that social change requires genuine reflection, in Berry's terms "studying hegemony and the ways discourses and practices become normalizing, naturalizing, neutralizing, essentializing, universalizing, generalizing" not only in the lives and practices of others but also one's own – processes of which neither theatre nor social work are free zones. For Berry, such drama is essentially about "[hu]mans in mess", challenging one's own autobiography. Yet, the realisation should not be paralysing, but support the initiative to continue processes of tracking, deconstructing, examining, excavating, critiquing and articulating. (Berry 2002, 33-41.) Obviously, the social change seeking orientation, if deeply internalised, forces one to evaluate one's own position and received truths. While finding non-problematic solutions in a complicated

world is not likely, the aim is to increase awareness and possibilities to make informed choices as well as to bear responsibility both individually and collectively.

THE COMMUNICATIVE/COMMUNITY BUILDING ORIENTATION is essentially about bonding and building relationships. As already often mentioned, the processes of sharing and getting resources to understand oneself and others are essential and wished for in both social work and socially committed art. So is the possibility and importance to have stories from outside the discursively hegemonic mainstream, or centre, articulated and heard. At the same time, it is nonetheless important to remember that the idea of neither social work nor socially committed art is to encourage tourism among the marginalised (e.g. Harle 2007). Half-hearted, superficial or pitiful encounters do more harm than good. Furthermore, as Iris Marion Young (ref. Nellhaus & Haedicke 2001, 10) reminds us, one should be cautious also with overflowing optimism about communities (however appropriately spirited) as the all-powerful solution to various social problems[94].

To conclude, many of the issues I have discussed in this chapter, as well as in the previous ones, raise more questions than answers. Natya Chetana's location at various crossroads in the field of Indian theatre, as a participant in the global theatre movement, and at the interface of social work and theatre, is inevitably a location in a rough sea of divergent streams of artistic and political interests, priorities and identifications. Rather than providing answers carved in stone, the task of the coming chapters is to examine the process called Natya Chetana; how the group with its particular interests, resources, and circumstances deals with and in relation to above discussed and other issues. In other words, while this and previous chapter have been essentially mapping various contexts in relation to which and at the intersection of which Natya Chetana's work can be articulated, from here on the study continues as a case study of the group, its theatre and social work.

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94 "Community is an understandable dream, expressing a desire for selves that are transparent to one another, relationships and mutual identification, social closeness and comfort. The dream is understandable, but politically problematic (…) because those motivated by it will tend to suppress differences among themselves or implicitly exclude from their political groups persons with whom they do not identify." (Young in Nellhaus & Haedicke 2001, 10.)

CHAPTER 5
LIVING AS GROUP

5.1 VANTAGE POINT: NATYA CHETANA AS A COMMUNITY OF WORK AND COLLECTIVE LIVING

In the earlier chapters I have briefly referred to the early years of Natya Chetana and the gradual steps through which the group has established its social and theatrical agenda. Although Natya Chetana's theatre work, social work and way of life can hardly be differentiated from one another, in this chapter I will focus on the social dynamics rather than the actual theatre making part of group life, which is then on the agenda specifically in Chapters Six and Seven, whereas Chapter Eight focuses on social work.

In retrospect, over Natya Chetana's life span the time of my major fieldwork in 2001-2002 can be considered as the last phase of a period of several years of a 'strong collective'. The group was fairly large in size and had had funding for several years that had enabled full time concentration on theatre and related activities. Before and after that, Natya Chetana has also faced other kinds of times. A theatre group, like any other community of living or working, is never stable. People join through their own peculiar routes and shape the collective by their contribution and personality. Each and everyone tends to grow and age, and at some point leaves. Some may die or fall ill, others exit to continue their lives somewhere else; some keep in contact, others quit forever. Financial and other troubles or fortunes, whether of individual or of more general nature, also have their impact on the constitution of collectives.

Interestingly, one of the metaphors that Subodh in particular, but also others, frequently apply to explain the Natya Chetana team to outsiders is family. Although in South Asia many kinds of relationships are dressed up as some kind of family relations, or colleagues are often called in terms that emphasise family-like affinity, not every organisation or theatre group claims to be a family. What are the things at stake when Natya Chetana names itself as a family? Moreover, as it is not insignificant how organisations of work are constituted and how the workers relate to and perceive each

other, does the construction of the group as a family tell something about the group's social work? In the following, I take up issues such as why and how individuals join, stay or quit with Natya Chetana, and how is the group as a community of work and an experiment of collective living. What are the things that hold the group together? How is the actual work organised? And finally, what does group life in Natya Chetana take, and what does it give?

5.2   CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP

Natya Chetana team members are called volunteers, who are of three types: full, part and pass timers[95]. As the group's booklet announces, full timers stay together and are "always available for NC work all the time mission needs". Part timers engage in Natya Chetana activities, like acting or festival organising, in their spare time. For tours or special productions they often take leave from their other engagements. Pass timers, also called casual volunteers, "come to Natya Chetana in their leisure time because they love to be associated with NC's activities". (E.g. Natya Chetana 2001 b, 28.)

The full timers nominate the director, so far it has always been Subodh, and the treasurer. Both the director and the treasurer belong to core team that coordinates different activities and makes all implementation decisions. In 2001-2002, the core team consisted of three members, the director and two other long-term full-timers (Subodh, Santosh and Kunia). In addition, Natya Chetana has a separate executive body that meets once or twice a year and upholds the legal status of the organisation. It consists of seven members, many of them professionally involved with theatre or other performing arts (e.g. Natya Chetana 1996, 6), some of whom, like Odissi dancer Gayatri Chand, have also been periodically involved with Natya Chetana at some point in their lives. During my days with Natya Chetana, I have met the executive body members occasionally in various theatrical performances in Bhubaneswar or in Natya Chetana's festivities, such as the group's foundation day celebrations or launchings of new publications. Mostly, however, neither their presence nor their influence on the organisation has been very visible to me. Although my perception can reflect the generally challenging nature of ethnographic fieldwork, and thus my inability as a researcher to fully trace the multiple or multi-level roles of the people around me, I find it intriguing that those legally representing Natya Chetana seem to be fairly distant from the everyday work of the group. A Natya Chetana kind of organisational structure is anyhow common in In-

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95   The term used, for instance, at the Barkul reflection camp and in the following report (Natya Chetana 2001 b).

dia. Many of the non-profit, voluntary or non-governmental organisations (whatever term they prefer to use for themselves), which Natya Chetana formally is, seem to have an executive or advisory body of well-known elder or otherwise esteemed activists, scientists, freedom fighters and other refined people. In this sense, Natya Chetana is no exception.

Over the course of years, Natya Chetana has trained hundreds of young Orissan people in theatre making, and some of them have established their own Natya Chetana -inspired theatre groups. These groups, for instance, are part of Natya Chetana's wider network from which it draws in volunteers for specific programmes. In everyday life 'the' Natya Chetana is a group of full-timers who in practice run all of the activities. While some stay for long and others just for couple of months, in my experience they embody presence, and despite changes, also continuity. Therefore, in this chapter my focus is mainly on the full-timers. The key in focusing in them is that running a theatre group is much more than just rehearsing and performing. Ideas, connections, finances and other resources do not come out of the blue, but are based on hard everyday work between intense periods of play making. In 2001–2002, the number of full timers was around fifteen, including two to three women. With the exception of Subodh's involvement since the foundation of Natya Chetana in 1986, they had been in the group for anything from less than one year up to fourteen years, and were twenty to thirty eight years of age. Sometimes the youngest part-takers for special productions were as young as sixteen or seventeen, such as the actresses of *Boli*. While it is a common practice for Natya Chetana to have a child actor or actress in the play and, if that benefits the play, to employ some senior amateur theatre or folk artist connected with the group, Natya Chetana was (and is) essentially a team of young adults.

One's position either as full, part or pass timer has direct financial implications. As discussed in the context of voluntary social work in chapter three, in the Indian NGO-field volunteering does not necessarily mean work without any financial compensation. In Natya Chetana "there is no staff on professional basis" (e.g. Natya Chetana 2003, 11), meaning that no one can expect to earn any real salary. At any rate, while being a full-timer was no guarantee for any income, in 2002 during several reasonably funded years the practice had been that the full-time working volunteers had been provided a small scholarship (in 2001 and early 2002 worth Euro 20-30 per month) so that they were able to cover their food and other minor expenses. As a matter of fact, the scholarship made full-time participation possible; being a full-timer leaves neither time nor energy for raising any other income[96]. Part and pass-timers had no scholarships, but they

96 There is no principle against of extra income. Some of the full-timers have some extra sources of income that help them to maintain their families, such as a cow.

were free to contribute without major personal costs, as food and a place to sleep were arranged for them.

5.3 ENTRY STORIES

When Natya Chetana was founded in 1986, it was largely a creation of Subodh accompanied by other drama students. Subodh's interest in theatre evolved through rather dramatic moves. According to the story told on numerous occasions as part of the history of the group, as the eldest of four sons in a relatively upper caste middle class family, Subodh's first choice for a career was to become an engineer. As a first year student, however, he faced severe bullying, as was common in technical colleges those days, to the extent that one day the elder students beat him until he was unconscious. The incident made him harbour revenge. To learn the tricks to keep a rein on the bullies, he befriended one of the big gang leaders of the town. At that time the town was known as a terror prone place, and Subodh's association with the gang leader worked out all too well. He too was counted as a troublemaker, and the police were looking for him. Hoping to calm things down, he escaped the troubles to another town and ended up at a place of theatre rehearsals. There a troupe that was about to leave for a tour in tribal areas agreed to take Subodh along to do one of the roles in the play. This was more than perfect time pass for Subodh who wished nothing but to vanish for a while. From the other actors he then learned that it is indeed possible also to study drama, the nearest place being no further than Utkal University[97] in Bhubaneswar.

Weighing up his future options, he figured it impossible to go back to the engineering college. He also recognised that the incident might hamper his employment chances in the future. Meanwhile he found the idea of choosing drama as his career really appealing, a fact not lessened by the news that two of the teachers in the drama school were film stars. So, he was soon fully convinced that drama was a challenge and was determined to study it. This did not please his parents who found no other way to try to change his mind than refusing to support him by any means. Thereafter Subodh lived on little resources, sleeping at times at the railway station, surviving largely at the mercy of his teachers, friends and more distant relatives. Despite the troubles he studied with all sincerity to become a good actor.

The effort bore fruit. As a second year student Subodh got an opportunity to participate in a film, followed by a chance to act as a junior film hero, which meant future prospects to become the main hero in films. His prospects however changed when he

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97   Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalan.

had severe back problems that limited his physical activities. His thinking also changed, and instead of acting he started to focus more on directing and assisting in his teachers' film productions. Meanwhile he became more concerned about the kind of dubious attitudes that he had become aware of as commonplace in the film world, and felt that he would not like to contribute to things that he considered harmful to society at large. Along with his studies and other involvements, Subodh had taken part in the National Service Scheme (as referred to briefly in Chapter Three), and founded Natya Chetana. As Subodh's social motivation grew stronger, these, as well as his scouting background provided the impetus for his choice to leave a commercial professional job for the sake of social work. After some kind of personal and financial crisis, he decided to devote himself full time to Natya Chetana and therefore to take Natya Chetana perhaps more seriously than what had been the idea when the group was founded. From today's perspective, the story helps to understand Subodh's good contacts to the local film world and, in contrast to the fact that he once belonged to the few with good career prospects in the commercial, salary-paying jobs in films, the significance of his social motivation.

Concurrently, just few years after its establishment Natya Chetana went through a transition period and new members joined the team, some after being persuaded by Subodh, others through other routes. For instance, in 2001–2002 Santosh, who was then an experienced long-term team member of the group, got initially to know about Natya Chetana through his hostel mate and joined a theatre expedition in 1988. The experience encouraged him further. Being a music student, he reasoned that by continuing his studies he might become a singer, whereas in Natya Chetana there was a chance to build a different contact with people, plus his gift of music would be a benefit, so he decided to join. In practice, however, joining the group as a full-time volunteer would have been difficult without the consent of the family. Santosh informed his elder brother, the head of the family after their father's death, by a letter of his decision. Astounded, the brother wrote back asking for explanations. Soon after he also travelled to Bhubaneswar and visited Natya Chetana. Only after becoming convinced of the good intentions and sincerity of the group, that "they are organized to do something for the society", did he give his approval.

Like Santosh of the 2001-2002 team, also Kunia, Sanjaya, Mamata and Chuni had joined Natya Chetana at approximately the same time. Mamata's joining the team happened through marriage, as she and Subodh married in 1989 after having gotten to know each other through Mamata's sister Meena, who was the first lady[98] volunteer of Natya Chetana. As Mamata is a physician by profession, she has kept her professional engagements and interests alive despite periodic involvements with Natya Chetana.

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98 A (positive) term used of female volunteers in Natya Chetana.

At the time of writing, she contributes to the group's existence among other things by supporting Subodh financially. The marriage also gave Subodh and his parents the opportunity to re-establish friendly and caring relationships with each other again, and Subodh's parents' attitude towards Subodh's theatre work has gradually turned positive to the extent Subodh's retired mother contributes to Natya Chetana by editing the group's theatre bulletin, *Natya Swara.*

The following entry stories to Natya Chetana, then, are extracted from personal interviews I did with the volunteers during spring of 2002. Despite condensing and translating, I have done my best to maintain the original spirit of the narration. Rather than telling everybody's story, my decision has been to pick a few different entry stories that convey both common and fairly exceptional routes to Natya Chetana. Thinking of the starting points of the individuals to join a theatre group, Sanjaya was an unemployed young man inexperienced in city life and life outside his family and local community. If anything, the story told by others goes, he was almost professional in playing cards. Somnath's story represents an example of involvement in the group along with university studies. The stories of the women Chuni and Bebi that follow tell among other things about women's ways to theatre stage in contemporary Orissa. Taruna, then, is "a born folk artist", who enriches the group with his multiple skills when needed.

Sanjaya was a young village boy, with "no beard and moustache", searching for any job, when his uncle, a senior amateur theatre actor who sometimes acts in Natya Chetana's plays, advised him to try out how he likes theatre work in the group. Until then Sanjaya had only once taken part in one village play. With Natya Chetana, his first impression was to drop out and to go back to his village. His family, however, pointed that Natya Chetana is not a bad organisation, and questioned him: "Why should you just sit in the village?" In six months time he got interested and joined the group full time in 1991. Starting from little tasks, like working in the group's screen printing unit, he gained more confidence and responsibilities. He started taking photographs, then audiotaping, then videotaping. He met famous local actors like Bijay Mohanty and Ajit Das. All of a sudden he found himself mixing with more people, sitting together and working together with them, and realised that "this kind of family is also possible". While Sanjaya got attuned into life and work in Natya Chetana, some other people were nonetheless very curious. Suspecting problematic love affairs, they kept questioning Sanjaya about how it is possible that ladies and gents stay together. Why are not all of the people gents? Sanjaya explained them that there is no problem; gents stay in the gents' room, and ladies in ladies' room. A few years after Sanjaya had joined Natya Chetana, the team did some film shooting in his home village. This gave the villagers the opportunity to get a clearer idea about Sanjaya's work. Later on the news that he has also been performing abroad reached the village and made people happy.

Another young man, Somnath, was a university student in 2002 studying Oriya literature. Interested in drama and acting already in his childhood, he had experienced two enemy groups becoming friends through the help of drama. He had also witnessed how the tribal people of his home district could get into dramatic conversations. Convinced that "drama is the enemy of all enemies", he heard of Natya Chetana for the first time in 1998, and decided that once he was in Bhubaneswar he would try to contact the group. The opportunity came in 2001 when Natya Chetana was casting volunteers in a new play, and he was chosen for the team. His first impression was little confused. *Natya*, drama, was very clear to him, but what about *chetana*, awareness? The play making process cleared also the meaning of *chetana*, what drama is for society. Being familiar with the life of Santhal tribals, Somnath was also personally concerned about the problems of tribal people, a major theme in the play they did.

In the workshop rehearsing the play he was very happy. He realised how a group is very necessary for doing something, as well as the participation of every group member, and the importance given to all opinions. He was so enthusiastic that he even skipped the event in which the university awarded him a gold medal, a major recognition for his achievements in his studies. Making a play was hard physical labour, but all the participants were happy both for the process and production. Somnath was surprised to learn so many new things and hear so many different thoughts, and was especially impressed by the discussions. He got convinced that he better try to change, and destroy whatever bad habits he had. Since his childhood he always felt that he had the courage to do something for society, but earlier he has not discovered the way. In 2002, volunteering for another play, he was convinced that he would not seek out a government job in the future, but stick to artistic work for society and about the society's problems, because it is hearts that must be changed. Theatre, like literature, is direct media to hammer the hearts and minds of people. Somnath's parents had received his ideas with happiness and were supportive. His classmates, then, had really no interest in drama, in which they saw no future; they were only interested in their degrees.

Many aspects of Sanjaya's and Somnath's stories, two different accounts of a young man's entry to the group, could be shared by some other Natya Chetana volunteers. Sanjaya's beginning in the group was not particularly passionate. He found his zest gradually in a process of finding his own place in the group, learning different skills and taking more responsibilities. Somnath, on the other hand, represents a case of a highly educated young man who was from the beginning taken by the power of theatre to speak to both individuals and communities, and got support for his societal calling. Already in the first play in which he volunteered, he had plenty of responsibility as well as one of the major roles.

Regarding the women of the group, Chuni was an eager observer of different types of dramas and musical performances that took place in her village already as a child, to the extent that she was scolded for not paying enough attention to her homework. Her family had nothing against theatre, but thought studying should be the priority, not vice versa. Odissi dance especially attracted Chuni, and although she could not get a teacher, she learned as much as she could by observing. She also learned folk dances, and started to teach other girls. After matriculation, she chose to study Odissi vocals. One of the art forms taught in the same department was drama, but at that time it had no ladies at all. Chuni recalls having known one who tried, but who soon joined another college, telling Chuni that there is no future for ladies in drama. Chuni, however, decided to perform two minor characters in plays directed by Bijay Mohanty and Ajit Das, Orissan actor celebrities, who, though trained in the National School of Drama in Delhi, had nonetheless returned to work as teachers and actors in the Orissan theatre and film scene. Seeing a woman on the stage, the whole college was surprised: Is this lady one of our students or is she professional? All of this took place in late 1980s, when also Subodh was studying at the same college. After founding Natya Chetana he kept asking Chuni to join the team. Chuni's expectation had been to become a singer, but gradually she fell in love with Natya Chetana, acting, drama and social work. As a consequence, she became, as Natya Chetana claims, "the first lady artist in the field of street theatre" in Orissa. What's more, through Natya Chetana she received many types of learning experiences in theatre as well as different types of puppetry. Work was hectic. They toured with three to four plays a year, and she was very satisfied. Knowing her nature and her enjoyment of performing, even her friends and family accepted her choice. And though when she started there were not many female actresses around, she has convinced many girls and women first of all to see, but sometimes also to do theatre.

Bebi, then, was in 2001-2002 a trusted and regular 'seasonal' volunteer who periodically travelled from her home in a steel plant town several hours journey inland to Bhubaneswar to help Natya Chetana for days, or sometimes weeks at a time. For a young woman in her late twenties Bebi had already plenty of experience of performing and other media work. Considering it more like a hobby, she had worked occasionally as a newsreader at a local TV channel and as a casual announcer, programme maker and radio drama artist for the All India Radio. Her first contact to Natya Chetana had taken place in 1994 through an amateur theatre group in which she was acting. Natya Chetana had contacted the group, like many others, when searching for female participants

for its project 'Women at the Front'[99]. Starting from the fact that in Orissa women on the theatre stage are mainly a cause of surprise, there are hardly any professional actresses, and even those few in the field are vilified and treated suspiciously, the aim of the project was to promote women's leadership in the field of culture in Orissa. After an interview, Bebi was invited to join a workshop, and even her parents, who have not been particularly happy about her interest in performing, allowed her to participate in one of the project workshops. Bebi found the experience very nice. She recalls that the participants were led into the theatre process slowly and steadily, "it was like nothing, like children's games". Everything was practical work, "not spoon feeding", but "standing behind and guiding". And though thinking was high, living standards were simple[100]. After the training and the women's theatre festival programme that followed, Bebi started to keep touch and assist in Natya Chetana's productions.

Identifying herself as an amateur theatre actress who regularly visits Natya Chetana, Bebi admitted that she had learned a lot with the group. Earlier, despite all her involvement in performing, she had been totally ignorant about folk theatres, or *rasa*, or intimate theatre, which she now considers very great knowledge. She has also learned to adjust to Natya Chetana's life style, though she would personally welcome more neat and clean surroundings. Moreover, despite having used to work independently, in Natya Chetana she has adapted to group life as well as to the group's principles.

As the above conveys, Chuni and Bebi, both of them well recognised actresses of Natya Chetana, got into acting and Natya Chetana step-by-step. Both of them have since childhood had a strong calling for theatre and dance. Fairly atypically, Chuni's family has approved of her choice, and later also blessed her love marriage (as opposed to arranged marriage) with Santosh, also a long-term volunteer of Natya Chetana. An important reason behind the family approval is that Chuni's father has been a dedicated social worker since his youth, active in the *Bhoodan* movement and education and constructive work with *dalit*s and tribals, and strongly supportive of drama work for social consciousness. In his view, social change has to be based on serving the people, beginning with what they have. In the process of social change, "it is only drama which

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99 Through the project, Natya Chetana trained a total of 22 women in theatre, puppetry, poster-making and leadership with the idea that they could then utilise their learning in their own area. The project, consisting of motivation and training camps, preparing performances (theatre & puppetry) and holding a special women's theatre festival, was supported financially by London-based WACC (reported in detail by Natya Chetana 1994.) Later on, in 2005, Natya Chetana was able to continue work along this line through another project, Women's Experiences in Leading Theatre and Puppetry.)

100 The expressions refers to the common dictum of simple living and (spiritually/intellectually/politically) high thinking, often associated with certain forms of volunteer, community-oriented social work.

can influence, which can pass into the hearts of the people". Thus, though he has "lived the time when girls were very much criticised if they entered drama parties", he had no objection to his daughter's choice. Evaluating Natya Chetana in 2002, his opinion was in favour of them. "They have raised their tone against the dark side of the society. That is one kind of revolution in Oriya dramas." In Bebi's case, though Bebi has been able to make her own choices, in her family there have been also many doubts about her theatre career. Throughout the years (and at the time of writing), Bebi has nevertheless grown into a bold actress whose role in Natya Chetana is not limited to acting, but script writing and directing, as well as taking care of many office duties and other works.

Unlike those 'growing up' in Natya Chetana, Taruna represents a case of a senior artist contributing to Natya Chetana when need be, when his other projects allow. Born in the 1950s, Taruna has a wide experience of various folk and religious theatre forms from Ramlila[101] and *Krishnalila* to religious processions, Oriya drama, and more or less everything that has to do with different aspects of performance in Orissa. When he performed for first time he was only three to four years old, a hunter's child accompanying his father, the hunter, and uncle, a tiger, in a drama that took place in his village. In school, he was regularly involved in playing and singing, and learned to play many instruments already during his childhood. At the age of fourteen he joined a team, which played *bhajans* (devotional Hindu songs) for the village audience. In his first Oriya drama he performed a female character of a village girl, "because that time only boys participated in making drama". In the beginning of 1970s he went to Bhubaneswar to learn fine arts in a school for arts and crafts. He also had the opportunity to learn *tabla* (a pair of hand drums, used in classical, popular and religious music in South Asia). In the meantime he also got a job in the service of the Government of India as a cartographer, the regular job that he has done ever since. The rest of his time has been filled with a wide variety of cultural activities and his growing family. He has acted, accompanied or directed a number of folk theatre pieces in different styles, translated plays from Bengali to Oriya, done makeup, props, rhythm, and song lyrics. No wonder, Taruna identifies himself as "a born folk artist", "with the blessing of God". Taruna has known Natya Chetana since the group's first play, in which he accompanied as a rhythm player. Since then, he has assisted the group by accompanying many of the plays, writing songs, or making special props like the impressive crab that can be seen in Natya Chetana's play *Sapanara Sapana*.

At the time of the interviews, Sanjaya and Chuni were long-term full-timers in Natya Chetana, Bebi was in a process of becoming one, whereas Taruna and Somnath have never joined Natya Chetana as full timers, but have contributed periodically. As such the above stories are full of cultural information and personal facts, and depict the aspirations of

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101 A popular folk theatre form based on Ramayana.

certain young Orissan people in their attempts to find their niche in life, or, as in Taruna's case, aspects of life of a busy folk artist-government servant. From a social work point of view, the interesting finding is that for most the driving force to join Natya Chetana for shorter or longer terms has been a strongly felt interest and love in theatre. Even in cases where theatre was originally a source of hesitation, as in the case of Sanjaya, the work and its social set up won out in the end. Of no small consequence is Natya Chetana's way of making theatre, in particular the practices of paying attention to the group process and personal development and valuing the ideas and creativity of every participant, which is not always the rule in Indian, often hierarchical and typically guru-led processes. Then again, not everybody in Natya Chetana does theatre. In the group there are possibilities to make one's contribution also in other tasks, like in office work or taking care of the group's countryside campus *Natya Gram*. Therefore some, such as Debraj at the time of 2001-2002, can work exclusively in management tasks. In addition to theatre making, every actor has to nonetheless participate also in management and other everyday tasks.

Furthermore, though the previous examples emphasised the spell of theatre, I don't consider the role of social motivation and ambition to facilitate social change insignificant. On the contrary, from a social work perspective my discovery is that the social change seeking essence of the work is unquestioned and obvious. To recognise this, the requirement is that the narratives are interpreted with a willingness and interest to seek manifestations of social commitment in them. In the case of the young volunteers, the joy of theatre making comes not only from acting but the reasons and way of doing it, as well as the kind of contact it enables with the audience. When Chuni has gone door-to-door to meet women and encourage them to overcome their shyness and come to see Natya Chetana's theatre, her point has been that society can change, but problems have to be discussed. If only the women come, they will realise what she means. Moreover, it is social work that explains Natya Chetana's image and reputation as a good organisation. Next, let's examine how the reputation is lived through in the everyday practices of the group.

5.4 "PLAN TOGETHER, WORK TOGETHER, HELP EACH OTHER, LIVE TOGETHER"[102]

Rules of group life

Natya Chetana's philosophy, or "self-imposed discipline" contains 'isms' or practices identified as group feeling, hard labour, social commitment, collective growth, respect

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102 The phrase is Natya Chetana's motto (Natya Chetana 1996, 42).

for indigenous knowledge, being an all-time learner, respect for democratic values and simple living (e.g. Natya Chetana 1996, 5-6). In Natya Chetana's self-evaluation camp held in Barkul in September 2001, similar ideas were named as the five philosophies that the group tries to follow: Belief in group life and collective growth; choosing a life of committed, voluntary and hard work[103]; commitment to theatre art and related activities, commitment and responsibility to the society, and attempt to personally embody and demonstrate the practices the group stands for and recommends for others. (Natya Chetana 2001 b).

The rules of group life have been decided together throughout the years at group discussions. They speak to the group's ideas about itself, and can be seen as attempts to shape the group as a whole as well as its individual members to desired direction. In general, the guidelines are practical and unambiguous, and emphasise openness, transparency and respect towards each other as the foundation for good group spirit. The rules are also to be taken seriously. As the Barkul camp memo written on the basis of group discussion condenses, the Natya Chetana's core team or director may ask a volunteer to retire from the group in cases of "observation in deviation in practicing the NC philosophy" or "breaking any discipline of the group" (Natya Chetana 2001 b). Next, I discuss the group's policies of 'no addiction', the commitment to simple living and finally the rules that have to do with behaviour and interaction in the group.

The requirement for staying in the group is that one does not drink tea, coffee or alcohol. Smoking and *paan*[104] are also forbidden. The rule is justified by the fact that coffee, tea, or on the whole the habit of having hot drinks are not indigenous to India, but were brought to the subcontinent as part of colonial invasion and related production and marketing policies. Moreover, Natya Chetana notes that tea plantations destroy the best mountaintops, often located in *adivasi* areas. Because the tea industry prefers workers already familiar with tea cultivation and processing, and brings them in from outside, the common story is that the *adivasi*s on the spot are left without a source of income or worse, displaced. But the rule of non-addiction is also embedded in Natya Chetana's performance history. At one point, the story goes, while making a play against addictions, Natya Chetana found that one of the local tea companies tried

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103 Hard labour, especially when it refers to physical work, is not a traditional Indian virtue. On a larger scale, the idea of physical work as something healthy for society in general, and upper class people in particular, making them no different from others, was introduced by Mohandas Gandhi as part of his political and practical philosophy (e.g. Basham 2006, 39).

104 A slightly stimulating mixture of betel nut, spices and chewing tobacco packed inside a leaf of *paan* tree.

to secure customer adherence by adding a hardly noticeable but still addictive touch of heroin into its tea bags[105].

For me refraining from tea or coffee was personally challenging, but the rule made no exceptions for a researcher. Natya Chetana was not completely heartless, though. To fulfil their habit of having hot drinks, uninitiated visitors like me as well as guests were sometimes served *pancha rasa*, a spicy drink of five flavours (sugar, a bit of salt, some spices), or occasionally horlicks[106] or cocoa. I nonetheless missed the kind of clarity and boost a cup of tea or coffee can bring. (As kind of revenge, I was later happy to inform Subodh that for instance chili, one of Natya Chetana's daily foodstuffs, is originally a South American plant.) On the other hand, even with my lack of personal motivation in the trial of a caffeine-free life, the politics of abstinence made clear the power of personal routines and conditionings. Giving up a simple pleasure like a daily cup of coffee can be experienced long and substantially as a deprivation. Not that quitting tea had been an unnoticed affair for every Natya Chetana volunteer. Some had gone through severe headaches as part of their 'de-addiction' process. Once clear, many had tried to convince their family members and other close ones about the financial and liberating benefits of the choice. When an actor and actress belonging to the group got married, they refused, in spite of family members' opposition, to serve the wedding guests the customary cup of tea.

At a more general level, the experiences of refraining from coffee or tea point to the fact that living up to one's ideals is not necessarily a piece of cake even for those motivated and committed to the cause. Among other things, even when Natya Chetana members keep to their principles, the rest of the world does not live up to their ideals. Sometimes that has meant that Natya Chetana has faced its limits in collaboration. In 2005, they tested the waters to work together with a group of very hard-core social activists. The other group's view was that all social problems are due to caste system. They did not want to obey any religious rules, nor did they believe in classical Indian theatre. They also refused to refrain from smoking, pointing that there are no rules and regulations to control them, besides control is always behaviour of a 'class'. In later remembering the incident, Subodh suspected that perhaps they had an inner feeling that as he belongs to a dominant caste, the rules and regulations are his impositions on others. For Natya Chetana theatre is sacred and certain Gods and Goddesses are duly respected, and making rules seem essential and meaningful. Hence Natya Chetana could do nothing but back off from the cooperation. A choice for certain practices means choosing to depart from some others.

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105 The fact was also proved by the National Narcotics Bureau of India.

106 The company name and malted milk hot drink, originally in nineteenth century meant as artificial infant food.

In everyday life, Natya Chetana's principles of simple living are manifested in a number of ways. One of the jointly made decisions was to use as little furniture as possible. Correspondingly, the furniture of the office consisted of some shelves, couple of sit-on the floor study desks and few mattresses. Throughout the two houses, there was one bed, the wooden marriage bed of Subodh and Mamata. A gift from their relatives, it now served as a kind of storage space above the floor level. Everybody slept on the floor, either on a stray carpet or a little thicker cotton mattress. Simplicity did not, however, mean saving or ascetism for its own sake. Natya Chetana was not stingy, though not particularly wasteful either, when it came to the need for decoration, such as in celebrations or festivals, or investing on documentation or costumes in the play. When the plan was to go, it was not rare to call a taxi.

Simplicity had implications also for dressing up. Combined with Natya Chetana's ethos of respecting traditional values, the preference was for a traditional dress code[107]. For long, the practice has been that if the financial situation of the group allows, on special occasions like for a tour Natya Chetana provides its members at least a shirt with the group's logo printed or stitched. The common costume adds to the group feeling and distinguishes the group from others. Apart from advertising, this benefits the group in big gatherings and during travelling, as it makes recognising other group members in a crowd easy. In their everyday life the team members wore whatever clothes they had, for many this was not a great variety after all. However, when one of the volunteers appeared in *kurta* and not his usual 'more Western' outfit as his office wear for the first time in the group's memory, he received spontaneous applause from the rest of the group.

A central issue in living together was behaviour and interaction in the group. Frequently discussed principles included cooperation within the group; developing an understanding for each other; discovering one another as individuals without reservations; collective growth; openness and transparency in front of others and as a group; demonstrating the group spirit at work and at outside; respect to elders and affection to juniors; respect for difference of opinion; having the attitude and behaviour of a learner; and being basically enthusiastic and working hard. Demonstrating patriotism and obeying the group decision as the supreme authority is mentioned, for instance, in the memo of the Barkul reflection camp, in which each and everyone expressed their ideas about the group. (Natya Chetana 2001 b.) The atmosphere that is aspired to is explained as an attempt to build up an image of an *ashram*, a place of learning, with emphasis on

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107 *Kurta* (long shirt) and *lungi, dhoti* (traditional loincloths) *or pyjama* (simple long pants) for men and *sari* or *salwar kameez* (women's attire consisting of dress and pants, preferably with *dupatta*, a long scarf set to cover the breast and shoulders) for women.

love, affection, tolerance, respect to elders and giving and getting feedback to grow as human beings.

The principle of respect to elders and affection to juniors has to do with cultural importance of age and related age-based hierarchies in Orissa. In their late thirties Subodh and Mamata were the eldest of the team, Subodh being thus often called 'bada bhai' (elder brother), and Mamata as his wife 'bhauzo' (wife of elder brother). Otherwise in Natya Chetana, as common in Orissan society, juniors addressed their seniors either as 'bhai' (brother) or 'apa' (aunt). Correspondingly, seniors were free to call their juniors using their first names only. In the middle of the age hierarchy, I was either 'Sanju-apa' or just 'Sanju', depending on who was calling me. In addition to age hierarchies, using different addresses had to do with the fact that in South Asian context the terminology pointing to family connections is rich, exact, and actively used. Instead of given names, it is common to address others by terms that emphasise the person's position in the hierarchy of relationships. (E.g. Trawick 1992, 48, 64.) No wonder, in Natya Chetana I was in the beginning confused between the team members' references to brothers and cousin brothers, sisters and sister-in-law-sisters.

I will not go to the details of each and every principle of group life now, but hope to open some of them up little later. Suffice to say that the long list tells about the beauty, but also the potential and real challenges of group life. For a group to be safe for its participants there has to be a feeling of trust, but how to build that trust? Moreover, how to get collectively attuned to the same direction so that it also practically works, the workload justly and meaningfully shared, matching with the different aptitudes and capacities of individuals? Natya Chetana's strategy to meet these challenges was to discuss and reflect, and it had developed its own practices for that. On the other hand, it seemed that the group had long ago also adapted practices that not everybody subscribed to any longer, even if they made no big issue of their opinion. One such convention was the rule that the director distributes the letters that come in. The idea behind this was that in this way no letters would get lost. Moreover, the practice provides a chance to observe who get post and from where, or who never get post. Following the flow of letters in such a manner the group had earlier managed to get wind if somebody was intending to leave the group. It happened to me a couple of times that after having seen a letter addressed to me from home arrived, because of Subodh's absence I was made to wait until evening or next day before I got it in my hands, and I was angry. As such, the practice once more emphasised the engagement to the ideals of group life, including certain kind of transparency as one of the highest values.

When discussing the collective principles with the group, it was explained to me that for trust to flourish, each and everyone has to open him or herself to others, and should be reciprocally interested in the lives and issues of others. When someone

does not fill these expectations, it causes insecurity in the rest of the group. One of the fears was that since unemployment in Orissa is high, Natya Chetana may be perceived as an attractive way to pass the time, rather than just being unemployed. During the autumn of 2001, the suspicion that the real reason to join Natya Chetana was not the group's mission and theatre work but absence of better options concerned one younger volunteer in particular. In a session where everybody reflected their own future plans and whether and how they are going to continue with Natya Chetana he – like others – was asked to name who is his best friend in the group, whom he knows best, and what he would like to do most in the future. Though he had been along for roughly a year, it turned out that he did not know the village of the person whom he claimed to know best. It was later explained to me that the rest of the group had trouble with this young man. He did not allow others to see his personality, nor was he a close friend to anyone, but concentrated on creating an image of himself as a silent and modest person. This was in contradiction to the fact that he had needed a holiday to lead the ceremonies in his sister's wedding, not a duty for a shy and silent person.

In my view, the above examples address the importance of the team members' ability to adjust to group life and work. And though the Natya Chetana team expects a lot from everyone in the team, those who fail can sometimes get a second chance to meet the expectations, if they have a clear motivation to make good on their earlier mistakes and win back the acceptance of the group. From time to time Natya Chetana has gotten dedicated volunteers like this. At the time of writing, only one person ever has been drummed out of Natya Chetana. The story told to me was that he was drinking and talking big.

Planning together and the division of work

One of the central and most striking features of Natya Chetana's group life is planning together. The practice is depicted already in the early outsider accounts of Natya Chetana. On the basis of his observations since late 1980s, a relative of one of the Natya Chetana volunteers stressed that one of the strengths of the group is that there is no dictatorship, all are equal and there is a decentralisation of power. Yet another relative of a volunteer highlighted the importance of group democracy behind Natya Chetana's success.

In the daily rhythm of the group, the first occasion for sharing and planning takes place after the Morning Prayer, when people inform each other about their daily tasks and goings. Moreover, the arrivals of outsiders, mine too, as well as my

ILLUSTRATION 5. Evaluation and planning session going on in Barkul, September 2001.

work with the group, have been a cause to call a meeting, to get everyone updated, and share the tasks. Everyone has a say, and everyone is also expected to be fully present and make notes, if the nature of the things so demands. The high value of joint planning is indicated also by the fact that when need be, despite the scarcity of resources the group has decided to invest in having undisturbed time for joint discussion and evaluation of the group's work or whatever is most urgent, for example, by hiring a hotel room for the purpose. Joint planning and reflection is a central routine also on tours. Planning together has an important share because it is an essential tool of Natya Chetana's work and organising. If there is no time to waste, sleeping and eating are secondary.

Natya Chetana's organisation follows a team logic, though there are naturally individual responsibilities. Natya Chetana conceives its structure as 'wings' of cultural action, training, documentation and administration. The persons in charge of them do their work relatively independently. In 2001, Santosh, supported by Chuni and Purna, led the wing of cultural action. Kunia was in charge of training; whereas the documentation wing had two major tasks, screen printing, dealt with by Mongu and Nibaran, and photo, video and audio documentation, of which Sanjaya was in charge. Tutu, Debi and Debraj took care of the administration wing. Certain other duties, like shopping and book keeping duties were shared on weekly and monthly basis.
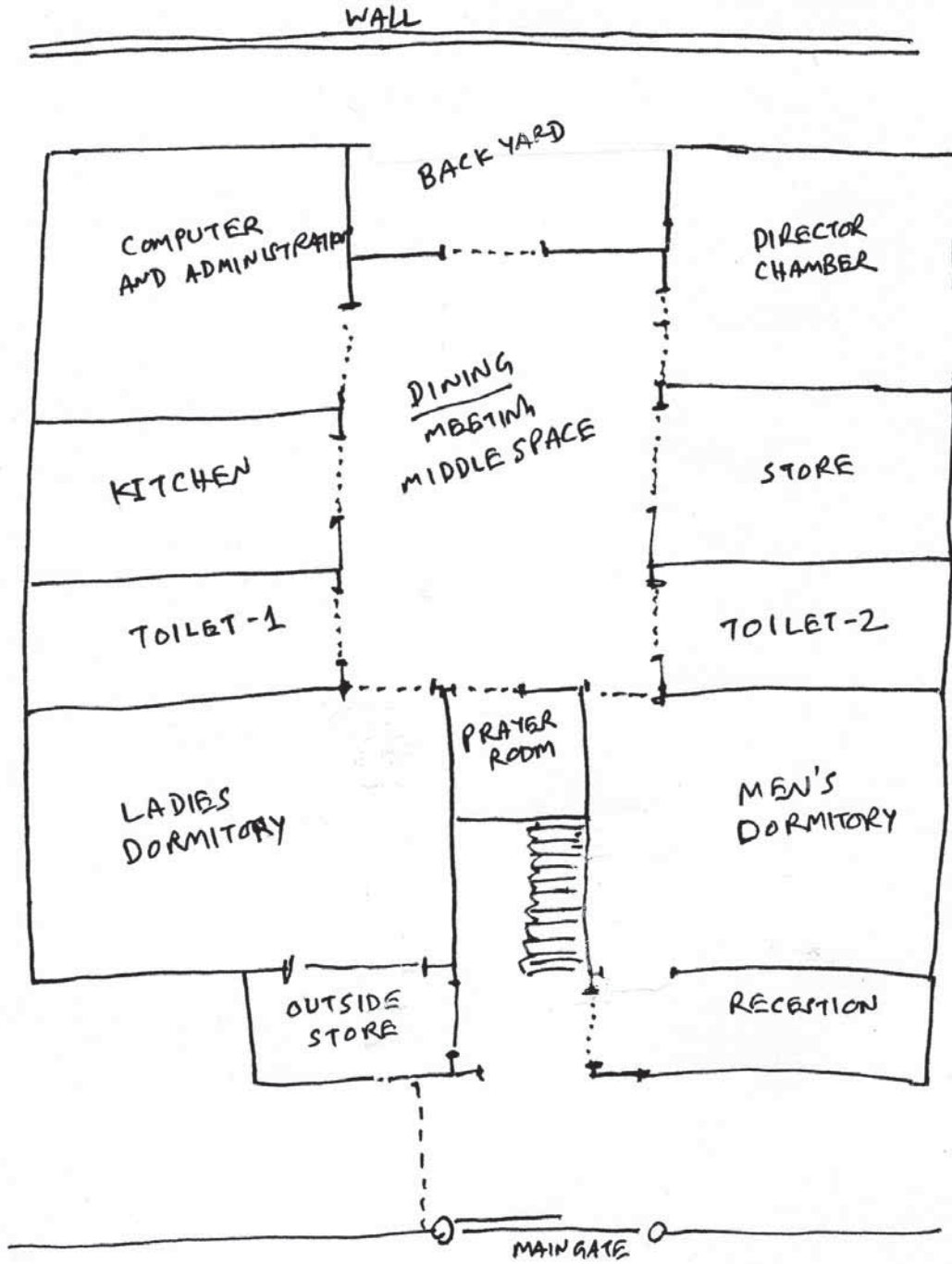
ILLUSTRATION 6. Groundplan of Natya Chetana Hostel 2001 (drawing by Subodh Pattnaik).

Living together

The goal is that those who stay full time with Natya Chetana, be it short or long periods, can get their accommodation by the organisation in the same household with others. Natya Chetana's experiment in communal living started in 1990 in the neighbourhood of Chinta Maniswar, Bhubaneswar. At that time Natya Chetana consisted of 12 students, all male. Later the same year the group shifted to a rented house in the Nayapally Lottery Plot area, then an agricultural area on the outskirts of the town. The new place served as a rehearsal and dwelling space, and six to seven months after the move the first women, Meena, "the first lady volunteer of the team" and soon after Chuni joined in. Meena did secretarial work and learned video shooting and editing (which later became her profession), whereas Chuni started as a singer, but gradually stepped into acting.

The Nayapally house served the group well for years. Opposite to the house was a field that the group was able to use as a rehearsal and performance space. Occasionally the team grew some vegetables there. In the 1990s, Natya Chetana's activities spread and the group started to rent also another house from the same neighbourhood. The new house, named the Natya Chetana hostel, became the main residential building of the team, while the first house functioned as the office, except for one room where one of the married couples of the team lived. In my view, in the division of space functionally or symbolically important things were given a lot of room. Computers and documentary material and equipment had a room of their own with the possibility of air-conditioning. In the office there was a separate director's room, which often served as a place of meetings that were anyhow casually set up where and when needed.

Living together was practically arranged so that singles of the same sex shared a room, men sleeping on the floor in gents' room, women in ladies' room, and each full-timer couple was provided a room of their own. During the daytime, the spaces were utilised according to need, and the order and use of the rooms sometimes changed rapidly to match respective needs. All in all, no one could expect much privacy or individual space. The room of Subodh and Mamata, for example, served commonly as the space for small gatherings, and if there was spare time, watching TV, as Mamata paid for some commercial TV-channels. As Subodh once summarised, the only place where one can enjoy privacy is the bathroom.

How do a dozen or more people get along perpetually crammed in small rooms? According to the Natya Chetana experience, rather matter-of-factly. The scarcity of space became felt through the most mundane matters, like queueing up here and there, or difficulties to find any free space for hanging up laundry inside the house during the rainy season. Generally, the everyday life in the group's hostel in Bhubaneswar was spacious and comfortable when compared to training workshops or accommodation

on tours. Moreover, matching with the group's policy on simplicity, it is worth pointing that all of the Natya Chetana team members had, when compared to most individuals in Europe or in general with a higher standard of living, considerably few belongings. Most managed to accommodate their things by their share of the few shelves built into the wall in most rooms, plus hanging their clothes at the window grates and on the sparsely available hooks. Those who had little more stored their belongings in an aluminium box or two piled up somewhere aside.

When I joined the Natya Chetana team in 2001, there were no other non-married women on the team. Therefore, the ladies' room was practically my realm with the unexpected – but for me personally welcome – result that I ended up having fairly large amount of personal space, the most in the whole house. What's more, because it was thought that I don't mind sleeping on a bed, 'the marriage bed', already conveniently located in the ladies' room, was emptied of all kind of stuff for my use. Though my belongings during my stay with Natya Chetana took no more than two to three travelling bags, next to my fellow dwellers I was a true materialist.

Having little personal space means that one has to bear and be able to relax in the proximity of others. On the other hand, even in a tight group there are ways to get a bit of privacy. Mine were morning or sunset moments on the rooftop, as well as occasional

ILLUSTRATION 7. Lunchtime. Purna, Mika and me having lunch, Akhaya keeps us company.

visits to nearest market. For the team members, prayer in the group's little prayer room was a private matter. On tours and rehearsals, Chuni in particular was famous for her capacity to make and mark a women's zone to be respected by all others.

An important part of living together was also eating together. As people were not necessarily joining the group for every meal, after the Morning Prayer one of the tasks was to mark in an exercise book which meal one wanted to eat in the house that day. Afterwards, the food costs were charged accordingly. For meals, thin, narrow carpets were spread on half-square on hall floor in the hostel building, and Dhira Bhai served the food on everyone's *thali* plate. After the meal everyone washed his or her own plate.

Though living together is an important part of Natya Chetana group life, not everybody does it. In 2001-2002, three of the full-timers lived outside, one with his parents, one with his friend, and one with his wife and child. In the latter case, the couple had tried living with Natya Chetana, but it did not work out, and so they found it better to live on their own. Commuting by motorbike, the man joined Natya Chetana every morning and left late in the evening when the day's work was over. The other two followed the same rhythm, but because they were mainly working in the office and were only rarely involved with acting or performance arrangements, they were usually free earlier in the evenings. My feeling was, however, that living outside increased the financial strain of survival, and meant contradictory loyalties in time and energy. How, for instance, to answer the expectations and one's own willingness to be present both for the theatre group and one's spouse and child?

Leadership

As noted earlier, in Orissa age-based hierarchies play an important role. In Natya Chetana, Subodh is the founder, leader and director of the group, but also the most senior of the full-timers. Therefore, it is of no surprise that much what is written of patriarchal heads of Indian joint families seems to match with his position in Natya Chetana. Moreover, as the group's *guru* he is also respected by those elder than him; even senior professional actors or musicians that occasionally assist in Natya Chetana's productions touch his feet as a sign of respect and ask for blessing from the *guru* before going on stage. On the other hand, Subodh also touches the feet of those elder than him, among other things to show that he does not believe in the *guru* position but wants to neutralise it. His experience is nonetheless that it is not possible to change the practice of *guru* respect overnight. Further, as Kakar & Kakar (2007, 16) point out, in Indian culture the superiors, be they gurus, kings, fathers or ideal leaders, behave, and are supposed to behave, almost maternally towards those 'under' them, trying to establish

"a mutual sense of highly personal attachment". Moreover, in my view, a *guru* or a leader who wants to be seen as something else than only a distant and possibly daunting figure has to be humane and interested in the issues of other people. The test of these qualities is the *guru's* behaviour, and not speech alone.

In Indian culture the drawback of the preference for an authoritative leader, who is strict and demanding, but also caring and nurturing, is a general tendency to idealise the leader, which results in the fact that s/he is often deprived of critical feedback (Kakar & Kakar 2007, 18-19). Though Natya Chetana is largely identified with Subodh, who also has a lot of say in the group, it is clear that he is not the Natya Chetana, nor could he run the activities alone. Theatre is group work and without the group there is no theatre. Moreover, as noted before with regard to the centrality of collective planning and sharing in Natya Chetana's practices, it is typical for Natya Chetana to discuss and decide most matters collectively. In addition, opportunities to give critical feedback, also about leadership, are from time to time specifically put on the agenda. One such occasion took place in Natya Chetana's reflection camp in September 2001, when half a day was spent discussing the group's leadership.

In the absence of Subodh, the rest of the group members made a list of their feedback to him and prepared to present their points in the form of a play, rehearsing five scenes in a short time. The exercise was clearly exciting for the actors, but they managed to depict their leader and his habits with rich and easily recognisable details. Subodh's task was to watch the dramas. This he then did, being full of emotions: laughing to tears; being nervous, moved and extremely interested at the same time. On the basis of what he saw, he listed the criticisms raised against him:

— Negligence in attending prayer in morning, and on top of that, supported by his wife, blaming others for his absence.
— Careless use of the telephone, even engaging in talking on the phone when abroad for personal and unnecessarily long talks with his wife.
— Indifference in food habits, using a special kitchen.
— Unnecessary outbursts of rage to the volunteers in the office.
— After being absent-minded he disturbs and unnecessarily reacts to everyone's activities, and on top of that further worsens things by defending his own behaviour.

Indeed, it had happened several times that Subodh had not arisen for the Morning Prayer, despite efforts to wake him up, and then sometimes his anger at not being awoken followed. The careless use of the telephone from abroad refers to expensive telephone bills, and thus using the group's resources for cooing and longing for Mamata from abroad. The indifference in food habits was based on the fact that sometimes Mamata reserved or prepared some special tidbits for Subodh, in particular in times
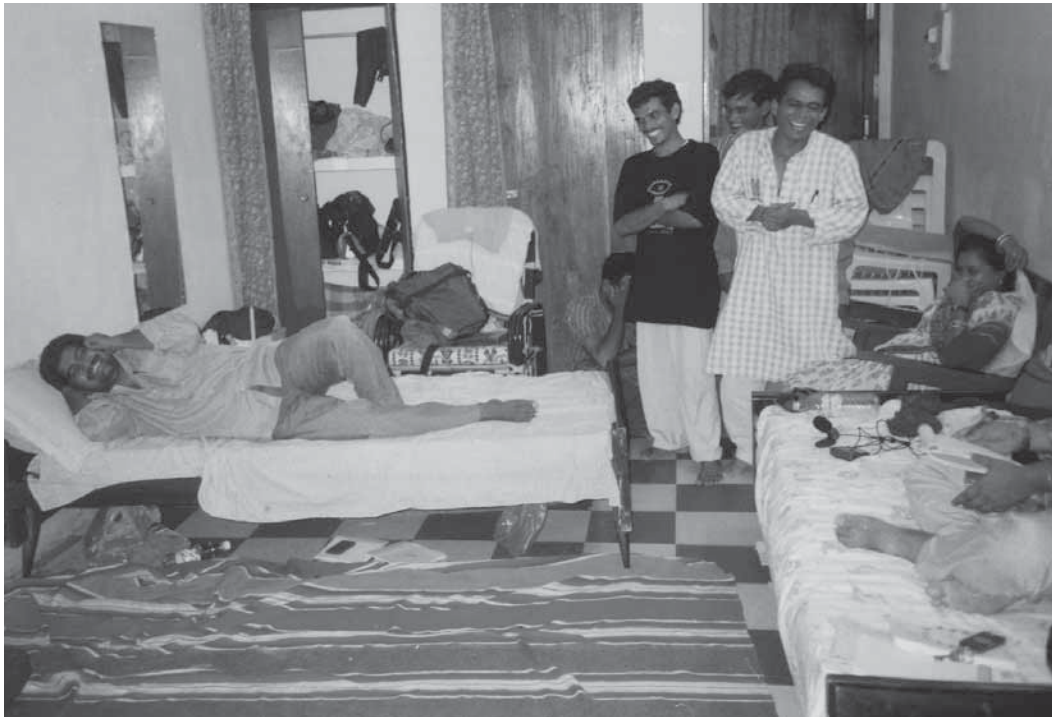
ILLUSTRATION 8. Purna performing how Subodh behaves on the telephone.

when his health was not good, but occasionally also otherwise. Finally, especially when stressed, and at that time there were more than enough reasons to be stressed over the group's future, Subodh suffered from insomnia and was quick to become angry. Sometimes the outbursts of anger ended in loud quarrels with someone in the team, when Subodh was, justified or not, dissatisfied with the way the person had done his or her work. The ways people faced angry Subodh alternated remarkably, some with lots of bargaining power and arguments, or just with laughter and a generous amount of humour, some were crying and sulking, while others wore pained expressions of indifference, with or without excuse. The group's sympathies were often though not always on the side of the scolded person. If the whole office was in the firing line, the collective reaction seemed to be that of letting Subodh roam but not taking his mood too personally. Pointing out issues and occasions when Subodh had been either unfair or allowed himself special privileges, the criticisms stressed that the group's leader is also expected to live according to the chosen commitments. This was largely the rule, and despite his outbursts of rage, Subodh was also gifted in entertaining the team, keeping others in a good mood and carrying responsibility. Moreover, quarrelling, like cosiness and amusing others over the course of the workday can be interpreted as a sign of emotional closeness and caring. As Trawick (1992, 100-104) was taught in Tamil Nadu, if there is not quarrelling, there is no concern.

Subodh's position as the leader of the group was and is not really challenged, quite the contrary, many hold him as the foundation stone of the group. Considering the criticisms that Subodh listed, I find it noteworthy and telling that they were expressed in the first place. In my experience of both Finnish and Indian organisations Natya Chetana is actually one of the rare organisations to discuss the issues of leadership openly in front of the leader. In Natya Chetana the practice is made possible and easier by the fact that Subodh himself encourages it and suggests time for it in the group's schedule. While my idea is not to claim that Natya Chetana is outright perfect in these matters (which organisation is?), or that criticising leadership or receiving feedback from others would be light and simple, the fact that such issues are discussed is important. It is also worth noting that the team members are generally relaxed and talkative in the company of Subodh and do tell their suggestions if they have ideas on how to make things better. Moreover, in decision-making there are scopes to discuss and express one's opinion even if in the end it is often Subodh who draws the conclusions on the basis of the discussions. This means that from time-to-time Subodh has had to adhere to the will of the group and put his own plans or visions aside.

When Subodh reflects back on his own leadership style throughout the years he feels that during the first ten years, as he learned of participatory theatre techniques, he blended his rule from autocracy, the only leadership model he knew until then, to democracy, and the volunteers took over the group maintenance. The shared sense of responsibility has had consequences also for Natya Chetana's theatre. An elder friend and occasional assistant in the group's performances points that one of the differences between Natya Chetana and other local theatre groups is the punctuality and sincerity of Natya Chetana's rehearsals. Instead of responding to the dictates of the director only, in Natya Chetana the actors are encouraged to use their own intelligence, and it is often them who suggest and improvise good solutions for the stage. In Natya Chetana, the actors are also habituated to hold rehearsals without the director, if need be. This has often been the case when Subodh has been abroad and the group has prepared a play during his absence, doing good work. In view of the observer, these practices are part of the recipe of how within the group a 'raw folk' can turn into a good artist.

5.5   FINANCES

In Orissa running a full time theatre group, in other words finding the resources to pay for the group's housing and theatre making costs is not easy. Existing funding being sparse in general, state or other national institutional sponsorship is rare to a Natya Chetana kind of theatre work, which is not always readily identified as high art or suit-

ed purely to the category of folk theatre (the two categories that are sometimes entitled to arts-based funding). Moreover, because of wanting to follow its stated missions and maintain independence in its theatrical work, Natya Chetana has needed to turn down proposals a couple of times, even when it has meant losing good remuneration. On the few occasions such a judgement has taken place, Natya Chetana has conceived the suggested work as too propagandistic or otherwise against the group's ideological lines.

On the other hand, importantly, Natya Chetana has at times managed to attract funding on the social basis of its work, a chance that the strictly artistic groups lack. Throughout the years, as domestic funding has remained relatively scarce, Natya Chetana's financially most notable funding has been based on development cooperation projects, the main donors (for at least a three-year period) having been the Netherlands-based Hivos, Terre des Hommes in Germany, the Norwegian Norad, and the Finnish Siemenpuu Foundation. Usually the cooperation has meant financing the making of one or two plays annually, and the related performance tours, plus possibly something for administration and other facilities needed. In addition, Natya Chetana has sometimes been granted small-scale project-based funding for a shorter period of time. Yet even the development cooperation market is problematic for a theatre group. Like in the field of the arts, socially committed theatre or other cultural media is not necessarily counted as worth supporting. In the development cooperation arena the usual reason is not suspicion regarding the artistic value of the work, but the difficulty to prove the impact and achievements of the work. Theatre processes do not produce quantitative and evident results in a similar manner as, for instance, projects planting trees or digging wells do, however much one would count plays staged, volunteers involved, and the heads in the audience. In particular for input-output scaling the impacts of theatre in society are too vague to measure, especially when the policy of many donors has been recently to limit the cooperation projects to a maximum of three years. In the first decade of the millennium, the ground reality of development cooperation in Orissa, as conveyed in the stories of local observers, has often been of stop-and-go type. Many agencies have seen greater projects, connected also to greater visibility, elsewhere and withdrawn from the state altogether.

Under these circumstances, Natya Chetana has never had long-term secure funding, and has had to adjust to recurrent and often severe financial crises. In a way, it is a small miracle that Natya Chetana has managed to continue as a more or less full-time theatre group already for more than two decades. In addition to international donor sponsorship, the group has managed to carry on its activities by occasional public donations, government[108] and NGO sponsorship (for instance, in the form of training

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108 Since the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, Natya Chetana has been given an allowance by the Central Sangeet Natak Academy.

fees) and by selling its own products like puppets and prints of scripts. While the latter sources have, despite international sponsorship, always been important for the group's spirit, in times of grave financial scarcity their role in the group's survival increases.

Within the team of Natya Chetana the idea throughout the years has been that everybody should contribute to the group's finances at least by donating ideas for income generation. In practice, the responsibility of seeking funds and all that it contains has relied most heavily on Subodh for many reasons. As the founder and director of the group, he has become most experienced in applications, reports and networking, though others help regarding their own sphere of responsibilities, be it activity reports or account keeping. Attempts to get funding require good skills of visualising possibilities and evaluating their practical feasibility and consequences. Moreover, it takes plenty of initiative, networking and alertness regarding donor policies and application deadlines, and presupposes fluent enough English and a grasp of the worldview and language of the possible financier. Until now, Natya Chetana is principally proud of having written all its cooperation proposals and reports by itself, a practice that is becoming rare as small NGOs rely increasingly on professional proposal writers and reporters who ensure mastery of the language and practices of development cooperation.

In Natya Chetana the lack of long-term funding and thus financial security is made very clear repeatedly in the group's meetings in order to remind the volunteers that Natya Chetana cannot serve them as a source of income. At times when there is no money, there is no other option but to encourage even the long-time full-timers to search for other sources of income for their personal sustenance and hope that they can contribute to Natya Chetana during their free time. This was the situation at the end of my fieldwork period in May 2002. Before that, the group had had a number of brainstorming sessions to find ways to dig out from its financial crisis, and also coined a number of practical ideas together, they were just not enough. However, with unemployment being high even among educated lower middle class people, finding work in Orissa and Bhubaneswar was a difficult task demanding personal networking and attitude. What further complicated finding employment was the strong moral ethos that the source of income should not be in contradiction to Natya Chetana's ideals, but preferably benefit theatre, art or society in general in some way.

In the gloomy financial situation, Natya Chetana's disposable resources were distributed so that everyone who left the group got a bicycle (as discussed in Chapter Six, Natya Chetana has been essentially a team of cycling theatre makers) and 1500 rupees as a small incentive to start a new life – not a fortune but better than nothing[109]. On the

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109 In December 2008 when I returned to this issue with Subodh, he stressed that such incentives are not a policy of Natya Chetana, but were possible in that particular situation.

other hand, in the tight situation my impression was that Subodh, though unable to expect anything from anybody, highly valued the fact that some volunteers were able to stay despite the gravity of the financial situation. One of the thoughts that he comforted himself in the situation was his idea that in India beggars never commit suicide: If even beggars, whose life and income are highly at risk, who have no place to sleep, nothing to eat, no proper clothes to wear, can be hopeful about continuing their lives, why should Natya Chetana be so worried?

5.6 NATYA CHETANA THROUGH THE METAPHOR OF THE FAMILY

Natya Chetana – a family?

To me – as well as occasional visitors – the team of Natya Chetana was often depicted as a family of theatre makers. Indeed, with Natya Chetana the family metaphor made instant sense to me to the extent that I immediately made it part of my own vocabulary: Chronologically speaking, I conceive Natya Chetana as my 'second Indian family', the first being the family of my gandhian 'parents' Shashi and late Lakshmi Chand Tyagi. My membership in both these 'families' was established through living together. In the absence of blood bonds, naming them as families has served as a metaphor for affection and sense of belonging. However, despite my ready acceptance of the family talk, under closer scrutiny the construction of Natya Chetana as a family calls for more consideration. Next, my aim is to take advantage of the family metaphor as a possible vantage point to look at the group and its social relations.

When assessing Natya Chetana through the idea of family, it is important to keep in mind its South Asian cultural context, in particular the ideas concerning 'the Hindu joint family' (outlined briefly in Chapter Three). In view of Kakar & Kakar (2007, 8-10), the joint family is an important site of lived psychic reality in Indian culture because most Indians grow up "in family settings that approximate to the joint rather than nuclear type". Moreover, Beteillé (2005/1993, 436) reminds us that although the same individual might live in both nuclear and joint types of families during different phases of his life, in all sections of the society "grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins continue to play an important part in the individual's development, whether from within or outside the family". Indian joint families often operate at several levels: as a household, as a property group possibly consisting of several households, as an even wider group united, for example, by obligatory ritual purposes, or as a grouping that is defined genealogically rather than in terms of active interaction. In everyday life, the levels overlap (Madan 2005/1993, 420-421). For analytical purposes it is useful to distinguish between the family as a kin group

on one hand, and the family as a household and a residential unit on the other hand (ibid. 418-421; Béteille 2006, 102). Previously, I have largely covered issues that deal with Natya Chetana as a household as well as Subodh's position as the 'paternal' head of it. In essence, Natya Chetana full-timers are a group of people who live together with certain financial arrangements and division of work. In the following, my curiosity is directed on issues of gender, generations, and arrangements and interpretations of relationships both within the group and in relation to the team members' natal families or in-laws.

Men, women and their relationships

Joint families in general as well as the Indian version of it tend to construct gender, the roles of men and women and the gendered expectations they face, in a particular manner. Trawick's (1992) and Seymour's (1999) studies on families in India tell that women have power as well as their scopes of resistance even in patriarchal families, and that in India children are often raised to deal with a lot of ambiguity in their important relationships. Like everywhere in the world, the family is the site where different kinds of temperaments and preferences come together and have to be negotiated.

For me, learning gradually to appreciate the Indian joint family has not been a straightforward, open-minded process. Starting with stories of the infanticides of girl children, dowry deaths and the plight of child wives and widows, the joint Indian family appeared to me initially as a haven of a variety of possible atrocities; men and women who had internalised patriarchal logic all too well doing wrongs to vulnerable women, young and old. As well, the praise and glory, including the ideal of immaculate motherhood, can subjugate. While I have not totally given up my disillusionments – families, in India as well as in Finland can sometimes be painful and even lethal – I have learned that for many the true meaning of family is love, support, acceptance and happiness, also in India. As suspicious as I was, I could not help recognising how my Indian friends often shined and glowed when talking about their family, including the one they had married into. Time and perceiving, in other words ethnographic participant observation, has taught me that Indian families are often fairly flexible, able to adjust the different characters and skills, or sometimes the lack of them, within them at least as well as many Finnish families do. For many of my Indian friends, then, the imaginary of 'the West' has been attached with qualities such as loneliness, insecurity, indifference and the lack of love towards one's family members. Couples divorce, children navigate between the parents, and the elderly have to live at the mercy of paid workers in old age homes. Perhaps it is in human nature to prefer what is familiar and to be horrified of the practices of the other?

On the basis of a longitudinal study of family life and its change in Bhubaneswar, Susan Seymour (1999) suggests that traditionally love affairs, especially strong emotional bonds between couples are not encouraged in the fear that they might endanger the generational (son-father, son-mother) and fraternal loyalties upon which the the family is based. Love should not disturb the family structure. Thinking of Natya Chetana through the family metaphor, my feeling is that something similar matches the theatre collective. From the perspective of the group and its cohesion, neither the unions within the group nor spousal relationships in which, for instance, the husband is involved with Natya Chetana and the wife lives elsewhere, possibly with in-laws and the couple's children, should disturb or disintegrate the life of the Natya Chetana family. On the other hand, the expectation is also that there is love and affection between the spouses. If one would be indifferent to one's spouse, it could also be conceived as a problem. Interestingly, in the case of the earlier pointed criticisms (under the section of leadership) raised by rest of the group against Subodh, his relationship with his wife emerged from several angles. Here, I am tempted to think that alongside Natya Chetana's emphasis and demand for the commitment to the group, Subodh's obvious closeness with Mamata challenged the setting. Returning to what is known of joint families in India, if Natya Chetana is conceived as a family of brothers and sisters, the conclusion from the criticism is that spouses should not interfere or be given better status than the group.

From autumn 2001 to summer 2002 there were two married couples, Subodh and Mamata and Chuni and Santosh living and working with Natya Chetana, although of them Mamata was only part time volunteer as her main professional interests and activities took place outside the group. There were also two more men of the team married and each had a child. The other man lived separately from Natya Chetana with his nuclear family in Bhubaneswar, whereas in the other case the wife and child were living with the husband's parents in his natal village. All of the rest were single, expecting their marriages to be arranged and take place sooner or later. This was similar to the part-time volunteers involved for shorter periods in play productions. They were either single or their spouses lived in a joint family setting, from which the husband was temporarily absent for Natya Chetana's sake. Whether significant for the matter of being able to participate in Natya Chetana as a couple or not, both the marriages of Chuni and Santosh and Subodh and Mamata were 'love marriages', originating from them getting to know each other and wishing to marry each other, not from parents' arrangements. All of the other marriages of the team members had been arranged marriages.

For those still single, marriage and the possible livelihood options were a topical question. Many were aware that supporting a family with the precarious and very small full-timer's scholarship was barely possible. The options that the young men of the

team could visualise to live both Natya Chetana and married life were basically either to get a wife who is working and thus able to support herself financially, to get a wife who is willing and capable of adjusting to living in Natya Chetana (on the condition that the group finds ways to continue), to lead a life where the wife lives with her in-laws and can be met couple of times a year, or to quit Natya Chetana and try to find work that enables both supporting the family and living together as husband and wife. The latter option is actually beyond the means of many Indians, since both migrant labour and distant work placements that do not adhere to the family affairs are common in India. But also the option of accommodating the wife within one's natal family was problematic to many. For instance, in cases in which the natal home had recently suffered from a flood or cyclone, at the very least they felt the need to fix the house to the extent that it can decently accommodate one more person. This then would have needed investments in money and time, both issues that the team members were constantly lacking. Getting a wife who is able to support herself, or to do so by joining Natya Chetana was not very likely either, and not necessarily in the interests of those arranging the marriage. Last but not least, one of the team members who had been touring abroad with Natya Chetana several times found that his reputation as a seasoned traveller created further obstacles for his marriage negotiations. On the basis of his travels to Europe, many of the parents seeking a suitable man for their daughter thought that he must be rich and well educated, and sent his family marriage proposals. Finding then out that neither his income nor education fulfilled their expectations, they withdrew their proposals, whereas parents of better matching girls assumed him to be beyond their scope and did not test the waters for marriage prospects with him.

For the non-married women associated with Natya Chetana the question was how the husband and the in-laws would take their involvement in theatre and whether continuing acting would be possible. Attitudes regarding the unsuitability of acting for women as well as the ideal of the wife staying at home at the service of her husband and his family are not unheard of in contemporary Orissa. In short, the ideas of marriage, its conditions and consequences seemed somewhat complicated.

Already the above conveys many of the ambiguities at stake if one wants to live 'in several families' at the same time. For such an endeavour, the theatre family is particularly demanding, as the full time involvement, typical also for many other voluntary organisations, does not leave much time for other relationships. Nor does it really allow assisting one's natal family economically or by one's labour contribution, which causes frustration and strain for many. During my fieldwork the lifestyle of Natya Chetana demanded extreme commitment to the group, both in time and effort. The full-time volunteers were mostly there for Natya Chetana 24 hours a day, working busily from morning till evening. The volunteers seldom took holidays, and their families some-

times felt neglected. A prime example of this is that when two long-time volunteers of Natya Chetana were finally able to take a proper vacation and visit their families, they faced *ovimaan*, resentment. Their family members were happy to see them, but angry because of their long absence, and they were expected to put up with the response and help the relatives to get over their displeasure.

One more sign suggesting that the Natya Chetana family has so far suited best to young adults who are not yet married and whose own parents or others in the natal family do not yet need much of their help is the fact that despite occasional visiting child actors, the group accommodates no children. So far the choice of the volunteers has been either to separate from one's children for the time spent in Natya Chetana, or delay or decide not to have children. Some have quit with the group at least partly because of family reasons, to be able to be with their children and to contribute more to their nuclear and natal families. Therefore, in my view, one of the big questions for each Natya Chetana team member is how to accommodate different and at times contradictory loyalties within one's person. At worst, living with the group can create pressures from every end: whatever one does, somebody is neglected.

Despite, and in contrast to the above described pressures, many of which have a particularly gendered natures, it is useful to remember that same time Natya Chetana is often a zone of friendly and spontaneous humour, friendly coexistence and liberal thinking, also in gender issues. While the group is careful to observe codes of morally acceptable behaviour, the group's general attitude towards the rest of the society is not particularly moralistic. Rather, the group is usually keen to understand why certain practices, like road side prostitution or trafficking in children take place, and discuss the root causes of them. Within the group, then, both men and women are offered and expected to take responsibility. While each and every volunteer has his or her gendered expectations and conceptions about proper behaviour in society, in Natya Chetana's everyday practices these are also explored and challenged, both in the plays and in the everyday group life. Moreover, leading a theatre life means sometimes setting aside traditional gender roles and other routines. There is not always time to be very particular about cooking, cleaning or laundry.

Other positive aspects of belonging to Natya Chetana, to list a few, are the chances for ambitious artistic and cultural work, including acting, even abroad. One can work with one's personal and political motivation and have a tight sense of belonging and one's own say in the group of like-minded people. Within the group, each and everybody also receives individual attention. One of the practices is that each and everybody's birthday is duly celebrated. 'The Natya Chetana family' is also building up a kind of kin and friendship network of its own. This 'extended family', or Natya Chetana's wider support network is comprised of the group's important teachers, friends, activist

ILLUSTRATION 9. Chuni and Subodh are joking together.

and other colleagues, and welcomes also the team member's 'blood-based' family members sympathetic to the cause. The feeling of togetherness is maintained by arranging picnics and welcoming the people to the group's performances, festivals and other events. This is Natya Chetana's way of creating a sense of 'jointness'.

'Family' – the justification for voluntary work?

When I asked Subodh about the identification of the group as a family (August 2007), he told that when Natya Chetana started, they were young and enthusiastic, wanting to do something for the society as well as to utilise their best for the art form. Then came the time their own families started to expect more from them, causing a kind of demand of body and mind. As a consequence, Natya Chetana was moving towards a kind of professional career, with professional approach and spirit. But they became afraid of that. They feared that they might be in danger of losing their flavour, the identity of voluntarism and the component of sacrifice. In the end, volunteerism and sacrifices were weighed to be more valuable than purely professionally oriented way of working. In retrospect, Subodh's estimation is that had Natya Chetana got better funding to start with, perhaps the group would have ended as jobholders and not a family. This they did not want.

For Natya Chetana, the content of sacrifice is manifold. As already touched upon, against other, better-paid or more secure career options, choosing an insecure theatre life can be seen as a sacrifice. Natya Chetana team members' often scanty income combined with the group's policies of abstinence from many pleasures of life result in fairly simple living. Spare time hardly exists. Further, maintaining relationships outside the group and answering the emotional, social and economical expectations of one's kith and kin can be difficult; the choice of not being there for one's parents, spouse or children is also a sacrifice. Belonging to Natya Chetana tests the loyalties and understanding of one's those one is supposed to be responsible for.

When the family obligations have not disappeared in Indian society (e.g. Kakar & Kakar 2007, 10-12), and people are prepared for personal sacrifices in order to protect and promote their family (Madan 2005, 447-450), utilising the family metaphor helps Natya Chetana to articulate a similar colour of commitment, this time to the theatre group. The family exceeds its individuals and thus justifies the ethos, and choice, of doing principally unsalaried voluntary work. It is one way to articulate commitment. Moreover, naming Natya Chetana as a family serves the group as shorthand to explain the group's lifestyle in acceptable and familiar terms. The 'family' is loaded with positive content and helps to articulate otherwise complicated lifestyle and relationship matters of group life and work. As the group's performing settings vary from city auditoriums to pathless villages it may even be that to audiences less familiar with modern organisational structures other kinds of vocabularies to explain the group's inner relations would not open up that easily.

In some other place and time, a team of a dozen men and two to three women would not be thought of as a family, not even metaphorically. Natya Chetana both is and is not a family. Here lays also a challenge for the family talk. Natya Chetana volunteers are members not of the Natya Chetana family only, but other families, too. Therefore, often, the membership in the process called the Natya Chetana family can be temporary and transient. The question that I have no answer for is how understandable or possible it would be to live and work together without naming or thinking the way of organisation through the idea of family.

5.7 DREAMING OF HOME IN THEATRE VILLAGE

As discussed above, despite family talk, Natya Chetana has so far been perhaps best suited to young adults in a phase of life in which they do not yet have too many responsibilities in relation to memberships in other families of theirs. One option to live as part of the theatre community but still with possibilities for married family life

with children could be life as part of a theatre community but with a more solid base of livelihood. Such an option could be provided by Natya Chetana's long term, gradually developed enterprise called *Natya Gram*, 'the theatre village' around 30 kilometres south of Bhubaneswar. For the group establishing a theatre village has been a long time dream, in which it has also invested a lot. Natya Chetana's booklet (1996, 35) says that the group had started to long for a final settlement for which land was felt to be essential. The land, 5 barren acres "situated in a lovely place, behind a hill range, in between two villages, 3 km away from NH" (national highway) was bought in 1991 by the savings that the volunteers of the time contributed for the purpose.

The first task was to fence the area with barbed wire and pillars. (This is a job that seems to have no end. When I visited the group in August 2007, local petty criminals had found out that five acres is too much to keep proper watch over at night, and had stolen iron fencing pillars nightly under the cover of darkness. They were then selling the stolen iron by weight to the local recycling businesses. Natya Chetana's reasoning was that the only way to end the stealing was to replace all the iron pillars with concrete ones, a costly operation but there was no better choice. But getting properly made concrete pillars was not that simple. For several weeks the group's cook Dhira Bhai, the only one having some understanding of the pillar making craft, had to be on watch from morning until evening at the company making them. Otherwise, they feared that Natya Chetana would get just makeshift pillars, which would crumble away after few months.)

Natya Chetana ran training camps and workshops on the land from the beginning, starting with accommodation in tents. In 1993 the first buildings were built, two simple thatched roof houses, followed by a well to get water for daily use as well as for the plants (some fruit and coconut trees and flowerbeds). Nowadays there are also two or three cows. Otherwise *Natya Gram* is neither under cultivation nor does it provides much food supplies to Natya Chetana. For the main part, *Natya Gram* serves as the place to hold intensive rehearsal sessions, some in the form of workshops, as well as trainings and bigger gatherings. Moreover, Natya Chetana's People's Theatre Festival (*Loko Natya Mela*), a festival for local amateur theatre groups and folk performers that Natya Chetana has strived to organise annually since 1990s, has been held in *Natya Gram* since 2001.

In years the 'village' has improved remarkably. By living with less and investing the saved money into *Natya Gram* the group managed to build a simple round hut with open sides and a thatched roof to serve as a rehearsal and meeting space, as well as a building for accommodation. The only building made with foreign assistance (received from Natya Chetana's collaborators from abroad as a response to the damages caused by the super cyclone of 1999) is a fairly large concrete building that can serve several pur-

poses. Although it now functions as a museum of folk music instruments that the group has collected from all over Orissa, it is high enough to be transformed into a small film studio. Two more buildings have been constructed fairly recently, meant to serve as office and residential space, and Natya Chetana has gradually shifted more and more of its activities and archives into the *Natya Gram*. Saving money by giving up the office and dwelling place (reduced into three rooms by fall 2008) in Bhubaneswar and shifting totally to *Natya Gram* has been on the agenda many times. So far total abandonment of the city residence has not been possible because of lack of infrastructure in the countryside in particular in the form of a proper telephone connection and steady electric current.

By all means, also keeping the scarcity of available financial resources in mind, Natya Chetana's choice has been to think big about *Natya Gram*, and keep determinately investing for it. So far the *ashram* –type 'village' is in intense use periodically. Mentally, *Natya Gram* signifies much more. The idea is that at some point a team of volunteers can live in the theatre village "and earn from income generating projects related to cultural activities such as audio-video studio, museum, training school, theatre auditorium, shooting floor etc." (Natya Chetana 2001 a, 31). As already noted, I consider *Natya Gram* to be particularly important also as a way out from certain social problems of the present theatre life style: it marks a possibility to combine both theatre life and life with a spouse and children.

5.8   WHAT AFTER NATYA CHETANA?

Despite the emphasis on commitment and tight group life, Natya Chetana's experience in 2001-2002 was that it was weighed down by continuous departure of people. As Subodh reflected, "Many of them wanted to be secured in earning and could not be satisfied with a scholarship available for a temporary period. Few of them became self-confidant and have left to open their own organisations, similar to Natya Chetana." As noted, in the severe financial crisis and after in many ways emotionally and financially taxing winter many of the several long-term full-time volunteers ended up leaving the group, a process which came through gradually during the spring of 2002. "At some point if you think my voluntarism is over, now I want to grow like a normal human person of the society. It is a choice." (Subodh, August 2007.)

In 2002, leaving the group that had served several years as a tight collective of life and work was obviously difficult for many. After years of intense group life, learning to live without the group meant taking up new, in the beginning uneasy steps; a kind of an identity crisis in a new situation. Many found trying to find their niche in the

labour market challenging. Little by little, each and everyone has found and identified with some kind of a livelihood, new or old. For instance, Santosh continued his once abandoned music studies, received a gold medal from his university as recognition of his skill, and is at the time of writing a music teacher by his profession. Chuni has led mainly a life of a housewife but has also assisted Natya Chetana in couple of productions as well as done puppetry both on her own as well as on behalf of Natya Chetana. Some have found salaried work in NGOs; others use their theatre learning in acting or doing stagecraft for TV and films; some have returned to do agricultural work in their village. While many are particularly well connected to theatre making and other aspects of performing, many are also continuing on the lines of social work or promoting social change. Chuni's puppetry has strongly an awareness building component in it, Purna works as a trainer in the NGO field, and at the time of writing Sanjaya has just shifted to work in an agency whose main focus is to help the rural poor by promoting micro credit practices and providing legal counselling as well as legal conciliation in cases of conflict. On the other hand, some former Natya Chetana full timers have also become individually tired after chasing different jobs in vain, turning gradually bitter about the choices they have made.

Subodh's understanding is that in the job market the experience gained in Natya Chetana is mostly welcome. However, lacking the group and the kind of boost unity can bring, the individuals are not necessarily always as powerful or capable of utilising the best of their capacity as they were in Natya Chetana. When people are no longer united as a group, they are evaluated according to their individual capabilities. But then again, Subodh counts that in Orissa there are at least two important street theatre groups consisting largely of former Natya Chetana volunteers. "At least these two groups are now utilising Natya Chetana experience for profit making, not developing bitterness", and "doing quite well, able to provide support for at least ten different families. So this is in a way a better situation." From the perspective of the remaining team of Natya Chetana, losing good, experienced volunteers causes certain troubles. One is that if Natya Chetana is invited somewhere to perform a play it had completed half a year or a year earlier, a high turnover of volunteers means that reviving a play requires equally rigorous and time consuming rehearsals as when it was rehearsed first time. "So if someone says we will pay you a huge amount of money but perform day after tomorrow, it is next to impossible."

Sometimes the former members can turn the worst enemies. In Subodh's view, usually the reason is that they are facing hard times in their lives. They left Natya Chetana and may be now jealous as the group is still functioning and has got some name and fame. In addition, there are also other enemies as well as jealous people who try to harm the group or disrupt the work going on. In one performance of the play *Boli*, for exam-

ple, an abandoned water tank started overflowing onto the stage from a shallow build-ing behind it in the middle of a show. I have witnessed numerous sudden and strange power cuts that have taken place either in the middle of Natya Chetana's performance or some important event that the group has organised, strange because they apply only to that very spot, not to the normally lighted houses around in the neighbourhood. These have not been cases of broken fuses. Knowing to expect such mischief, one of the touring essentials on urban tours is a generator to be quickly used as a backup system if needed. Occasionally Natya Chetana also faces systematic blackmailing. A common case is that someone, whether or not ever associated with Natya Chetana, tries to extort money on the basis of invented cases. Usually such person is allied with some unem-ployed lawyer – if they would be successful they would share in the profit.

Obviously, quitting the team is often a challenging process, resulting sometimes kind of counter reactions against the group one was once part of. In my view, such backlashes as well as the overall tightness and intensity manifest the emotionally and socially powerful nature and comprehensiveness of Natya Chetana's group life. Choos-ing an intense theatre life with Natya Chetana has to be balanced against other survival strategies, loyalties and obligations, a puzzle not necessarily easy to solve in Natya Che-tana or after leaving the group. Nonetheless, for the team of Natya Chetana the group itself functions as a strong motor of optimism, initiative and energy to do something good for the society, even at the cost of personal sacrifices. Meanwhile, the group life provides schooling for life. Most of the volunteers come out from Natya Chetana some-what different persons than what they were when they joined the group. Different tasks and responsibilities in the group teach skills that can be utilised also afterwards. One has learned screen-printing, another puppet making, third report writing, and so forth. Many have received a concentrated dose of experience from theatre making from plan-ning the rehearsal processes and constructing scripts to acting, statecraft and closing down productions. And many have know-how that has value in the fields of social wel-fare, community organising, and training as well as social and political activism.

CHAPTER 6
NATYA CHETANA'S CONCEPTIONS
OF THEATRE

In this chapter, my focus is on Natya Chetana's concepts of theatre. Instead of going more deeply into Natya Chetana's theatre as social work, my aim is to profile the kind of theatre the group does and what it stands for in theatrical terms. Over the years, Natya Chetana has developed two practical and conceptual formulations of its own of theatre, namely 'cyco' and 'intimate' theatre[110]. The group ended up to these two different forms because

> During the course of time Natya Chetana has realized that the style of theatre for the urban people has to be different from the theatre for the rural people as life style, daily routine and the values are different. (Natya Chetana 2001 a, 8.)

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110 Through my fieldwork I am thoroughly familiar with the two intimate theatre style plays, *Boli* (The Sacrifice) and *Biblobi Bihanga* (Revolutionary Birds) that Natya Chetana performed in 2001 and 2002, including their rehearsal processes, performance tours, closing up and final evaluation. I am more briefly familiar with the play *Maati* (Mother Earth, 2008), and its earlier version, the cyco theatre play *Dhola Suna* (White Gold, 2007). In addition, I have seen Natya Chetana's plays *Bana Manisha* (The Wildmen), *Sapanara Sapan* (Sapan's dream), *Kaatha* (The Wood), *Tangia Chap* (The symbol is the axe), *Sita Asita* (Sita and her opposite), and *Reboti* (name of a village girl), and the puppet play *Abhayabara* (Daring Boon) on my shorter visits to the group or when the group has performed in Finland. So far my stays in Orissa have not coincided with any of Natya Chetana's cyco theatre tours. Had they, there is the chance that my participation on a tour would not be considered desirable. This is because going on tour requires approval from the local authorities, which in general do not encourage Westerners to roam around the Orissan countryside under obscure conditions such as cycling with a group of actors. Especially after the killing of the Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons by a Hindu Right lynch mob in 1999 in Orissa (an event seen as part of a string of anti-Christian attacks) the local authorities do not guarantee the safety of white (presumably Christian) tourists outside of the big cities and the most common tourist destinations. Lately, there have been regional tensions and outbursts of communal violence between certain politicised Hindu groupings and Christians belonging to poor sections of the society, but foreigners/tourists have not been targeted. At any rate, from Natya Chetana's perspective as well, the presence of a white Westerner on a cyco theatre tour would need to be clearly defined so as not to create confusion in the eyes of the villagers. While being a researcher-documenter might be too vague, acting a major role could do, but I have never acted in any Natya Chetana play. Under these circumstances, my learning about cyco theatre is based on seeing the plays performed in other settings, Natya Chetana's own documentation and discussions with Natya Chetana team members and others who have take part in cyco theatre tours.

In short, cyco theatre is theatre carried out by bicycle tours to rural villages, whereas intimate theatre is made and performed for urban audiences, sometimes in relatively 'intimate' environments, like on a rooftop next to the neighbourhood audience.

The two forms are the focus of the first part of the chapter. The second part concentrates on discussing Natya Chetana's politics of representation. Informed by the discussions referred to at the contextual portrayal of Indian theatre in chapter four, I will address the group's stand and work when it comes to 'tradition', 'roots' and 'India'. Furthermore, as the group repeatedly identifies itself as a people's theatre group, I ask, who the people are, and why does Natya Chetana use considerable amount of time and energy to perform also to middle class audiences? How should Natya Chetana's approach be situated in relation to 'village' India and romantic cultural nationalism? The aim of these exercises is to piece together an understanding of Natya Chetana's work and position in theatrical terms, which then helps reckoning the multiple entanglements Natya Chetana's work has as and with theatre, also when perceived from the angle of social work.

6.1   NATYA CHETANA'S THEATRICAL INFLUENCES AND FORMS

Influences from Badal Sircar, people's theatre, and PRIA

In finding its own identity and way of doing theatre, Natya Chetana names three important sources of inspiration. These sources are the group's contact with the Bengali playwright and director Badal Sircar, learning the process and ideology of people's theatre, and learning participatory methods in the trainings of the Delhi-based NGO Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA).

Badal Sircar[111] (born 1925) belongs to the first contemporary playwrights recognised at the all-India level, and has been an important force in directing, acting and performance practice. While familiar with Western theatre and influential Western theatre makers like Schechner and Grotowski, in his theatre work he drew strongly from traditional Indian forms and current social issues. Interested to bring together

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111   Badal, originally Sudhindra Sircar was a member of the anglicised Bengali landowning class, which formed Calcutta's urban intelligentsia. Like many other theatre makers of upper class background of his time, despite his early calling theatre was not the first and definitely not the parents' choice for a career. Educated as a civil engineer, Sircar worked in construction companies and later in town planning, spending a few years also in England, France and Nigeria. Using every chance to see and absorb theatre, he wrote plays from his thirties until he left engineering and turned seriously to theatre. His first better-known play was *Evam Indrajit* (1962), staged in Calcutta. In 1967, he founded his own company *Satabhi*. (E.g. Gupta 2004, Yarrow 2001, 154).

both rural and urban elements, he called his theatre "third theatre" (Sircar 1978) to address its quality as neither indigenous/traditional nor imported, as well as to differentiate it from "first", popular folk art forms, and "second", "Victorian" Western theatre. His desire was to do theatre for diverse audiences, and catalyse social change by exposing "media lies and Government untruths". Though often underplayed as street theatre, in the 1970s Sircar's approach marked a significant point of departure both for Sircar's own career and for theatre intended for large audiences with little money. Part of the bargain in turning to poor audiences and the consequent lack of money meant giving up the possibility to maintain a professional theatre troupe which necessitated minimalism instead. (E. g. Yarrow 2001, 154; Gupta 2004.) Later Sircar conducted frequently workshops with other groups, one of them with Natya Chetana. As Subodh remembers

> Actually, in three phases he came to Orissa. First we wanted him like a guest of honour one of our festival, and he really gave very beautiful speech (…) Second time he came to conduct a workshop, how he is utilizing a method of workshopping to develop a play. That is very nice, even though that is not very much indigenous. But still he has improvised a lot to give more strength to actors, to performers. So that was one. Then third, we wanted him to come and perform in one of the festivals. So then we could see him playing his direction. And also the team members performing in our festival. So in these three phases we could have him with us. It was a great experience with him and his influences. (Subodh, Helsinki 7.9.2005.)

Among Natya Chetana volunteers, Sircar is a figure remembered with love and reverence. Knowing him only through literature and the narratives of Natya Chetana volunteers, I have understood that he has encouraged Natya Chetana in particular to rely on physicality in acting and being open-minded regarding performance spaces. Other elements in Natya Chetana's posture might also echo Sircar's influence, such as the practice of collecting voluntary donations at the end of the play when performing to rural audiences rather than having ticketed shows, something that Sircar picked up from folk theatre groups.

People's theatre, in Oriya *loko natya*, is the concept Natya Chetana commonly uses to classify the group's performance genre. As pointed out in chapter 4.1, in India the term people's theatre was initially used by the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), active immediately before and after independence. Later on the concept has been used by Jacob Scrampical (1994) as a broad category under which he discusses folk, street and social action theatre in India. Natya Chetana recognises and respects the pioneering approach and style of IPTA, but does not refer to IPTA's tradition further than that. This may be due to IPTA's political association with communists; Natya Chetana is reluctant to associate itself with any party-political link-seeking, and generally to any

outsider attempts to regulate the tone of the group's message. Nevertheless, a family link to IPTA's work in Orissa in 1960s exists: Before getting married and having kids, the firstborn of whom as Subodh, his mother acted for a while as IPTA's radio singer.

As touched on in chapter two, instead of Indian sources Subodh – and through him Natya Chetana – was inspired by the people's theatre approach during a training in Kolkata:

> The concept was having two angles in it. One is to do theatre by the victims of social exploitation or injustice and with the non-artists. The concept was also to do theatre with a participatory method where all join hands together to build up a play. So, Natya Chetana started doing theatre to extract artistic ability from common but interested people. And NC attempted participatory making theatre style. (Natya Chetana 2001 a, 3.)

The engagement with people's theatre turned out to be revolutionary. It transformed the style, content and process of Natya Chetana's theatre making, which has had the flavour of *loko natya* ever since. Moreover, it changed the understanding of who can do theatre. This strong identification is also mirrored in Natya Chetana's various mission statements:

> To explore and develop theatre and artistic abilities for reviving own cultural roots and highlighting socio-political-economical themes for supporting people's movements leading towards a self-reliant society with equal justice and right. (Natya Chetana 2004, 4).

> to practice and promote cultural and artistic activities with social commitment (Natya Chetana 2000 b), or

> 1 – To take up the 'content' from the people, and a drama always looks forward to search the possible protagonist and antagonist. So this is the political angle. 2 – To improvise the indigenous 'forms' of the common mass which either exists or is vanishing and has been neglected by the so called mainstream. So this is the aesthetic angle. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 4.)

In the late 1980s, around the time of adopting the people's theatre approach, Subodh had an opportunity[112] to learn about organisational management in a training conducted by a Delhi-based non-governmental organisation Participatory Research Asia

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112 The opportunity came through the local (Orissan) Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD).

(PRIA)[113]. The training gave Natya Chetana tools to conceptualise and understand its own identity as a collective. Later Subodh and Mamata also participated in a trainers' training, which further helped to strengthen the participatory and awareness creating horizon of Natya Chetana, providing ideas and tools on how to work as a group and a team of trainers. Most importantly, the trainings connected Subodh and Mamata with like-minded people in pan-Indian NGO networks.

Lately the focus of PRIA's work has been on "Reforming Governing Institutions" and "Civil Society Building". Rajesh Tandon, the acknowledged co-founder and long-term president of PRIA, stresses institutions of governance as being important in the development process of any country. When governance is essentially based on processes of state-society interactions and partnerships, the participation of the people (people referring to all citizens) is a necessity on the way to sustainable, effective democratic governance. So far this is not the case. Most Indians have been relegated to the role of mere beneficiaries or voters, the rule being mal-governance and decision-making centralised in the hands of the few. Even voluntary development organisations and NGOs have their share of "fly-by-night, self-serving, short-term oriented NGO "shops", set up to access project funds of a government or international agency". Therefore, in Tandon's view, it is imperative to reform the larger structures of governance, "to build the effectiveness of the citizen's voice and the responsiveness of the state actors". This then requires giving value to people's knowledge, in other words cognitive respect towards the less educated and less influential; processes of listening, learning and organising along with them; partnership and participation that enable mutual interdependence. And governance has to be brought where people are, not people where institutions of governance exist. So far, "some work on strengthening citizens' voices, others work on redesigning big institutions, but the 'twain never meet'". The challenge is to work on both approaches simultaneously, interlinking them. (Tandon 2003, 3-7.)

Though the above was written about PRIA in the 2000s, the subtext of the message, its critical, justice calling pro-people stand, is familiar to me from Natya Chetana's rhetoric and reasoning. When PRIA works to strengthen civil society by facilitating leadership skills, Natya Chetana is a civil society actor who urges, through its performances, the audiences to think what citizenship and democracy mean for them. Furthermore, though I cannot really track the amount of impact Natya Chetana has received

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113 Today PRIA (www.pria.org) is a well-recognised organisation that receives funding from both international and Indian sources, has staff and/or state or district office in eight states of India, and a wide network of partner organisations. It undertakes "development initiatives to positively impact the lives and improve the quality of living of marginalised and excluded sections of the society", works on themes of governance, people's participation, empowerment and local level development issues, and undertakes the capacity building of stakeholders by organising training and educational programmes. (PRIA 2006.)

from PRIA, Natya Chetana emanates a similar kind of thoroughness as that condensed in PRIA's reports, networks, interventions and discussion boards. Certain ideals, like respect for people's knowledge, or beginning the path of realising ideas starting from oneself, seem much alike. In general, even though not argued exactly in social work terms, the issues addressed by the above-discussed inspirers of Natya Chetana, such as the need to focus on the poor and the marginalised and see social problems as part of wider social and political state of affairs, are identical with the values and objectives commonly recognised as the core of social work.

Old look, new wine

A flashback from December 2005 in Tampere, Finland: A half-day workshop on Natya Chetana's theatre (11.12.2005) for a dozen women, most of whom share the interest in applied theatre. I act as an interpreter (English-Finnish) so that no one needs to particularly struggle with the language. As often in many introductory speeches to the group's work, Subodh says that when he graduated from the theatre college in Orissa in 1986, his education had been mostly in Western drama. Having learnt the theories of Stanislavski and Brecht, his mind stormed when he realised that the folk theatre practitioners of Orissan villages had been using same theories for at least 300-400 years, but without anyone recognising or giving them any credit for their achievements. Yet, the folk theatre artists know very well what "being the character" or "alienation" in theatre means[114].

To further illustrate his point, Subodh starts giving examples how in mythological plays the identification with the character has time to time been so extreme that the actor can no longer distinguish himself from the role he has been performing. For example, in a play where in the final scene the god kills the demon, actors performing the god are known to have really slain demon-actor. In another play, a demon sets

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114 Subodh is appalled that certain Europeans are celebrated for innovations that have been at use outside Europe much longer, as in this case "being the character" or "alienation" in Orissan folk theatre forms. Even if the Orissan folk theatre artists and Stanislavski would after all deal with different theories or rationales producing somewhat similar outcomes, in past centuries innovations already done elsewhere were often claimed in the name of the European or Westerner who finally succeeded with them. As pointed out in chapter three, colonialism was fortified by European belief on the superiority of their civilisation, which did not leave much space for taking in information contradictory to that. I wonder if disinterest and the lack of recognition of knowledge and innovations by those 'outside' the hegemonic modes of thinking, talking, and being is equally commonplace today. Although there are margins and centres of power everywhere, also within East and West, the situation depicts orders of power and recognition in the world we live in.

the tail of the monkey-god Hanuman on fire, resulting in the whole palace burning down. Jumping from one thatched roof to another Hanuman-actors are known to have inflamed whole villages with their burning tails. After many accidents like this, the audience comes prepared. There are men in reserve to bind the actor with strong rope if protecting life of other actors or the safety of the village so demands. For Subodh these are clear-cut demonstrations of Stanislavskian theory. In my translation I add that in such instances the actors are understood to be possessed by the Deity and not responsible for their actions.

Next, we talk about awareness as the purpose of theatre, and the state of Orissa, how it is strong in the fields of art and culture, despite being one of the least developed of the states of India. Subodh draws a picture on the wallboard, a smaller circle inside a bigger one. The smaller circle represents theatre that has two main elements, form and subject. The outer circle represents the issues influencing theatre: tradition, politics, social and economy. Theatre deals with all these aspects, and they all also influence theatre. For instance, in earlier times landlords often ordered performers to their house, and the performers performed where and what the landlord liked. Kings were also keen to have their say on the performances, controlling both their content and setting so that they showed them and their palace in most favourable light. The point is that deciding the topic was and is a political choice. It sets the roles of the protagonist and antagonist in the play, channelling to what kind of sides or issues the audiences can put their souls into. (Notes 11.12.2005, Tampere.)

As the above implies, becoming conscious of the richness of Orissan theatre convinced Subodh and other Natya Chetana volunteers that their task would be to examine both the strengths and weaknesses of their own, Orissan theatre. One of the conclusions was that the problem of the traditional theatre is that its content is limited to mythology. Moreover, in drama school Subodh had understood that theatre has a language, one of them being the kind of theatre the British brought to India. His realisation was, however, that Orissan theatre has not been acknowledged to have any grammar, which is why it has been treated as mere dialects, and dialects, "living only in mouth, are always treated as inferior than the language". Subodh thought that "perhaps it is my biggest responsibility as a theatre student of India and Orissa to create a grammar of my own theatre". As Natya Chetana's aim is to do theatre on contemporary subjects, the solution was "to make a new bottle, looking like old, but with new wine". From the group's perspective, using the old, local ingredients for their kind of new theatre is, among other things, an act of love and respect towards the traditional Orissan folk theatre forms and those who have kept them alive. Cyco and intimate theatre have been born from this attempt: to make theatre that looks traditional but provides contemporary content, and establishing it also by developing 'a grammar' for it. The

latter, combined with the recognition of the scarcity of written material on local folk theatre forms, is the reason why Natya Chetana has found it important to explain its theatrical forms also "in write-up, with proper brochures and all that". (Subodh, Helsinki 7.9.2005.)

Cyco theatre

When I have asked Natya Chetana volunteers what in Natya Chetana they like best, almost as a rule, the answer has been "cyco theatre tours". This is despite the fact that most admit that touring by bicycles is heavy, especially when the tour is just before the rainy season, as it often is, when the humid heat can reach 50 degrees centigrade in the shade. On the other hand, once the rains start, they cause other challenges. Nevertheless, the joy and pleasure of doing cyco theatre is not easily put off, vicissitudes tend to glorify the exercise.

Initially, Natya Chetana called its cycling theatre "psycho theatre". The intention was to stress the group's ambition "to disturb the psychological status of the viewers" in order to make them think and discuss the subjects of the plays. When Natya Chetana realised that the name psycho invited therapy-related connotations that they had not intended to address, the term was changed into cyco, which refers just to the mode of transport, the bicycle. (Natya Chetana 2000 a, 1-5.) As Natya Chetana's brochure informs:

> The history of Natya Chetana's theatre lies with the bicycles. Initially to go to distant places the group did cycle expeditions. It was to avoid the travel cost. But when NC received little money it used vehicles to go to villages for putting up shows. Then the vehicle became a bigger attraction for the villagers rather than our theatre. Even the vehicle provided a symbol of the involvement of money. This gave a scope to the local politicians to misinterpret us by giving a political brand with reversed color. So we decided to stick to cycling as a strategy. (Natya Chetana 2001 a, 5-6.)

As the citation demonstrates, the original reason behind touring by cycling was the lack of money, and though it was not really thought of much, the mode of transport created a positive attitude towards the group. When the group was able to afford a car, they were interpreted as rich, or at least representing the interests of the rich. Instead of concentrating on the performance, village people got curious about who gave the group money, and why. Furthermore, the local politicians were quick to pick up the chance to take credit for their party, without any grounds, for Natya Chetana's performance. The

experience was enough for Natya Chetana to arrive at the conclusion that in addition to being financially sound, cycling is necessary for a favourable image: "the people should feel difference between paid workers and volunteers" (Natya Chetana 2000 a, 10). In addition, cycling suits the general ethos of the group. It gives an adventurous feeling, is good physical training, ecologically justified, and does not rely on high technology. In a nutshell, though even a bicycle is far from a matter of course for everyone, it is in the reach of many more people than cars or motorbikes. As cycling requires physical labour, in contrast to the often fairly non-active lifestyle of the Indian middle classes, bicycle tours function as a visible proof of Natya Chetana's commitment to be at the same level with the 'common masses'. In practice, the important thing is that at least the majority of the group and equipment goes by bicycle. When Subodh or some others have used a motorbike during the tours because of health reasons, it has not fundamentally disturbed the overall image of the group as cyclists.

In the beginning, Natya Chetana's psycho or cyco performances did not meet the expectations of the local people because they were used to all-night shows. Though people appreciated Natya Chetana's plays, they considered the then barely two-hour long piece to be a mere starter before the actual performance, and were not happy to learn that the whole thing was over. As a whole night of entertainment was not Natya Chetana's intention, the group had to develop a new strategy for performing in the villages. To break the conventional ideas of theatre shows and entertainment, they started to perform at odd hours early in the morning or daytime. The performances were timed to match the rhythms of village life so that the villagers were able to stop and see the play on their way to work, for example. Presented in this way, the plays needed to be relatively short "to suit the patience of the audience". The strategy was successful: Natya Chetana could feel that the plays caught the attention of the audiences and gave them food for thought.

> This idea which was thought to be impossible was made possible and got popularity for its thematic value. There were no other elements like stage craft, light and sound, make up or music to steal the show. Our shows were performed with lively action and with simple music. This encouraged us to continue the research on the line. (Natya Chetana 2000 a, 6.)

In other words, Natya Chetana found a way to enter the villages to perform the kind of plays it considered important but in a way that did not leave the villagers unsatisfied despite their different expectations for a show. The approach has remained the same until today. Not to cause any expectations, the audience is not informed beforehand. The actors enter to the village costumes on and fully prepared. (E.g. Natya Chetana 2000 a, 10–11.) Sharmila Chhotaray, herself a volunteer on a cyco theatre tour in

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1996, describes that the first thing is to select the performance space in the village, put up the play poster[115], and then go around clapping, drumming and singing an invitation song[116] to call the villagers to the spot: Then the group sets up the performance, possibly borrowing some needed props for the play from the villagers. Before the performance starts, the local host introduces the group to the audience. As the performers address the spectators directly, the acting always contains a chance for improvisation. (Chhotaray 2009.)

When starting to do a play Natya Chetana often has a broad thematic interest in mind, like a concern over the impact of industrial pollution or a desire to discuss the position of women. While careful to guard its independence to determine the topic and its treatment in the play, the group takes suggestions into consideration. Further, to guarantee local participation throughout the process, Natya Chetana prefers to work in partnership with local organisations. When having a cyco theatre tour in mind, Natya Chetana identifies the area where it wants to do a play, as well as local village level organisations interested to collaborate, if the demand did not come from the village organisations side in the first place. The role of the local organisations is crucial from providing volunteers who participate in the play making to introducing and hosting the group during the tour, as well as organising places to stay overnight and food for the touring troupe. While each performance is followed by a spot evaluation to understand the impact of the play (Chhotaray 2009), committing to follow up action and facilitating the discussion or events the play may initiate is the task of the local organiser. Natya Chetana would not mind even if the local organisers would develop their own theatre group "using the style created by NC. And they may create people's organisation to achieve their rights". (2001 a, 7.)

As often in community theatre, the cyco theatre performances are constructed to reflect an issue or issues familiar to the people of the area in question. The performance style is also adapted to local cultural elements in costume, music and dances. As a method, doing a survey of the area grounds the plays. The motto for doing the survey is "Go to the people, learn from them and see what they can do for their development"

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115 Each play also has a poster of its own (made at Natya Chetana's own screen-printing unit), some of which are left in villages to remind of the group's visit.

116 "Come, come, brothers and sisters come; We the actors are here to play for you; Seeing it you would lose your consciousness; Come to see the drama…" (*Asa aso ho, Bhai Bhauni e Asa; Ame natua asichu nata karibaku;Udijiba tuma hos ho; Nata dekhibaku asa…*). (Chhotaray 2009.)

(Natya Chetana 2001 a, 7)[117]. A handful of Natya Chetana volunteers, not the whole performance team, does the survey. Without making a big noise about themselves, the team stays in the village for a few days or sometimes weeks, visiting different families, observing, and discussing with the people. The survey is systematic. According to Natya Chetana's Cyco Theatre book, the team wants to learn about economy, politics and social structures in the area (as well as possible problems regarding them), important characters of the area, myths and traditions; folklore, local music; daily life of people, local accent, vocabulary and idioms, habits and customs, use of colours, costumes and ornaments, symbols and local and typical utility goods (Natya Chetana 2000 a, 7)[118]. In summary, Natya Chetana is interested in anything and everything that can be useful in creating a play. The insights gained are again discussed with local people or members of local organisations to get feedback and comments for the playmaking.

Simultaneously – or after the survey – the group goes to a workshop to develop a play on the basis of the material gained through the survey. The performing team consists of a mixture of local participants and Natya Chetana full-timers, sometimes other interested volunteers and/or amateur artists as well. Starting by dramatising the survey material, the group then improvises the play during the course of the workshop. As the

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117 The same motto is also typical for many social and community development endeavours. Same time, Natya Chetana's conception is not very different from what Lea Kantonen (2005) writes about the different roles of community artists as positioned on a continuum ranging from an observer to a journalist and an interpreter to an activist. The observer spends time in the community in question, and brings forward his/her experience about the life of the community in his/her artwork. An analyser/interpreter analyses the information and learning s/he has gained, whereas an activist collaborates, negotiates and organises with different groups and institutions, trying to enhance the prospects of the community. Rather commonly, community artists start from observer or journalist positions, but gradually shift towards more active and public roles, towards activism. (Lacy 1995 ref. Kantonen 2005, 47.) Similar processes are not rare in ethnographic research either. On the other hand, U.S. based arts scholar Grant Kester sees the roles of community or political artists in a more critical light. In his view, artists often adhere to the roles of an educator, guide, shaman or tourist. Yet, though many artists talk in the name of the marginalised groups, they actually use them to enhance their own agendas in similar way as politicians trying to win over people with different identity positions do. Once a variety of marginal identities are lumped together it is easy to forget the complicities through which each of them has been formed. No single politician or artist can act as the spokesperson for everyone in the margins. Kester's point is not to disgrace collaboration with marginalised groups but to call for more meaningful and ethically sound ways of doing it. There are numerous communities and movements from which artists can learn and with which artistic collaboration could be fruitful, but not from the above or providing services of 'a shock therapist'. (Kantonen 2005, 47-48.)

118 As survey makers Natya Chetana's approach to the Orissan performance traditions resembles to some extent the approach of some of the early anthropologists keen to 'save' cultures before they disappear, or at least to collect samples of them in museums (for example, Natya Chetana 2001 a, 6). Such spirit is also part of Natya Chetana's collection of local folk music instruments and their exhibition in the group's museum in *Natya Gram.*

emphasis in the theatre making is in the process, aside the earlier described practical and aesthetic framework no one (including Subodh) knows how the end product will turn out. The script, the set and the characters are built up collectively. Solutions are often worked out and tried together with improvisations as well as collecting and discussing suggestions from the whole team.

Performances in the villages are a convincing credit to Natya Chetana's work. From 1986 until the end of 2008, the group did more than 40 plays in cyco theatre form, which is thousands of kilometres and hundreds (if not thousands) of performances. Usually the distance covered and shows performed was between 200-300 kilometres and 20-30 performances, but the group did also tours extending up to 700 kilometres and 70 shows. No wonder, cyco theatre has become a kind of a brand for Natya Chetana. It is the theatre form by which the group situates itself, which is central to the group's political identity, and which catches the fundamentals of the kind of theatre work Natya Chetana stands for. Furthermore, cyco theatre as awareness work is understandable, attractive, and easily motivated for people interested in Natya Chetana's work, including donors and well-wishers, working as a grounding also for intimate theatre.

Intimate theatre

For Natya Chetana, cyco theatre has been a way to reach rural people. In towns and cities the challenges are different. Initially, in the middle of 1980s, Natya Chetana started in Bhubaneswar "inside the auditorium in British style". In other words, Natya Chetana rehearsed in Bhubaneswar (due to the lack of money in the first years at Indira Gandhi Park) and hired the local theatre auditorium *Rabindra Mandap,* "the only recognizable theatre hall in the city", for its performances. The strategy was to do regular performances to create a good audience flow to the shows. Everything went well until in the beginning of 1990s Natya Chetana ran into disputes about the use of *Rabindra Mandap* and decided to quit booking the hall for its performances[119]. (Natya Chetana 2003, 6-9.) The solution forced Natya Chetana to find alternative places for performances. Having had rehearsals in different spaces, the group had discovered that when they practiced on their rooftop, the neighbours congregated on the surrounding rooftops to follow their

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119 The disputes took place in 1991. First, the *Rabindra Mandap* authorities refused to open a cycle stand that Natya Chetana had demanded to guarantee that the cycles of its audiences would not be stolen. Soon after, the group was held responsible for a broken latrine, allegedly damaged during their performance. Lastly, the group was ordered to cancel a widely announced show on the basis of the rule that urgent government functions, in this case the award giving ceremony of the local Journalist Association, can brush aside any set programmes. Natya Chetana has not booked *Rabindra Mandap* ever since. (E.g. Natya Chetana 2003, 6-9.)

rehearsals. The finding gave the impetus to rooftop performances. First, Natya Chetana started to have regular shows on its own rooftop, and later in some other locations, where friends or relatives were able to provide their rooftop for performance use. After the 440-seated *Rabindra Mandap*, the new setup felt intimate with the audience. The usual distance between the audience and the performers was lacking, making Natya Chetana enthusiastic to maintain the spirit of its theatre "and not merely to provide entertainment or to hanker for name and fame". Further, the experience convinced the group that it should not do translated plays, but make its own scripts on the basis of local incidents, a decision that later turned into a principle. Rather than an end, the decision to boycott *Rabindra Mandap* turned out to be an opening, and actually helped Natya Chetana to live up to its peoples' theatre approach. As the confidence of the group grew, it started to try out also other places for performing. (Natya Chetana 2003, 8-9.)

Changing the performance set up and gaining strength for the new ideas reverberated in the composition of the team. As Natya Chetana's book on Intimate Theatre claims, the turn of events strengthened the group's vocation to do theatre with a social commitment. The ambition of becoming professionals had to be forsaken. Those who were more career-oriented gradually left the group, and amateur and village artists joined. As Subodh once again states: "It was a political choice also to search for a theatre style, which will be owned and be accepted by the common audiences and theatre workers with feeling of owning". The new style was named intimate theatre. (Natya Chetana 2003, 9-11.)

Intimate theatre is targeted at urban middle class audiences. The plays explore contemporary problems or tensions familiar to the audience through stories that are conventional in the sense that they have "a climbing action (…) to reach a climax". Though Natya Chetana is conscious of the stage and underlines that "Indian theatre makes a theatre worker free to place one side, two sides, three sides and even a mobile type of positioning of audience", intimate theatre is presented to one side, as the urban audiences are already accustomed to the proscenium form. Otherwise the use of the stage follows Natya Chetana's chosen style. The sets, which need not to be realistic, are portable and made of available resources such as bamboo. Except the use of dimmer to fade the full light in and out in the beginning and end, the lights are flat. Among other things, these solutions serve the target of keeping production costs low. Furthermore, in line with Natya Chetana's understanding of India and Indianness, as well as pointing to the claimed ancient theoretical background of the art, "The play should give a scope to prove the actors as Indian by throwing original voice, singing songs, dancing and also through action creating the (Nine types) of RASA in a play." In compositions the group tries to score different levels of the set [as for example with the 'mountain' in the play *Boli*, see illustration 17], and there "is a lot of use of CHORUS actors in projecting the scene and the theme or purpose of the scene." (Natya Chetana 2003, 13-18.)

As in cyco theatre, intimate theatre plays are usually rehearsed in a workshop setting, either in a specific camp or in the midst of other daily duties in Bhubaneswar. Again, the partakers are not only Natya Chetana full-timers, but also part-timers and other volunteers. As intimate theatre is made to cover major cities of Orissa, the need is basically for volunteers who can donate their time and effort, not so much for local volunteers from a specific cultural area as in cyco theatre. During the workshop, time and effort is put in creating trust and community spirit within the group. Though Natya Chetana sometimes uses stories written by Orissan writers and playwrights[120], mostly the scripts are done collectively, as is the stagecraft, composing the play on the sets, designing props and costumes, and evaluation of the whole process once everything is over. For an Orissan scale and resources, the plays are generally well rehearsed, having 4-6 weeks more or less full time rehearsals, and emphasise stage design. As Subodh condenses:

> The plays are always played after a definite process of rehearsal, which is participatory in nature where the actors are a more powerful and own the show after a strong realization of the subject and the impact on them first. The players are first to believe personally the subject and the outgoing message through the play. (Natya Chetana 2003, 4-5.)

The actual tour with the ready play is usually made by an inexpensive bus or lorry, or when the group occasionally performs elsewhere in India, by train or bus. In each town Natya Chetana's local contacts help to organise the show that can be staged open air or indoor. The plays are advertised beforehand by posters, and sometimes by door-to-door circulation, and usually the audience is expected to buy tickets. As with cyco theatre performances, the shows are accompanied by an exhibition consisting of photographs, news clips, data and play posters, as well as Natya Chetana's publications (also for sale). Before the performance is staged, the actors perform a ritual on the stage, sometimes visibly, sometimes just amongst the team, to dedicate the set and gain confidence and blessings. Like in Hindu religious rituals in general, the ritual contains burning incense sticks and breaking a coconut. "Then the members greet each other. The seniors give blessings to the others while the juniors touch their feet as a mark of respect and urge for a blessing." (Natya Chetana 2003, 20-21.) By 2008, Natya Chetana had put on 23 productions, and performed five of the plays also outside Orissa. One example of the genre is the play *Boli* discussed in Chapter Seven. A list of Natya Chetana's cyco and intimate theatre plays in chronological order can be found in Appendix 4.

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120 In addition to collectively made scripts, for its intimate theatre plays Natya Chetana has adapted stories from Fakir Mohan Senapati, Pratibha Ray, Manoj Das, Bijay Mishra and Rati Ranjan Mishra (e.g. Chhotaray 2009.)

Comparing cyco and intimate theatre

In Natya Chetana's book on Intimate Theatre, Subodh has encapsulated the differences between cyco and intimate theatre as follows:

TABLE 1. The differences between cyco and intimate theatre.

	DIFFERENCE	CYCO THEATRE	INTIMATE THEATRE
1.	**CONTENT OF PLAYS**	Mostly based on case studies, rural and village-based experiences of life and incidents familiar to the audiences.	Mostly based on urban stories and experiences of life, occasionally also on stories selected from good storywriters; the topics should be familiar to the audiences.
2.	**DURATION OF THE PLAY**	Mainly short plays (30 to 45 minutes).	Mostly long plays (1 hour 15 minutes to 2 hours) depending on the need of the subject.
3.	**TIME AND PUBLICITY**	Mainly in the daytime, without prior notice.	Mainly in the evening, with proper declaration and publicity.
4.	**STAGE IN RELATION TO AUDIENCE**	Mostly presented to three-sided audience.	Mostly presented to one-sided audience.
5.	**USE OF SET**	No sets that need to be fixed beforehand to the stage.	Use of abstract but portable settings to create different locations for the play.
6.	**LIGHTNING AND BACKSTAGE**	No use of lightning as daylight is available; no backcloth, rather the backstage is open to the audiences like in folk or street theatre.	Use of flat light and backcloth. Mostly avoids proscenium (use of 'wings'), rather uses two exits to the backside as described in "Natyasastra."

Adapted from Natya Chetana Concept of Intimate Theatre (Natya Chetana 2003, 3).

Despite the differences in the theatrical style and audience, the ideology behind cyco and intimate theatre is highly similar, and the two forms have also other common characteristics. In both the forms, the storylines of the plays should connect with the lives of the people in the audiences, and be understandable for "the common masses"

by their form and aesthetics. In storytelling, the emphasis is on visual actions rather than a strong dependence on dialogues. Among other things, this is important because of the multilingual reality of India. In Orissa alone more than 60 languages are spoken, so it cannot be taken for granted that everyone in the audience understands Oriya. Furthermore, Natya Chetana's stand is that the group's style of performing should be recognisably Indian as opposite to adaptations from foreign forms. As Subodh writes, "The play should have five elements of Indian theatre such as Action, Dialogue, Songs, Dances and 'Live and Indigenous' Music, which are the identity of Indian Theatre and also the strength in comparison to other forms of theatre in the world". Furthermore, as Natya Chetana's plays are made to be portable, they are not dependant on 'modern technology' but can be performed without any special technical requirements[121]. This means that there are no light cuts in scene changes even in intimate theatre plays; the changes happen by exit and entry. "The design of costume and properties are different for each play basing on the psychology of the story or the characters." And the ending of the play should leave the audience serious and make them think. (Natya Chetana 2003, 4-5.)

To me, both the differences and similarities addressed between the forms seem at first sight mainly theatrical, keen on spatial arrangements, style of exit and entry, and amount and kind of technology used. They depict the composition, and demonstrate the decisions concerning performances meant to different kind of audiences and situations. However, such formal choices, though easy to interpret just as practical principles, contain ideological and political stands; the choice of the form, space and situation of performance is a political act. As Subodh says, "When you talk about the form, it always refers to the subject. Subject and form goes together." In addition to Natya Chetana's method of building the plays and the themes chosen, the aesthetic style, portability, and above all else touring in rural areas, label the work as people's theatre, and, along with it, as social work.

6.2   THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION AND PERFORMING

Tradition, modernity and modern Indian theatre

Simultaneously with its people's theatre and social work emphasis, Natya Chetana's theatre and the rhetoric behind it participate in ongoing theatre debates in India. In depicting its own theatre, Natya Chetana often contrasts itself to "British theatre".

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121 Saying no to modern technology in performances means saying no to light cuts, finely adjusted lightning and sound reproduction, 'Western' electrical music instruments, and any screen or TV -techniques on stage. However, basic lightning and sound reproduction is fine.

Throughout Orissan middle and upper class theatre circles British theatre is a concept widely and instantly recognised. It stands for an understanding of what colonial British theatre in India (in particular, Calcutta) was. In other words, it does not refer to contemporary theatre in Britain. For Natya Chetana, the idea of British theatre is condensed most of all through a stage structure with "wings" and a one-sided audience, as well as a certain use of lights, in its Indian manifestation also often poor acting. As partial Natya Chetana's view is, it is worth realising that the group finds it necessary to differentiate itself from the kind of theatrical models that the British advocated during colonial times, and that have infiltrated directly or through intermediaries to local theatre scene and drama education. Though the 'Western' elements are only one ingredient in the local brews of theatre, sixty years after independence they are far from insignificant in defining theatrical tastes and aspirations. When in cultural issues in India the barometers of appreciation that matter often value approaches and structures anchored in a way or another to "the West" and its ways of valuation. Natya Chetana cries out for valuing Indian, indigenous solutions. It is in this sense that the statement that the stories should be familiar and easily understandable underlines the connection between Natya Chetana's theatre and the approachability of various folk theatre genres. Additionally, mentioning *Natya Sastra*, action, dialogue, songs, dances and indigenous live music as the "five elements of Indian theatre", or non-dependence on modern technology, address the heritage of 'folk' and 'classical' Indian theatre since the days of Indian antiquity. But what kind of modern theatre is this, when its fundamentals are grounded somewhere far back in airy-fairy history? Moreover, what does "Indian" mean here? The issue has been touched on many discussions between Subodh and me.

In Subodh's view, 'Indian' refers to a unique indigenous flavour, which can be immediately recognised as such. Taking an example from dressing-up, "most of the people in India are now using pants and shirt. But that's not an Indian dress. (…) If you want to see an Indian dress then you have to go to *dhoti* and *punjabi*." Like pants and shirt, Subodh considers that the British export, a proscenium style of theatre, has been institutionalised in India, among others by the National School of Drama. "So exactly like that, the dominant class, in dominant places, in dominant areas, in dominant auditoriums, the play which is performed, it is in proscenium style." But Indian folk theatre is lacking institutions; there are neither schools nor degrees for folk theatre forms. For Subodh, a proscenium style in theatre is as Indian as dressing up in pants and shirt. Even traditional folk theatre forms, if dislodged from their cultural context of performing and taken to auditoriums are no longer folk theatre but representations

of folk theatre, as the set-up changes[122]. As discussed earlier in Chapter Four, beyond the surface level, the category of 'Indian' is a platform of contested interests and interpretations. Stands on what India, whose India and what kind of Indianness is correct, are necessarily political, and simultaneously inclusive and exclusive claims in relation to sections and cultures of human beings living in the Republic of India and even beyond its borders. For Subodh, Indian is something that majority of the people living in India can recognise as familiar, belonging to their culture and over which they have ownership,

India is not what it was hundreds of years ago. In long processes of cultural exchanges, ideas and items that are not originally from the subcontinent, like democracy or chili, are today incorporated into the South Asian culture. As traditions are always somehow established, one of the questions often posed is that how does the idea of indigenousness in theatre reflect to modernity and change. Shouldn't proscenium theatre be seen as depicting contemporary Indian realities? Subodh's point is that actually also a proscenium style theatre with its one-sided face has been explained, even with measurements, in *Natya Sastra*. Instead of adhering to the proscenium structure brought by the British, amateur or urban theatre groups willing to address one-sided audiences could use classical Indian drama as their point of reference. But *Natya Sastra* was again with the upper class. Rather than to stick to the stage designs, Subodh's question is: "how, how a theory has come up, without practice?" He is convinced that there must have been folk theatre in existence before *Natya Sastra* was ever written down. If proscenium theatre "would have been represented to a bigger mass, then also it would have a different status". At present, however, only a small minority of people knows about this kind of theatre. As part of its theatre training programmes Natya Chetana has regularly taken the participants to see theatre in the *Rabindra Mandap* to expose them also to proscenium theatre. The experience is that "they are too much surprised", being astonished just like being in a different kind of world. "If you get a slum dweller, and get them inside the auditorium of *Rabindra Mandap*, they will be just like that. So that is how *Rabindra Mandap* style, or the proscenium style, cannot, can never represent India." (Subodh, Helsinki 7.9.2005.)

Natya Chetana calls for a theatre which is for bigger masses and which can be played in many kinds of places. For Subodh this, if anything, is in line with the tradition of majority of the Indians. But "nobody is convinced, because they are already in the trap." Natya Chetana wants to be faithful to the old tradition. Therefore in its intimate theatre

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122 Here Subodh's point follows Rustom Bharucha's (1993, 196-197) critique that traditional performers when uprooted from their own context to auditoriums, be it in Delhi or abroad, can hardly represent themselves and their craft. Rather, the premise and the situation tend to present them, marking them as exotic.

plays the group is not using "any exit in the both side the wings etcetera", and when performing on a conventional proscenium stage "We do that, but we convert that to Indian stage". In Subodh's view, the idea is not at this moment go back. Rather, the group is trying to imagine areas of improvement in the existing modes of theatrical expression. Modern theatre cannot limit itself to *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Thus, when Natya Chetana uses various elements from the old forms

> the characters are improvised; it is not imitation, imitated from the old one. Sometimes we use masks. So this is also not imitation. It is improvised. (…) We want to have kind of improvement, taking the inspiration from our old style, the folk style. We don't want to stick to any one standard form. Because we have forms, which is more story telling, we have forms, which is more dance, we have forms more with the dialogue, we have forms with only songs. So, we don't want to fix ourselves into some form. (Subodh, Helsinki 7.9.2005.)

To conclude, as Natya Chetana claims to be doing "Modern Indian Theatre" (e.g. Natya Chetana 2001, 3; 2003, Preface), the label modern refers to the contemporary content and the improvised style of the plays. Getting inspiration from, and combining and reformulating old elements creatively, the group works to formulate its own suggestion for contemporary Indian issues, aesthetics, and methods of building up performances. Unlike modern theatre made for a proscenium setting, Natya Chetana's modern theatre can reach and connect to a broad array of people. Being portable, the form can be carried to people instead of expecting them to come to the theatre hall. Though different from established traditional styles, aesthetically Natya Chetana's performances strive to be familiar enough, albeit in a new way, so that most of Natya Chetana's audiences can recognise the work as "theirs", to originate from their culture. Simultaneously, resulting from the group's commitment to people's theatre, Natya Chetana's theatre contains elements that mark a clear point of departure from 'traditional' 'Indian' ingredients. Such elements include the participatory process of building up the plays and the tendency not to give happy endings. Natya Chetana does not find these borrowings problematic. On the contrary, they help to highlight the standpoints of "the people" for and of whom the plays are made.

Who are "the people"?

As discussed earlier, Natya Chetana's theatre on the whole fits well within the category of people's, popular or community theatre. Yet, despite all the talk about the people and their theatre, it has remained partly unclear to me who "the people" at the bottom

of the rhetoric really are. Are they the ones I have seen coming to performances by walking, silent women carrying their children and finding their place on the women's side of the ground for the play's time? Or the ten year old boys who have already needed to replace their fathers at the stone mines? What about the well paid engineers at the Nalco (National Aluminium Company) recreational club? Does everyone in a rural village belong to the category of "the people"? If not, who does not?

Subodh tried to clarify the issue to me by explaining that one way to look at the world is to take it like theatre, based on dramatic conflicts. There are protagonists and antagonists, people with better and worse intentions, some directly and openly, some rather unconsciously. To keep sane, one has to identify with protagonists, even if they are sometimes helping the antagonists without recognising it. Life is choosing, for instance in politics things go either this way or that way, but not every way. For Natya Chetana, "the people are those who are suffering. For any cause, any way, the suffering people." (Subodh, Helsinki 7.9.2005.)

Though defining people as the ones who suffer does not exclude members of any particular class or profession, in Natya Chetana's common talking style "the people" refers most of all to so-called ordinary, non-privileged people. Granted that there can be oppressors and oppressed in every community, it is a different thing to die because of starvation than to suffer a bad dinner whose menu and sitting are dictated by someone else. Natya Chetana's people are not rich industrialists, politicians, or moneylenders. After all, Natya Chetana's theatre is made for "the mass" and not for "the class". Moreover, as relatively speaking those who suffer tend to be economically, socially and culturally oppressed, the category of people refers also to "the oppressed". Another similar concept widely used in the context of postcolonial theory and South Asia is that of the subaltern, referring to the perspective of (colonised) persons from regions and groups outside the hegemonic power structures. Though the term subaltern is not part of Natya Chetana's vocabulary, it matches well with Natya Chetana's ideas of "the people" not only as oppressed groups, whose existence is nonetheless crucial to the better off hegemonic groups, but who are also negatively marked by their 'difference' from the imagined mainstream.

Yet, Natya Chetana's category of the people has also more nuanced qualities. For instance, an anti-people person or an oppressor is considered as someone who is no longer community oriented, but is opportunistic and feels no compassion for the plight of others. In this sense "the people" represents the realm of community, the sense of belonging to the collective. In my view, the suggestion is that such a community spirit with a living touch to traditional culture and livelihoods can be found from the countryside, if it can be found anywhere. In this sense, Natya Chetana's "people" refers clearly to the people of rural villages and on occasion to small tribal

communities. Though some of Natya Chetana's plays also examine urban stories and situations, the intention is not to support urban life. Quite the contrary, urban life is seen to be prone to cause alienation, the loss of identity and suffering, and the lifestyle and livelihoods of town dwellers as more often than not problematic. However, while nurturing the idea of a communal, traditional life, Natya Chetana is not denying present realities. For instance, the fact that in lack of other options for survival many members of a village or tribal community struggle as a migrant workers, or that rural or forest communities are not free from corruption and opportunism, are issues dealt in Natya Chetana's plays. At any rate, when village India is seen as the source of community spirit, also those embracing modern life still have their chance: They can find their own inherent villager quality. This search also applies to Natya Chetana. Looked from this angle, Natya Chetana's conviction to have its own theatre village, *Natya Gram* (see Chapter 5.7), offers the option of a villager-like lifestyle – at least the place is in the countryside – that could be realised at some point in the future. If asked, most of the Natya Chetana volunteers actually locate their home in a rural village even if they have lived in Bhubaneswar or other towns or Orissa for substantial parts of their lives. Though this can reflect an understanding of life as a Natya Chetana volunteer as temporary, also those who are city dwellers by birth know where their village is, referring to a place of ancestral family land and heritage. On occasions like this, "the village" seems to present a site of home and belonging to a certain location[123]. Consequently, as almost everybody can name a village of his or her own, almost everybody can have some kind of connection to 'roots' and a traditional way of life. The thing is to become aware of this connection, and to enliven it as a valuable cultural resource. Finally, it must be said that Natya Chetana's kind of inexactness of articulation regarding who the people are is common to community-oriented theatre approaches around the globe. One of the reasons may be that the target audiences of the work cannot easily be given a profile; they may be simply too diverse for that. Another reason may be that in striving for social change, such theatre work is programmatically utopian rather than reactionary or nostalgic, even when the grounding itself is on 'tradition' and romantic, unity-emphasising understanding of communities.

To summarise, for Natya Chetana "the people" presents roots and source of indigenous knowledge and talent. Thus, from the perspective of the group, its theatre work

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123 In my eyes, this is not a condition unique to the so-called third world. For instance, in Finland, where large scale urbanisation occurred late on a European scale (in the 1960s and 1970s), most urban people are still connected to places in countryside where their family members or ancestors have lived. The connection is kept alive by keeping the family house as a summer cottage, or constructing one nearby on inherited or purchased land.

can be seen both as a defence and a celebration of rural people and their culture in Orissa. Reciprocally, Natya Chetana's theatre has something to contribute: By sensitising, disturbing the minds of its audience, it tries to give them an impetus to analyse their lives and to understand their rights. Not in contradiction with the above, in my view, most Natya Chetana's references to "the people" are fairly populist and leftist. Populist, because who the people are remains sort of open; and left-wing, because the group is committed to highlight the perspectives of the non-privileged and suffering, the inherent demand being that their experiences have to matter in policy making. At the same time, as open and broad Natya Chetana's category of 'people' is, in India similar references seem to be the rule in a variety of attempts and intentions to talk about the poor and the vulnerable at all fronts from academic texts to political speeches (see also Zook 2001). For Natya Chetana, conceiving "the people" broadly as the non-privileged, ordinary (rural) citizens whose existence is anyhow constitutive for the country, and discussing different forms of oppression present in their lives is in unison with Natya Chetana's understanding of India and Indianness. This is what most of India is; the majority living lives at the margins, shadowed by the 'cultured', affluent and powerful. Natya Chetana wants to be a mouthpiece for this downtrodden, not so cosmopolitan India, and to prove its value and beauty. Demanding legitimacy for its view, Natya Chetana participates in the discursive fight over who can represent, and whose experiences are relevant in defining what, after all, is Indian.

Patriotism and cultural nationalism

While Natya Chetana is keen to highlight and give value to the cultural capital and know-how in villages, its understanding of the people also takes on romantic and cultural nationalist tones, not unlike in other romantic cultural nationalist ideologies. For example, according to Frank Korom (2006), in Bengal, part of which today forms the state of West Bengal (North of Orissa), the nationalist revival of Bengali folk culture was an integral part of the freedom struggle and quest for new identity. As the British used the city of Calcutta as their point of entry to the Indian subcontinent, the local intellectual elite of Calcutta had early access to education in Western terms, and soon turned into anglophiles. Later, when already partly alienated from their own heritage, the urban Bengalis participated in cultural revivalism and the mythification of India's past, as part of an attempt to re-connect the urban intellectual minority to the rural masses. From the point of freedom struggle the aspiration was to unite all Bengalis in spite of

the divisiveness of the colonial rule[124]. One of the ideas of the movement was to bring urban people closer to their cultural roots. In the ideological struggle, the concepts of folk and its lore remained vague and were used and abused for various ends, and the romantic nationalism did not always manage to cross its upper class urban environment. Rather, it imagined "what the archetypal Bengali peasant should be" constructing an urban creation of the peasant as "an unknown but hauntingly familiar other". The invention of folklore and the true peasant was influenced also by the encounters with European Orientalists and their romantic visions of India. (Korom 2006, 31-41.)

In my mind, the above depiction rings bells both in relation to Natya Chetana and my homeland Finland where certain ideas of the peasants as the folk were influential during process of building a national consciousness from mid nineteenth century onwards[125]. Though from different cultural and temporal contexts, these processes are congruent in their emphasis on the centrality of the folk and idealising the peasants and their lifestyle as the source and justification for the process of building up a national cultural identity. Perhaps claims on cultural authority and nationalism rely on similar kinds of ideas and iconography everywhere in the world, dismantling them being then the privilege of the already established (Hutcheon 2003)? Obviously, Natya Chetana is well connected to the past and present discourses concerning India's freedom struggle and cultural nationalism. Many of the team members have likely imbibed these ideas in a form or another since their childhood. Subodh, for example, was the son of a school headmistress and Chuni, the daughter of a social worker father. Accordingly, strengthened further by its concern about the state of Orissan folk arts as well as the connection with global community/popular/people's theatre movement, Natya Chetana's construc-

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124 One of the revivalists and patrons of the search for roots was Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), winner of Nobel Prize in 1913, appreciated by Natya Chetana particularly for his plays. The *Rabindra Mandap* in Bhubaneswar is named after him.

125 At the time of the "national awakening" that did not emerge itself but was introduced by a number of devoted individuals, Finland was an autonomous part of Russia and before that the eastern part of Sweden. As S. E. Wilmer (2001) writes in an article that maps out the influence of German Romanticism to theatre in Finland and Ireland, "In seeking to formulate their own notion of what tied their people together and made them unique, cultural nationalists to some extent reinvented the past". In 19th century Finland cultural nationalists (inspired by German Romanticism) investigated and exploited folklore in its various forms to the extent that, despite the fact that the cultural nationalist movement was far from united, the collection of Finnish folklore became a national movement in itself. Theatre served as one of the principal, visible forms of this "recovery" and mythification of the folk. The emphasis was on depicting idealised peasants embodying the virtuous nature and strength of the national character – not so unlike the character of a "village hero" in Indian films. As a consequence, Aleksis Kivi, who first provided a more realistic depiction of Finnish peasants in Finnish (and not in Swedish, the language of the elite), or Minna Canth, one of the first Finnish authors writing naturalistic drama about Finnish working class, were accused for disgracing the nation with their realism. (Wilmer 2001, 15-60.)

tion of "the people" is idealistically pro-peasant and pro-folk. The suggestion is that every Orissan, the elite included, should stick to their roots rather than embrace too many foreign or modern influences. Yet, while eager to propagate the value and stress the beauty of Orissan folk culture, Natya Chetana's cultural nationalism is by no means xenophobic or coloured by politicised religion. It is only expansionist, keeping up its own agenda and trying to persuade others to join side: Everyone should learn about the beauty of Orissan culture, but every other culture is not necessarily seen as interesting, unless it can offer examples of having found ways to keep the local culture and traditions alive together with, or despite, modernisation. In my view, this notion matches with Linda Hutcheon's (2003, 29) observation that "for some cultures – such as aboriginal or newly emergent ones" influences from other cultures are "seen not as positive but as threat, through assimilation, to the very continuing of a once oppressed culture"[126].

As Kershaw (1992, 5) states, and the above illustrates, in the case of Natya Chetana "theatre is not independent of its social and political environment. Performance is a cultural construct and a means of cultural production." Moreover, "All culture serves someone's interest" (Tax 1972, 15 ref. Kershaw 1992, 41). Natya Chetana works to influence its own environment. In this project it is ambitious, expansionist and populist. But "critical and historical discourses are as much a part of the grand ideological struggle of history as the practises they analyse and describe" (Kershaw 1992, 41). While working hard to formulate and realise its own visions, Natya Chetana is bound to the prevailing reality and its dominant discourses. For instance, Natya Chetana's earlier described differentiation from and against 'British theatre' is an example of this struggle at the aesthetic front. Thus, Natya Chetana's posture towards villagers, modernisation, and culture(s) reflect, among other things, the post-colonial ambiguities of contemporary India.

Why make theatre for the middle classes?

The question that has kept troubling me is why a people's theatre group should do and target theatre for a relatively well-off middle class audience, who make up just a part of the population in towns. By the same token, it has to be noted that despite targeting intimate theatre plays consciously to a middle class audience, many of Natya Chetana's intimate theatre plays, in particular when performed open-air, do collect audiences

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126 In Finland one of the sentences summarising the national awakening was "as we are not Swedish, and do not want to become Russians, let us be Finns (*ruotsalaisia emme ole, venäläisiksi emme halua tulla, olkaamme siis suomalaisia*).

from diverse backgrounds. When the show is put up in the middle of a town square, as it often is especially in smaller towns lacking a theatre auditorium, those who cannot afford tickets can follow the play standing at the sides of the ticketed area. Subodh's answer to my inquiries on what kind of awareness Natya Chetana thinks to bring to middle class audiences is that

> We are picking up stories, picking up cases or improvised stories which is relevant to the middle class people, to find themselves in a channel of exploitation. Becoming the victims of some processes which is causing a lot to other people down to them. And we believe that, many times, the revolutionary spirit is in the middle class. (Subodh, Helsinki 7.9.2005.)

Sometimes Natya Chetana has used the same play, carried out in cyco theatre style in rural areas and intimate theatre style for urban audiences, to create pressure for weighing up the issue at many fronts. In fact, doing a cyco theatre play first, and then developing an intimate theatre play on the basis of the same material, has become a common practice for the group. This allows richer utilisation of the survey material, plus the longer intimate theatre form allows incorporating and developing issues and aesthetic solutions that do not fit in to the cyco theatre format. For example, the play "Suicide for whom?" dealt with the consequences of deforestation on tribal people. In villages, for a partly tribal audience, the question posed was for whom are they cutting the trees? The play suggested that by logging they destroy their chances to maintain their traditional livelihoods, as if committing suicide for someone else's sake. In towns, the audiences were challenged to reflect their own role in the chain of events, how the flow of timber to towns ultimately deprives and even dispossesses tribal people.

In Subodh's view, the relative benefit that the middle class people have is that in addition to being less engaged in raw survival, "they are exposed to the up, exposed to the down", and have therefore a wider view on the exploitation that takes place throughout society. The aim of intimate theatre is to catalyse self-reflection among middle class audiences, so that they could recognise and admit their own part in the chains of suffering and exploitation, and maybe also to question their "received truths"[127]. In this sense, one aim of the plays is to encourage the middle class spectators towards being collectively responsible. Moreover, bothering middle class minds is important for the reason that because of their position, they have capacity to dream different dreams than slum dwellers. One of the favourite examples of Subodh is that if there is a rick-

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127 By received truths I mean locally and culturally bound ways of knowing which to me can contain caste and class. I have learned the term from Diane Mary Hosking who talks also about "received view of science" in a similar manner.

212

shaw driver, who lives in a slum and whose father was also a rickshaw driver, it is quite likely he will remain one and use his extra income to have some fun. If a middle class man ends up being a rickshaw driver and manages well, in all likelihood he will do his best to move up from a rickshaw to a minibus, and so forth.

My understanding is that one's background can limit the vision of possible options, perhaps in either direction, and that Natya Chetana's interest is to encourage middle class spectators to dream about fairer play and a better world for all, as well as to work towards realising their dreams. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2008, 26) however warns about the notion of "responsibility as the "duty of the fitter self" toward less fortunate others". She fears that such identification as the one who can right wrongs results in nothing but upper class counsellors of self-help "with great supervisory benevolence", unaware of the discontinuity between them and the objects of their supervision (an issue returned to in Chapter 8.2). Instead, Spivak pins her hopes on the prospects that gaining insights into the life of the Other can give. If only one is able to read the texts of Others (I believe seeing performances that incorporate their views do as well) suspending one's convictions of superiority as someone indispensable, the one who can right wrongs, one is already on the way of an epistemic undoing. (Ibid. 23.) In my view, this is also one of the possible routes to learn responsibility that is not self-admiring but fragile and feeling; knowing that do-gooders are not immune to self-delusion. All of this suggests that as simple as it may sound, for a better off listener, or why not actor, allowing oneself to be moved and, what more, changed by the (stories of) experiences of the underprivileged is far from a matter of course. Nonetheless, mediators willing to connect the life worlds of the underprivileged and the better off with the aim of generating more responsible and communicative politics are surely needed.

Lastly, as Natya Chetana is part of the social and political environment, I consider the middle class audiences important to Natya Chetana also for other reasons. Being a theatre group, Natya Chetana lives not from commitment alone, but longs for recognition and understanding for its work. Though "the people" and their feedback are the main criteria to estimate the group's success or failure, in the long run Natya Chetana would like to have its say on what kind of theatre is done and appreciated in Orissan artistic, middle and upper class theatre circles, and to be appreciated for the work it has done. Among other things, this is important for Natya Chetana's programmatic people's theatre agenda. As a missionary for people's theatre as well as talents and aesthetics of "the people" of Orissa, Natya Chetana would like locally influential middle classes to approve of its stands. For Natya Chetana an important step towards local middle class appreciation has been the tours and trips the group has done abroad, in particular to Europe. Touring abroad has contributed positively to the group's status in the local circles of artistic theatre, proving that in all its rusticity and emphasis on people's agendas Natya

Chetana's theatre is refined enough to be appreciated by European audiences, and raise their curiosity. By the same token, travelling has served Natya Chetana by making the group known and real to its actual or possible financiers, and has given opportunities to meet friends and get mental support and recognition for the work. But, as anyone engaged in global, travel-requiring networking knows, what touring gives, it also takes. For Natya Chetana, tours abroad are time consuming and demand a lot of preparation, and that time is away from the work in Orissa. Concurrently, Natya Chetana has nonetheless been active, as well as successful, in initiating state-level discussion concerning theatre and its role and tasks. Nowadays, its concept of people's theatre, *loko natya*, is widely known among Orissan theatre circles, and strongly attached to Natya Chetana's name.

Social work reputation as a burden

Despite Natya Chetana's sincere efforts to uplift the value of the people and its own creative work at the grassroots, its approach has been time to time used as a demerit:

> Natya Chetana (NC) has been many a time only interpreted as a 'social work organization' because we did not limit ourselves to a proscenium stage. The 'process of developing' theatre was very important to us. Again some theatre groups criticised us as 'a message passing, propagandistic, street theatre group' as our priority was to address the village audiences who are our target mass. (…) But NC never dumped messages for propaganda. We were also motivated to do theatre for the 'mass' not for a 'class'. The available scope with the voluntary organizations and the financial supports from human rights groups were the enforcing factors to be a part of the larger social movements for a change in the society. (Natya Chetana 2003, From the Director's Pen.)

Though the content of the accusations targeted at Natya Chetana are seldom singled out in detail, the inherent claim is that theatre that can be performed wherever to whoever lacks artistic value. Such stands may still today imply the idea that quality (classical or high) art needs an educated audience to appreciate its aesthetics, which should not open up too easily to common folks. Moreover, as a reference to the caste system and poverty, the assumed dirtiness of street theatre may carry along persistent ideas of the impurity of the street as well as some of its users. Not unlike what social workers all over the world are accustomed to facing, such opinions may imply that Natya Chetana's theatre is too closely connected with people whose lives and art are not seen valuable, at least in the sense of being significant and providing meaning and a desired kind of identification in the contemporary world.

Such labelling addresses the issue that alongside theatrical qualifiers, the social aspects are a defining aspect of Natya Chetana's work: the work is guided by social work ideology. Both belonging to the team, the method of carrying the work, the issues discussed and finally the stands taken mark the work as social work, as does the commitment to the suffering and the oppressed. Indeed, these commitments as well as their practical realisations in aesthetics or choice of performance places make it possible to label Natya Chetana's work as 'mere' street theatre. Accordingly, for an ambitious theatre group like Natya Chetana the pro-people and social work reputation is not only an advantage, even if proudly and determinately carried. Walking a tightrope between different realms, "the people" and the artistic elite, populism and radicalism, incorporation and resistance, or art and social work, is neither easy nor unproblematic[128]. As often in the case of socially committed art, Natya Chetana's theatre is 'too much social work' to be truly appreciated within the genre of artistic theatre, but also 'too much theatre' to be always regarded as social work proper.

The possibility of being at the same time as both too much and too little social work or art is one way to specify Natya Chetana's position in between, or at one of the possible intersections of the fields of art and social work. At the same time, Natya Chetana's position illustrates the proportionality of definitions and disciplines, and how truly interdisciplinary or cross-sectional endeavours often both gain and suffer from their multiple footings. While sometimes celebrated, sometimes cursed, for Natya Chetana the position is nonetheless important, providing substance and significance for its work.

Achievements

What kind of consequences do Natya Chetana's performances then generate in the communities at the practical level? Within the Natya Chetana team the belief in theatre as an agent of change is strong. Nonetheless, in estimating its influence, the group is pretty down to earth. In his writing depicting the group's theatre style, Subodh points out that theatre is not a magic wand. While only a few plays have a clearly visible impact, Natya Chetana believes that its theatre nevertheless has an invisible impact on the psychology of the audiences. Sometimes a play makes somebody think of a specific issue

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128 In Finnish discussions, one of the questions posed regarding the multiple loyalties of community art is to whom is the artist primarily loyal. In other words, in situations in which one cannot get everything, which weighs most – artistic success, the social and political aims of the work, or involving the community. As Suvi Aarnio writes (2007, 258), ethically the worst scenario is that the ambitions of either the artists of the art institutions involved make the communities visible only as mere curiosities.

for the first time, but not to act upon it. Sometimes a group of people becomes inspired to get united for action, but the process of uniting may become so tedious that the impetus is gone before ever getting into action. Sometimes people react to a show with a decisive action plan, which still can fail. (Pattanaik 2000, 88-89.)

On the other hand, though the impact of theatre is purely psychological, a change in the minds of the people has brought also concrete results. According to the group's own evaluation, already the first play, *Bana Manisha*, performed in Bhubaneswar in 1986 to heterogeneous audiences who had moved to the area from different parts of Orissa, helped the people in the audiences to come together and first time to dig a drain for the area. Though the actual play did not discuss the issues of sanitation and hygiene at all, its point on the importance of unity and the problems following from lacking it worked as a catalyst for people's own analysis and initiative. The next year, in 1987, Natya Chetana's play against drugs, *Nisa Kare Nasa,* caught the attention of a local drug smuggler in Puri to the extent that the police was able to arrest him when he was watching the show. In 1988, theatre action (*Dukhiaria Dukha Katha*) against the exploitation practiced by local bank officers in one remote village was followed by a high desk transfer order, which forced the officers in question to give up their posts within 24 hours. Later, Natya Chetana's performances have played a role in slum dwellers managing to pressure the government to provide them with functioning, high standard sources of water; tribal people from the Mayrabahanj district establishing a cooperative society for marketing forest products to earn a better income; tribal people obstructing illegal logging in the forest they live, and so forth. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 7-8.)

Other kinds of reactions to the group's plays can also be taken as achievements. In 1993, the Natya Chetana team was severely beaten by influential villagers because of their play (*Chaita Charita*) against industrial pollution. The incident, in which "the lower class people protected the team", took place in an area dependent on an aluminium factory as the main source of employment, and was followed by local debate about the benefits and losses the factory caused to the villagers. Natya Chetana has gradually been acknowledged in artistic circles. In 1993, the play *Kaatha* (Wood) that dealt with issues of migration "touched the heart of both the common mass and the artistic theatre doers. The play got also sponsorship to take it to those remote areas from where the migration occurs." In Natya Chetana's experience, until then the local art theatre sphere had taken them "as a non-theatre group" and the group had had kind of outcaste position in relation to the mainstream modern artistic theatre done in the state. The group's position as an artistic theatre group was further established when the group received its first invitation to take part in a national theatre festival organised by the Central Academy of Theatre and Music. Later in the 1990s, Natya Chetana made a play, *Pachis Bhoota*, on the minimum wage with the consequence that

once the tribal audience learned about the minimum wage, they refused to cooperate with the local constriction contractors until they had bargained a better salary for themselves. Natya Chetana also supported a movement for local governance through the *panchayati raj*[129] system. The play *Tangia Chap* (The symbol is the axe) provoked audiences not to increase the corruption of parties by selling their votes but to vote sincerely for a good candidate. As Natya Chetana reports: "There was a great success when many of the villages came up with consensus candidates by judging their background and not by their parties. There was no election required in those 60% villages in that district." Interestingly, from the perspective of Natya Chetana, agreeing on the candidates without voting was triumph of democracy. In 1997-1998, Natya Chetana participated with the play *Biza Bazar* in the movement against alcohol, and with *Kala Pani* against mining. According to the group, the plays helped to form women's forums to protest the marketing of alcohol in the Keonharj district and demanding for proper rehabilitation and compensations for those who suffer from mining. (Natya Chetana 2000c, 9-10.) Likewise, Natya Chetana has been involved in a number of political struggles also during the 2000s.

Authenticating conventions and facilitating crisis in the audience

According to Kershaw (1992, 21), "to have any hope in changing its audience a performance must somehow connect with that audience's ideology or ideologies". In his view, the connection happens through authenticating conventions that facilitate identification with the community. At the simplest level, the authenticating conventions mean that the theatre makers model the social conventions of the community they work with. At the level of a single performance the claim is that the theatrical signs describe the "real" world outside the play. The authenticating conventions have worked successfully when the audience can decode the play's significance to their lives. (Ibid.) In Natya Chetana's case, the authenticating element is essential and constructs to great extent the credibility of the group. This credibility has a polymorphous nature. Several aspects in the group's people's theatre method, such as the survey and the participation of local volunteers in cyco theatre processes, verify the authenticity of the plays both for the audience and the group itself. When performing to middle class audiences, the claim is the same: Natya Chetana's is thoroughly familiar with the issues and the aesthetics

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129 The South Asian political system (literally governance by an assembly of five respected persons chosen by the village community), traditionally settled disputes between individuals and villages. In modern India, the village level *gram panchayats* function as the basic units of local administration.

of "the people" to whom the audience is supposed to identify or to feel sympathy for. Such credibility sets demands to the group also outside the actual performing work. As returned to in Chapter Eight, the lifestyle of the group has to be in line with the ethos of its plays, as is touring by cycling or not taking tea.

However, sheer authenticating is not enough. To be truly effective, the performances must "facilitate crisis" in the audience: In addition to being believable, the performances need to create also discomfort, disturb the ideology of community. In Kershaw's words, the art is how to do this "in ways that do not cause a riot/inseparable schism". (Kershaw 1992, 27-32.) Though Natya Chetana is not talking about facilitating crisis per se, there is something similar, in a moderate form, in the group's aim to disturb "the psychological status of the viewers" (e.g. Natya Chetana 2001 a, 5). Natya Chetana is strict in its insistence that the primary aim of its performances is not entertainment, passing information or advising solutions. Rather, the audiences should get "mentally disturbed, start talking about it and in best cases take united actions to search solutions by themselves" (Natya Chetana 2004, 7). By abstaining from happy ends the group tries to cause emotional discomfort, perhaps similar to what Finnish director and dramatist Kaisa Korhonen calls vacuum (*alipaine*). The performance is successful when the spectators leave the place troubled but with a personal urge to think about and search for solutions. For a message take root, this strategy, persuading people to think for themselves, is known to be far more successful than direct propaganda.

Natya Chetana's strategy to facilitate crisis or discomfort seems relatively moderate and bearable, which may be wise for several reasons. First of all, Subodh is strictly of the opinion that the intelligence of the audiences should not be underestimated, people can think for themselves. If one really wants to be intimate with the audience, one is to be careful not to show up directions, dictates or demands at the audiences (e.g. Natya Chetana 2003, 12). In other words, socially committed theatre has to practise its persuasion with full respect towards the audience members, leaving them the option for interpretation and thinking. Furthermore, the performers have to be alert and sensitive to the possible after-effects of their performance. As a group, the aim is to be able to continue the work; whereas the wish for the audience is that they will get together and find a constructive way to deal with their problems. Raising aggression or violence would threaten both ends. This is a real and delicate challenge.

In practice, community theatre's attempt of ensuring the identification of the community can also cause conflicts among the spectators. In communities of location subgroups may have conflicting interests, with the consequence that identification with the needs and desires of some section of the community can work against efforts to achieve identification with the whole community. As Kershaw states, at its root the identification sought between the theatre group and the community is an ideological one, an ac-

knowledged recognition that certain values can be shared by both groupings. (Kershaw 1992, 31-35.) Kershaw further writes that in drama and theatre it is common to nurture an idea of community as a process of ideological meaning making. As a practice, theatre inherently assumes a possibility of collective response. However, though community theatre aims to empower people through encouraging them to regenerate the spirit of their community, the practitioners are "notably silent about what such empowerment might be *for* in practice, or what kind of community the new inter-relatedness might produce". (Ibid. 60.) Natya Chetana is clear about its own role: The group functions first and foremost as a catalyst. The rest of the process is left to be supported by the local collaborators, who are present on the spot on daily basis.

The capacity that performances sometimes have to discuss complex and charged issues in a manner and in a framework that first of all manages to bring all the parties together and secondly remains bearable to all of participants, was one of the reasons why I got interested in doing this study. I wanted to figure out whether and how theatre can be an arena to promote social change and civic discussion in a way that remains somewhat acceptable to those in power; be it at local or state level. One answer to my questions might arise from the common understanding of theatre as *not* reality[130]. Because of it, as a *context* of dealing with delicate issues performance can bring a bit of laxity into otherwise tensed compositions of roles and issues, helping to be with others and their possibly contradictory and divergent interests. Further, the alienating dimension of theatre may allow new ideas or angles to the situation and the actors involved. In other words, sometimes theatre has the capacity to challenge and disturb, but also to provide space for being together despite differences, perhaps even for rethinking and negotiation. The depth and importance of these impacts is up to the dynamics of each situation and the people involved, but there are moments in which this kind of enabling option of performance can be felt.

While there are a number of socially motivated and artistically ambitious theatre groups in India, there are a few things in Natya Chetana particularly worth noticing. First of all, the fact that the group has survived already for a quarter of the century tells about its persistence and ability to both adopt new things as well as cherish and cultivate the group spirit. In my view, one of the secrets is that the group has been able to

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130 Natya Chetana's idea is that theatre is not reality, and therefore there is no need for complete realism. As Subodh (Helsinki, 7.9.2005) explains: "Theatre is always different than life and rather little larger than life. So what we do, we give symbolic enlargements in different plays, in different stories in different way. We enlarge very very small micro things even larger. (…) In a recent play, we have this villain, a multinational, the company from abroad. So what we did, we put them [actors] tied into one, like one person. And they were putting their legs just like demon, both legs in same time. It was a rigorous practice to move like that (…). So we, we always think that people can immediately relate bad characters, the anti-characters with demon."

encapsulate its principles and ideology in a way that makes sense both for the group members and outsiders, and that makes committing oneself to the group in a deep level possible. An equally important and distinguishing factor as such is the fact that major part of its existence the group has been to live and work in a highly collective manner, and concentrate full time on theatre and related activities. Theatre in India is a competitive field and funds, or patronage, for the work are hard to find. Importantly, despite struggling financially and having at times difficulties to obtain funding based on artistic criteria, a significant part of Natya Chetana's work has been facilitated by the development cooperation framed (social) funding, that the group has despite certain and severe interruptions managed to attain relatively continuously. On part, this has been possible because of Natya Chetana's extensive networks, though much of the intense national, regional and global networking has taken place for artistic and ideological reasons.

Natya Chetana identifies itself as a missionary of a particular kind of theatre, and is happy to utilise different kind of opportunities to spread its message. Interestingly, Natya Chetana's mode of performing seems to open up to a variety of audiences. The group is also interested in dialogue and collaboration, for example, in the form of joint productions. In Orissa, Natya Chetana's work is particularly marked by the fact that the group does tour in rural areas performing to local villagers of any caste and creed. Same time, the fact that the group has toured extensively abroad has been significant to the group in the form of experience and exposure to different kinds of theatrical contexts and traditions. Without compromising its proudly Orissan identity, contacts and tours abroad have anchored Natya Chetana well with the international or global alternative/community theatre movement. Indeed, it is through this connection that I found my way to Natya Chetana. On the other hand, it is also partly the reason why I was not able to hide Natya Chetana's identity in this study, the group is just too networked and unique for that. Finally, what distinguishes Natya Chetana is that it has succeeded in establishing itself a niche in both the arts and social work context.

CHAPTER 7
NATYA CHETANA'S PLAYS

In this chapter, I approach Natya Chetana's work through the group's plays, aiming to concretise Natya Chetana's theatre and related work. My focus is on the themes and contents of the plays, as well as of the processes the plays were part of, which gives a scope to consider the issues at the heart of Natya Chetana's area of operation.

The chapter starts with a summary of Natya Chetana's plays and their main themes, after which I take two plays, *Boli* and *Sapanara Sapana*, and the events around them, into closer consideration. In the case of *Boli*, my aim is to provide a detailed, relatively experiential account of the process of making the play and the issues the play addressed. In so doing, my idea is that a detailed look at one play helps to communicate both the material and practical realities of the theatre making, as well as the nature of the group process which is significant from a social work perspective.

Within the limits of the uniqueness of each production, *Boli* was a routine intimate theatre production for Natya Chetana. So was, at the start, the cyco theatre play *Sapanara Sapana*. It dealt with increased deforestation of coastal mangrove forests, and consequentl vulnerability that the loss of protective forest cover against powerful tropical cyclones at the coast causes for the inhabitants of coastal low lands. Soon after Natya Chetana's performance tour a super-cyclone hit the area, making the play's content all too pertinent. Feeling deeply involved, Natya Chetana transformed its concern into active participation in the post-cyclone relief and rehabilitation efforts. Besides discussing a specific, crucial moment for the group and the people affected by the catastrophe, returning to the experience here also highlights the more general question about the relationship between social work and the natural environment.

7.1 THEMATIC OVERVIEW OF THE PLAYS

Every Natya Chetana play that I have seen deals in a way or another with the kind of oppression and exploitation that the poor, vulnerable, or for other reasons margin-

al, groups and individuals face. Another name for this broad, cross cutting theme is structural violence and social injustice. Prime examples of this are the intimate theatre plays *Kaatha* (The Wood; performed in 1992-1993, 1995, 1998, 2000-2003), and *Maati* (Mother Earth, performed in 2008). Though violence and injustice are directly or indirectly present in every Natya Chetana play, at the same time the stories are interlaced with a number of other themes and issues. Therefore, holding structural violence as a theme that permeates each play, I have categorised Natya Chetana's intimate (IT) and cyco theatre (CT) plays (1986 – early 2009) under 10 thematic sub-themes in the following. The themes are unity and solidarity (approached in some plays through their negation), cultural alienation, gender inequality (the oppression of women, corruption, political satire (as some plays are essentially that), environment, health, right to food, right to work and right to education (particularly, literacy). As I have seen only part of the plays in person, identifying the central theme of each play is based on Subodh's estimate. One play, *Kaatha*, which deals with structural violence and displacement, was difficult to fit in the following categorisation. In the end, I decided to list it under the theme of (lack) of unity and solidarity.

TABLE 2. Nayta Chetana's intimate and cyco theatre plays according to their central theme.

	THEME	PLAYS
1.	**UNITY AND SOLIDARITY**	- **Banamanisha** (The Wildmen) **1986- CT** - **Ho Patara Bala** (Leaf Plate Makers) **1991 CT** - **Bana** (The Forest) **2009 IT** - **Kaatha** (The Wood) **1992-1993, 1995, 1998, 2000-2003 IT** (the main theme of the play is forced displacement)
2.	**CULTURE, CULTURAL ALIENATION**	- **Kuhudi** (Fog) **1991 IT** - **Kharabela** (King Kharabela) **1993 IT** - **Akasha Kainan** (The Flower of the Sky) **2001 CT** - **Bhoota** (The Ghost) **2003 IT** - **Maya Jala** (Illusory Net) **2004 CT** - **Babu** (Sir) **2004 IT**
3.	**GENDER INEQUALITY**	- **Saree** (1990) (Sari) **CT** - **Jhia Hoichi** (A Girl Child is Born) **1992 CT** - **Kanakalata** (Kanakalata, a woman's name) **1992 IT** - **Duhita** (Daughter) **1993 CT** - **Banchiba Pain** (For the Sake of Living) **1995 IT** - **Geeta** (The Song) **2000, 2003 IT** - **Sita Asita** (Sita and Her Opposite) **2002 CT** - **Reboti** (Reboti; name of a village girl) **2005 IT**

	THEME	PLAYS
4.	**CORRUPTION**	- Dukhiara Dukha Katha (The Sad Story of Dukhia) 1988 CT - Pani Chanda (Collection for Water) 1989 CT - Bancha Aau Banchao (Live and Let Others Live) 1989 CT - Bihanga Biblaba (Revolution of the Birds) 1990 CT - Bilei Bekare Ghanti (Bell the Cat) 1991 IT - Sua Munhara Patara (A Leaf on the Stream) 1991 IT - Aau Thare Swadhinata (Freedom Again) 1995-1996 CT - Boli (The Sacrifice) 2001 IT - Biblobi Bihanga (Revolutionary Birds) 2002 IT
5.	**POLITICAL SATIRE**	- Telia Mundare Tela (Oil on Oily Head) 1990 CT - Bilei Bekare Ghanti (Bell the Cat) 1990 CT - Swasa (Asthma / Struggle for Independence) 1990 CT - Aabu (The Lump) 1996, 1999 IT - Pataka Uttolana (Flag Hosting) 1998 IT (to generate patriotism)
6.	**ENVIRONMENT**	- Gachha Lagao (Plant the Trees) 1987 CT - Pani Pani Pani (Water) 1988 CT - Phula Kahe Katha (Flower Can Talk) 1989 CT - Matira Manisha (People of the Earth) 1990 IT - Jangala re Chahala (Havoc in the Forest) 1991 CT - Kaha Pain Semananka Attmahatya (Suicide for Whom) 1992 CT - Kaha Pain Semananka (Suicide for Whom?) 1992 IT - Chaita Charita (The Story of Chaita) 1993 CT - Srusti ra Swara (The Voice of the Nature) 1994 CT - Tangia Chhap (The Symbol is the Axe) 1996-1998 CT - Kala Pani (Black Water) 1998, 2004 CT - Sapanara Sapana (Sapan's Dream) 1999-2000 CT - Akasha Kainan (The Flower of the Sky) 2001 CT - Batarkiri (a name of a particular short-lived insect) 2005 CT - Dhola Suna (White Gold) 2006 CT - Jangalajonta (The Forest Trap) 2008 CT - Dhuan (The Smoke) 2005 IT - Maati (Mother Earth) 2008 IT - Bana (The Forest) 2009 IT

	THEME	PLAYS
7.	**HEALTH**	- Nisa Kare Nasa (Addiction Kills) 1987 CT (a play against tobacco) - Aahh (Aahh! The Pain!!) 1988, 1992 CT - Aakhi (The Eyes) 1989 CT - Dhakaa (Accident) 1989 CT - Aama Gaon (Our Village) 1990 CT - Chhotia Nisa (Small Addiction) 1990, 1992 CT - Prayaschita (Self-Punishment) 1991 IT - Mantra Rahasya (Inside Story of Mantra) 1994 CT - Bisa Bazar (The Poison Market) 1997-1998 CT - Tote Jhure Mun Rati Dina (Missing You Day and Night) 2004 IT (a play against tobacco)
8.	**RIGHT TO FOOD**	- Banchiba Pain (For the Sake of Living) 1995 IT - Bhoka (Hunger) 1998 IT
9.	**RIGHT TO WORK**	- Bancha Aau Banchao (Live and Let Others Live) 1989 CT - Pachisi Bhuta (Ghost) 1994-1995 CT - Mun Baha Hebi (I will Marry) 1997 CT (a play against economic exploitation and joblessness of tribal people)
10.	**RIGHT TO EDUCATION**	- Khadi Gala Gadi Gadi (The Chock is Rolling) 1988 CT - Tipa Chinta (Fingerprint) 1990 CT - Kholidia Andha Pati (Open Your Blindfold) 1994 CT - Reboti (Reboti; name of a village girl) 2005 IT

These sub-themes can be further divided into two broad categories, namely living together as a community, for which issues of social justice are central (themes 1-5), and basic needs (themes 6-10), crucial for survival. While one of the above themes and structural violence usually form the thematic core of the play, at the level of sub-themes and plots the plays may also discuss or hint towards issues listed under some of the other categories. Tellingly, the largest number of Natya Chetana plays address either corruption or the environment or both. The reason why the environment is such a central theme is that it connects directly with the livelihoods and therefore the survival of the rural poor, who depend on the natural environment. For them the conditions for fishing or farming, or for that matter access to water or forest, can be issues of life or death. These kinds of issues are particularly burning in Orissa, where rural people make up 85 % of the population and abject poverty is common.

Related to the above, basic needs are traditionally considered to be food, water, shelter and clothing. Most modern lists contain also sanitation, primary education and health care. Within development discourse, the basic needs approach has underlined that governments have to make conscious efforts to ensure that basic needs of their populations are being met regardless of the development strategy undertaken. In practice, the basic needs approach has often entailed government subsidies, particularly for food[131]. However, both governments as well as development aid donors have often found large infrastructure projects, such as building big urban hospitals, more attractive than catering to the health care and other needs of rural populations. (Healy 2008, 56.) The reasons behind this tendency are political: compared to big urban centres, the rural populations are often weighed as politically less influential and thus less important for those in power. Moreover, the structural adjustment programs in 1980s and 1990s did cut back existing successful basic needs approaches. In short, rather than straightforward welfare goals to be met with right kind of interventions, the reality surrounding basic needs is complex and deeply embedded with political and economic patterns.

One of the basic needs that Natya Chetana constantly address either as a sub theme, or so far twice as the main theme, is the basic need for adequate food (acknowledged also as a human right). Hunger, or malnutrition, is a clear-cut case of a need not being met, and an indicator of chronic (as opposed to transient) poverty (e.g. Samal 2007, 1). George Kent (2005) explains that malnutrition is usually caused by immediate, underlying and

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131 In India, the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS, earlier only PDS) is considered the most far reaching of all the safety net operations in terms of coverage as well as public expenditure on the subsidy. It provides rationed amounts of rice, wheat, sugar, edible oils, and some non-food products such as kerosene and coal at below market prices through a network of fair price shops disseminated over the country. (E.g. Tritah 2003, 2). While the system has helped millions to survive, and though so far there is no guarantee of a better functioning alternative system, the PDS has also been heavily criticised. Its main failures include the difficulty of identifying the poor (including people that should be excluded and excluding ones that should be included), widespread corruption and massive looting of the grain meant for the poor and occasionally arbitrary conditions for receiving the rations set by some shop holders. (E.g. Tritah 2003; Pandey 2009.)

basic causes, which impinge on and reinforce each other[132]. The availability of food in a particular place does not yet mean that the poor in that place would have enough money to purchase it, or access to decent productive work to earn that money. (Ibid. 9-12). Thus, while India is now considered to produce enough to feed its entire people, and occasional outbursts of hunger are attributed to short-term natural catastrophes such as droughts or cyclones, chronic malnutrition is widespread (ibid. 143). In fact, India is estimated to have more undernourished people than any other country in the world, and more than the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa taken together (e.g. Food and Agriculture Organization 2003, 7). Chronic malnutrition is reported to have become worse since early 1990s: on average, at the beginning of the millennium a poor person ate over 20 kilos less grain per year than a decade earlier (e.g. Gosh 2004, 291[133]). Kent's conclusion is that "India could feed all of its people, but it does not. The chronic conditions – the conditions that are normal – for so many millions of people in India are unacceptable in terms of the basic requirements for human dignity." (Kent 2005, 143.) In Samal's view (2007, 4), the two major explanations why India's anti-poverty programmes have not helped the poor lay in their bad implementation, and the absence of structural change in the society. Hunger, poverty, and human dignity were at stake also in the two plays discussed next.

7.2   THE INTIMATE THEATRE PLAY BOLI (THE SACRIFICE)

The process

When I joined Natya Chetana in September 2001, the group was gearing up for a new play, the making of which was the concluding step in Natya Chetana's cooperation project with Norad, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. I was per-

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132   While the immediate cause of hunger is usually improper dietary intake and/or disease, the underlying cause is commonly food insecurity (having to do for instance with lack or unequal distribution of food at household level, but also inadequate access to basic health care services, women's heavy work loads, poor water supply and so forth). Finally, the basic causes of malnutrition are societal, the main reason being the marginalisation of the poor. Basic causes may contain problems relating to human resources (such as inadequate knowledge, skills or time), economic resources (inadequate assets in terms of income, land etc.), and organisational resources (e.g. inadequate schools, health care programs, water supply systems). Combating malnutrition requires understanding about the societal reasons that cause it; focusing merely on ratios of food obscures more than solves. To summarise, hunger is less about inadequate productivity or excessive population growth than failures in entitlements to adequate amount of food. (Kent 2005, 9-12.)

133   Jayati Gosh reports that per capita food grain consumption declined from 476 grams per day in 1990 to only 418 grams per day in 2001. National sample survey data also suggests that at roughly the same time per capita aggregate caloric consumption also declined. (Gosh 2004, 291.)

sonally involved in the play process from beginning to end, with the exception of a two-week period during rehearsals due to a previously arranged conference trip.

As Natya Chetana prefers to engage interested newcomers, and not only those already experienced in theatre, the first mission was to recruit the crew for the play. Natya Chetana cast around for 18-35 year old volunteers capable of committing themselves for two months by putting posters up around Bhubaneswar and placing advertisements in local newspapers. Respondents were asked to come for an interview to the group's office. On the day of the interviews, the arrangements at Natya Chetana's office were massive. At the opposite side of a narrow dirt road were two tents for registration and waiting. The tents had a microphone connection with the office, and a hired security guard accentuated the formal air of the event. The interviewees were faced by a "jury" consisting of Subodh, two senior actors, Kunia and Nira Bhai, and me. I had no role to play in selecting people, but my white, mini-disc and camera equipped appearance added to the gravity of the situation.

After more than 30 aspirants, all male, of various backgrounds, age and ambitions had been seen in person, they were asked to do some exercises in groups. On the basis of their theatrical and group work skills, a dozen were selected. The next day, however, only seven returned. Others may have had second thoughts or had not been able to settle matters with their families or educational institutes. As the group was now smaller

ILLUSTRATION 10. The jury: Kunia, Subodh and Nira Bhai.

than intended, the decision was that Natya Chetana full-timers would compensate as much as their schedules would allow. Of them some, like Santosh, were to have also training responsibilities, with majority of the training falling to Subodh.

The training was held in *Natya Gram*. A few days after the start, three young women joined the team. They had been recruited through Natya Chetana's connections to local theatre groups and other institutions, and were assured to be safe with Natya Chetana. Accompanied by Natya Chetana's actress Chuni, they were accommodated in a small room with a proper bathroom. The male volunteers relied on more simple facilities, washing up by the well and living with some Natya Chetana full-timers in one big room, in which their mattresses and mosquito nets were lined up in two rows, leaving a narrow alley in the middle. The remainder, including myself, slept in the oldest, small, thatched roof -building of *Natya Gram*. Natya Chetana's cook Dhira Bhai prepared food three times a day, and the campers did their own part by serving the food and cultivating *bindi* (a vegetable also called lady's finger) for the kitchen. All in all, the period of rehearsing *Boli* was living as a close-knit theatre camp in the countryside. During it the entire team visited Bhubaneswar only once, to attend to the preparations and the celebration of the foundation day of Natya Chetana on the 10th of November.

ILLUSTRATION 11. Subodh showering boys at the well.

ILLUSTRATION 12. Theatre game going on at the camp.

The days began in the early morning at the *Natya Gram* camp with a Morning Prayer. Thereafter we had theatre games, yoga or dance class or a play rehearsal until bathing time before breakfast, which was between nine and ten. Then the day continued with rehearsals and classes, split by lunch in the afternoon. The evening meal took place at 10 pm or later. Finally, we slept. To my surprise, the camp started largely as an educational gathering with no pressure to join the actual play making despite the awareness of the tight schedule. The first days consisted of exercises, lessons and discussions on topics such as "What is Theatre". One of the exercises, coined by Subodh, followed two fictional characters, a landlord 'Gobardhan' and a schoolteacher 'Bharat'. It lasted eventually several days, making the campers to think and discuss about culture, power relations, desirable and justifiable cultural actions, as well as their own relationship to popular culture and what kind of theatre they would like to see and do. I felt as if I had been in the middle of an Orissan version of 'The Dead Poets Society'[134], because everyone was so ambitious and enthusiastic.

Despite the peaceful start, during my two-week absence the developments at the camp were remarkable. Everyone had written a script for a play. One of them, that

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134 A 1989 film directed by Peter Weir, *The Dead Poets Society* was the story of an English teacher who inspires his students to change through his teaching of poetry and literature.

turned out to be Subodh's script, was chosen by ballot to be developed further, and so there was now a play with a name and shape, and rehearsals going full tilt. Trinath, a ten to eleven year old boy from the neighbouring village, had been added to the team as the child actor of the play. Alongside the rehearsals the classes also continued, in particular dance and music, and a mid-term examination, which drew on the theatre lessons, was held. On the first of November all of the participants made their suggestions for casting, and the cast was decided according to the results compiled. Everybody got a role, some received several.

A week later, less than two weeks before the opening performance, the play was still messy, the dance parts and a number of scenes had a lot to improve. My field notes describe Subodh's feedback to the team: "Only ten people have learnt their dialogues by heart, others just by brain". Pratima, who plays the leading female role, "has to learn to cry in different ways according to the situation". And "few are conscious of the space; most remain unconscious of the height of different spaces". Subodh ordered all the actors into an exercise of silence so that they could better internalise their movements. They were allowed to communicate only by gestures and sounds, but not through speech. The responsibilities were distributed regarding the coming tour: stage manager Badri, light manager Panchanan assisted by Debi, music manager Prasant assisted by Sibo, time manager Pratima, team manager Sanjaya, trouble shooters Trinath and Ohlia, rehearsal place neat and clean Ramjan and Mongu, and so on. (Notes 7.11.2001)

The camp and rehearsals proceeded. We planned the schedule of the tour: the première November 17th in *Natya Gram* for the local villagers, then Konark, Berhampur, Damanjodi, Bolangir, Belpahad, Angul, Talcher, Baribada, Bhubaneswar, Jatani and again Bhubaneswar. With two nights to the première all of the men, and I, got a hair cut by a village barber. The dolls signifying babies in the play were ready, and costume-making was proceeding. Subodh conducted a "fast forward" rehearsal to help the actors in self-examination. "If there is any uncertainty about the role, locations, movements, replicas, or if one is not serious about it, he or she is sure to make mistakes." There were still a number of worries: The actors had not quite caught the dialect of the characters they were performing. Nibaran forgot the age of the character he performed when he had to get agitated on the stage, and the contractor who was a millionaire walked like servant. And the dance parts needed improvement. At night, a number of invited critics came for "a critic show to give feedback on the play. They put their hearts into the work. The harshest criticism was that the play was anti-people. *Adivasis* are not that submissive, it was argued. Moreover, they held the play to be overly moralistic, which is not typical for Natya Chetana. The suggestion was that the end of the play should be changed. Accordingly, after the show Subodh rewrote the script, and the première was moved back a day later than initially it was planned. There were also slight changes in the tour programme.
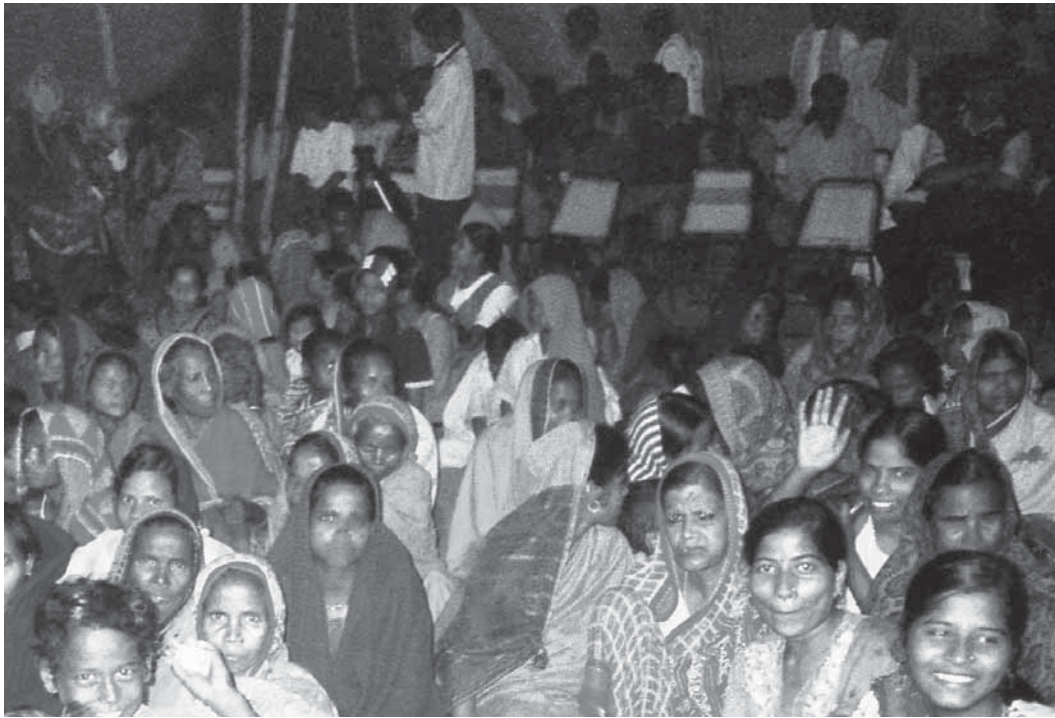
ILLUSTRATION 13. Premiere audience, women's side.

The morning after the successful première we were all ready at 5.20 am at the rehearsal shed with our things packed. The man in charge of light and sound, and Natya Chetana full-timers and other volunteers were added to the team to help with specified tasks on the tour. The plan was to reach Berhampur, a town in Southern Orissa at around 9.30 am. After the Morning Prayer and last-minute discussion on the overall planning, discipline and the management of the tour, everyone got a t-shirt emblazoned with the play's symbol, a picture of a boy whose head is cut off from his body. Then we loaded ourselves into the bus and left *Natya Gram* in a hilarious and excited mood. At the destination in a somewhat neglected theatre hall with water on the floor in front of the stage, and plenty of dust and mosquitoes in the air, constructing the stage took time but everything went well. It became clear that the performing is just one small part of tour work. For hours and hours every day, our task was to unload, carry, construct, reconstruct, carry, and reload again.

Gradually, after a few (at least for me personally) taxing days, we grew accustomed to tour life and its daily routine: Arrival at the place of the night's performance in the morning, constructing the stage and setting up the poster exhibition giving additional information on the play during the day, a nap and a wash if we were lucky, the performance, unloading the stage, food, and off we went for another night on bumpy roads, to arrive at the next place in time.

ILLUSTRATION 14. Loading in Berhampur.
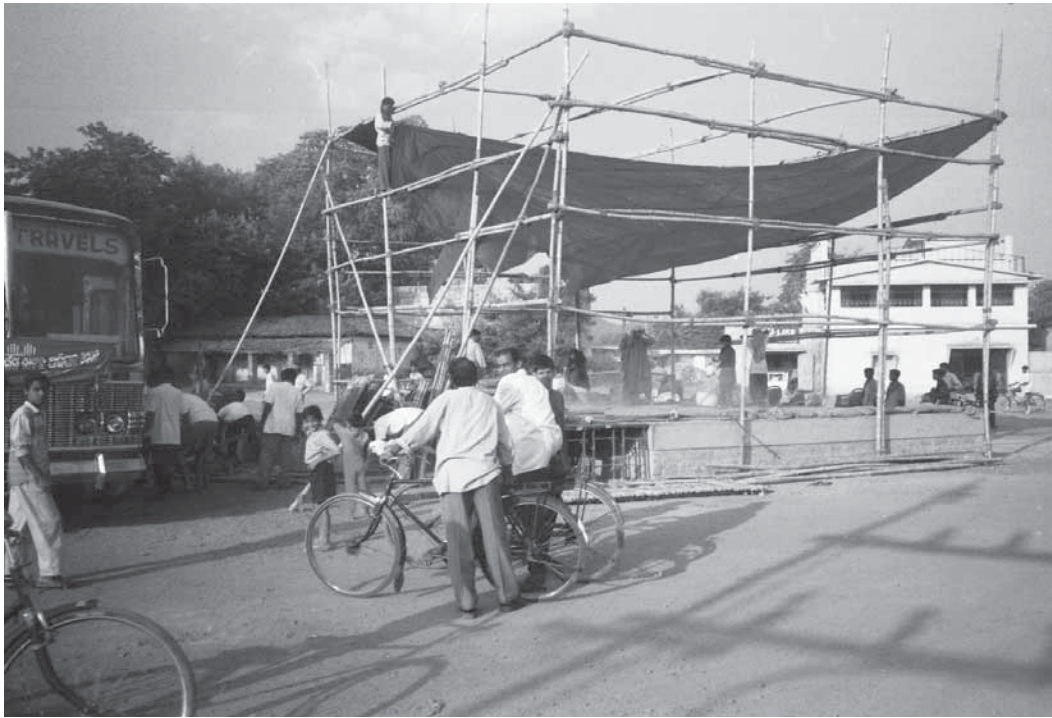
ILLUSTRATION 15. Constructing the stage at the square in Belpahar.

Along the way Natya Chetana's local collaborators took care of advertising, booking the performance spaces and providing food. The play is performed in various kinds of halls, some made for theatre, others not, town squares and other open areas, at the club of local aluminium company workers, and once in a large children's home maintained by the local Gandhian institution. The places were all different from one another, demanding different solutions for constructing the stage. The place I remember particularly well was Belpahar, perhaps due to the fact that I knew one of the local organisers beforehand. Knowing what touring is, Subhas and his Mirror Theatre people had done their best to take care of us: A space to take a nap, good food, even a welcoming banner. They had also done heaps of publicity work for the play. Some local people even competed for who buys the largest number of tickets. One elderly lady, who had paid for her whole extended family to see the show, received a commendation, as well as front row seats for her party. The performances were highly successful, responses from the audiences being appreciative and excited. Only one show was somewhat of a disaster with failures in timing, speech, and other actions on stage. The actors feared reproach by Subodh, who however just analysed what the problems were, why they occurred, and insisted on an obligatory nap for everyone.

On November 30th we were back in *Natya Gram* at a post-production workshop, evaluating what we did and how. We counted what it all had cost, including food and

233

ILLUSTRATION 16. An excited man from the audience has come to give feedback to the actors. The boy in the middle with water bottles is the play's child actor, Trinath.

lodging, the coach hire, lights, costumes, poster making and sundry expenses. The total sum of around 260 000 rupees (that time approximately five thousand Euro) was a surprise to many. We watched the play from a video, something that was supposed to take place earlier but could not be organised. The actors-turned-spectators had fun although they are also horrified by how poor the dance scenes were. On the closing night, everyone was able to be a very important person and while being videotaped and photographed in spotlight, give a speech by microphone on what s/he found personally important in the process of making and performing *Boli*. Then we had a feast with plenty of good food. The next day everyone received a group photo of the team, and a paper, into which all others have written comments and regards to him or her. Then we left *Natya Gram*, with most of the participants continuing on to their homes.

In brief, the play making process illustrates how a group of people, many of whom do neither know each other beforehand nor have earlier experience of theatre, are transformed into a team of actors. As the actors embody and represent Natya Chetana, an issue returned to from social work perspective in Chapter Eight, the goal is that theatrical process changes not only the audience but also the actors involved. In practice, that means among other things that the participants need to reflect their own relationship to the content and form of the plays, as well as practice and develop their group

234

work skills. While the form and content of the performances are linked, the mode of building up the performance and the spirit of the teamwork also have implications on the stage.

The play

Boli means sacrifice. In the play, it referred first of all to the human sacrifices that are believed to have taken place a while back in Orissa. They are rumoured to be performed even today as part of *tantric* or local rituals, with the belief that the goddess desires blood. If someone, human or animal, has been found without a head, the belief is that this has probably transpired in the name of *boli*. Secondly, many people sacrificed their lives for independence. Mahatma Gandhi used to call this *swarthara boli*, kill your own selfishness. The play drew on these two meanings and on the highest ideal of sacrifice in Indian society.

 Boli used a transferable stage structure constructed of bamboo and coarse cloth that served both as a mountain and a hut. It was possible to enter the stage from the hut or from the mountaintop, as well as bypass the hut/mountain. It was also possible to walk 'a path' up and down the mountain slope. On the ground level of the stage, the path led

ILLUSTRATION 17. *Boli* stage.

to the hut, but also functioned as the site of a railroad construction project, around which much of the play was centred. As the play was located in a hilly forest where tribal people reside, scattered across the stage were bamboo sticks with a piece of green cloth on the top, indicating trees. An important element of the play was drumming that varied in intensity, giving rhythm and accentuation to the drama at the stage. The drums were played by Santosh and Purna behind the hut/mountain, unseen by the audience.

THE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY WERE:
Newspaper readers
Minister/politician (*Mantribabu*)
Collector[135]
Servants (2)
Police officer
Journalists
Tribal people, including a tribal family: father Kazra, mother Sumni and their son Bagra
Contractor
Engineer
Guards (2)
Machine Drivers (2)
Jani, tribal priest of the local Goddess Jungle Ma
Jani's assistant (his drummer, executer)
Contractor's father, a follower of Gandhi
Forest Goddess Jungle Ma

The play starts by a procession of a tribal couple (Kazra and Sumni) carrying a dead child. The woman is keening loudly. They disappear behind the top of the mountain.

Newspaper readers walk in. They comment on the news of hunger deaths that are occurring among tribal people in Gutikhuda. The government and Supreme Court deny that the deaths are due to starvation. In their view, the tribals died because of poisonous food, mango seeds[136]. What is the truth? The minister will visit the village. To ensure his security, there are arrests in the area.

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135 In the Indian administrative system, each district has a collector, who is the principal representative of administration, as well as the revenue officer.

136 In Orissa, the consumption of mango seeds is synonymous with starvation.

In the next scene the minister, Mantribabu, is visiting the area. Dressed in black and white waistcoat, Gandhi topi (cap), dhoti (waistcloth) and kurta (shirt) he moves around greeting people. Suddenly he is surrounded by loud shouts of protests, and people are throwing pieces of black cloth at him. The minister has to escape. He and the collector accompanying him take refuge in the home of an astonished tribal family (Kazra, Sumni and Bagra). The parents tell the minister that they have lost one son due to poisonous food, and beg the minister to take the remaining son with him. "Just give him what you throw away! Without any payment you will have the boy as a servant!" The minister is tempted by the offer, but refuses when the collector warns that he would be accused of using child labour would he take the boy. A policeman arrives to announce that the mob has gone. The minister and the collector leave.

Next, the minister is holding a press conference at the tribal village. Journalists ask questions, take photographs, one is filming footage for television[137]. The tribals become agitated by the minister's speech. The security guards force them back violently, but finally the minister and the guards must escape the angry tribals.

After the press conference the minister is at his house. The field visit was far from successful; he is tense and does not want to see anyone or take any phone calls. A servant brings him a chair, dusting it off carefully, and serving the minister tea, which the minister refuses as too cold. Then his mobile rings. This call he takes. Soon a person with a briefcase comes in. He has an idea for a railway project. The railway could pass the famine-hit area and provide employment for the starving tribals. The proposition is that the minister goes to Delhi and negotiates a shift in the focus of the original project. This is easily justified by showing the results of a little survey, and the briefcase that turns out to be full of money. The minister is obsessed with the money and readily agrees. He barely remembers to ask why this person brought the money. Now things become crystal-clear. The person is the contractor for the railway project to be proposed. As soon as the minister is given flight tickets and the attaché case filled with money, he rushes to the airport to go to Delhi. In the forest the tribals hear sound of a helicopter (made by drumming), and come to see the plane flying high in the sky.

In next scene, the tribal people are happy clearing the forest at the construction site, singing and dancing through the work. The contractor and the engineer of the project are also at the site. All of a sudden, Jani, the priest of the Goddess Jungle Ma, enters the site. He brings the work to a standstill and blames the tribals for killing their own Mother Forest. The tribals withdraw in fear, but the contractor comes to see the interrupter, and points out that the site is a government effort to give work to the people. In response, the Jani claims that they should have asked permission from the temple. If they want to get it now, 50 chickens have to be sacrificed and a one-day feast with rice and country wine arranged for people from five villages. Having no choice, the contractor agrees on the condition that he does not have to be present. The agreed puja takes place. The tribals arrive, there is drumming. The Jani performs his rituals and goes into a trance: the tribal

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137 All of the cameras were particularly fine and funny, made out of bamboo.

villagers witness the Mother in the Jani. Only after he has left, the villagers can finally take a breath: "We are saved!"

Next, the villagers come to the contractor's office dispirited and sad. They have discovered that they will not be needed at the site for much longer. Instead of manpower, a machine will be used to build a bridge. They plead with the contractor to go and talk to the government for them so that the machine would not replace them. The contractor merely laughs at their petition. The tribals stand up and the atmosphere is tense. Their anger, however, crumbles. In the end they walk away gracelessly, with faltering steps, as if they were very old. Subsequently, one of the tribals is spying on the machines and trucks arriving in. When he signals, the others come to see what's going on. To obstruct the procession they go to sit in a line in the way of the machinery. A machine arrives with two drivers. Once it confronts the tribals it has to stop. The drivers ask to let them through. The tribals answer that they are poor, everyone has lost family members due to the hunger; they are not going to move. The contractor arrives to demand that the tribals have to allow the drivers to do their work. The tribals laugh at him. He goes away, and returns after a while with two policemen. After a period of negotiation, the policemen come to the conclusion that there must be someone behind the tribals' opposition. As a message from the headquarters orders the policemen not to do any harm to the tribals, they cannot really do anything; the contractor has to compromise. The contractor gives in and tells the tribals to come back to work next day. The victorious tribals rejoice and then leave.

Working again happily at the construction site the tribals build a rhythm with one another with a working song. Dancing, they carry white baskets loading them on top of each other. Soon the baskets make a pillar that grows to a great height quickly. The leader of the tribals places the final basket. Suddenly the whole construction crashes down over him, making him cry out in pain. He turns out to be severely injured. The engineer shouts accusingly: "This is why we want to use machines!" Kazra shouts: "Oh now we know the plan of the government! We want to live, we don't want to die!" Carrying the injured man away the tribals leave. The engineer is shining: "My plan worked very well!" He leaves to tell the good news to the contractor.

The next scene shows emotionally drained and suffering tribal people. The injured man has only one leg now, and needs a bamboo stick to move around, whereas the bridge construction proceeds at full speed. With the rhythm of intense drumming, the machine drivers dance the bridge to its spot. There it is! The contractor and the engineer come to see the brand new bridge. They look pleased. Suddenly there are menacing sounds. The land is trembling, the baskets rise and fall in the air; the bridge collapses! All of the people are thrown to the ground. One by one, they get up to see what has happened. Shocked, the tribals wonder if the accident means that they will get work again. The contractor runs amok, making the tribals leave the place. He rages at the engineer: "Your techniques and materials were all wrong!" The men blame each other until the arguing is enough for the engineer, who resigns and leaves. The contractor shouts that he will not allow the engineer to leave now, and orders the guards to catch the engineer.

In the next scene, the contractor sits alone in the middle of the stage. His mind is shaken. Trying to find escape in alcohol, he gets drunk. Suddenly he notices two ghosts (tall, masked figures walk-
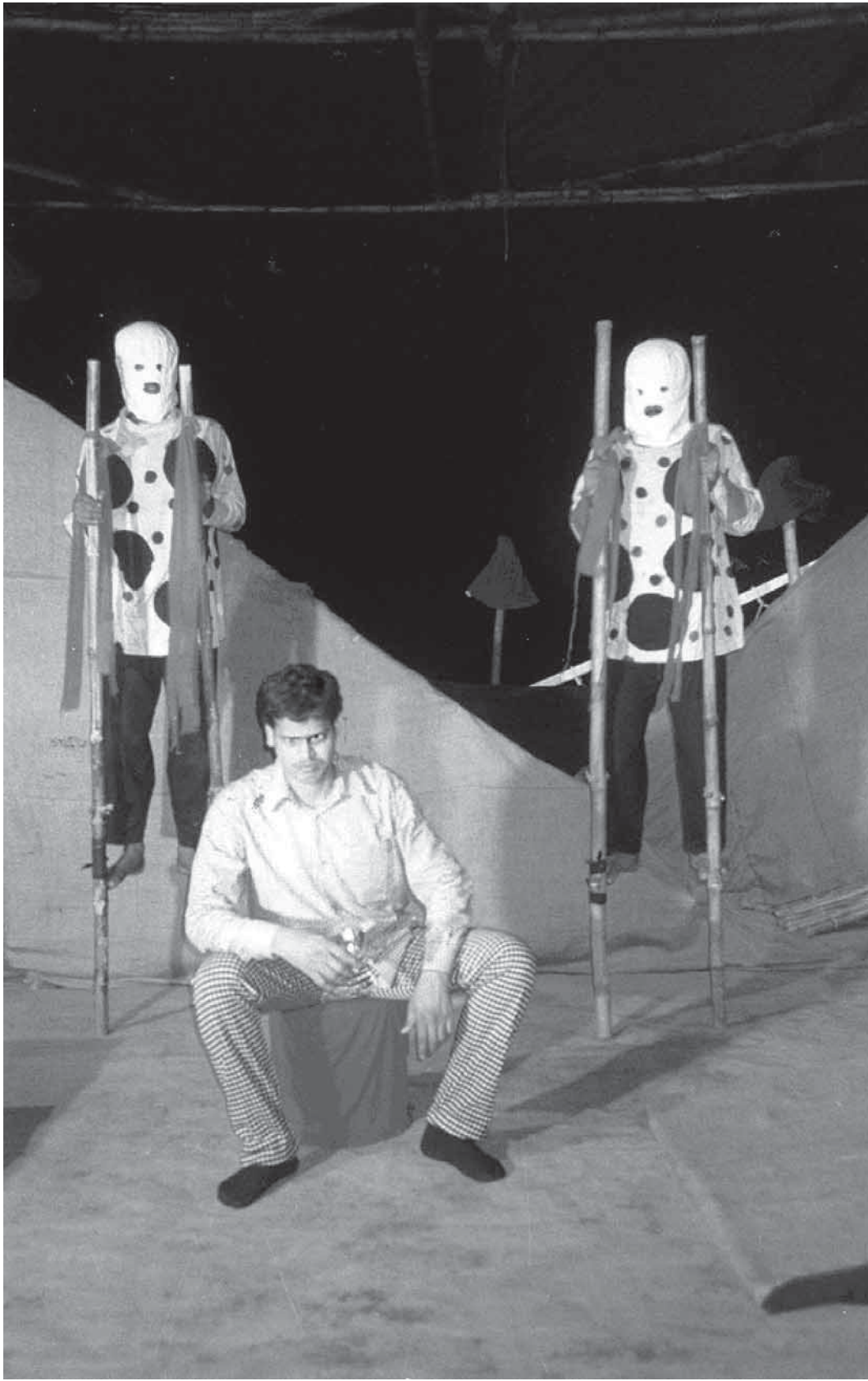
ILLUSTRATION 18. The ghosts of the machine drivers have come to meet the drunken contractor.

ILLUSTRATION 19. Sumni tries to find out from Kazra why he is so down.

ing with wooden legs) approaching him. They are the ghosts of the machine drivers who died at the bridge collapse. The ghosts hold the contractor responsible for the fate of their families, for whom no one is providing after their death, and want to take him along. The contractor stands up as if about to join the ghosts but sits then back and drinks more. The guards find the contractor unconscious. Uncertain what to do, one guard stays with the contractor while the other sets out for help, drinking the remains of the contractor's bottle on the way. When returning, the contractor's father accompanies the guard. With his village-spun khadi and few belongings, the father looks like a devoted gandhian. They stop at the mountaintop to look at the scenery. The guard does his best to testify how unsophisticated and boring it is to stay in the forest but the father is pleased by what he sees. He is not very satisfied with the present state of the society; rather he likes the forest and its people. All of sudden he sees a crowd of tribals writhing in pain farther down in the forest. The guard cannot see nor hear anything, but gets worried warning the father that the people of the area are very violent. If the forest people would know that the old man is the contractor's father, they would kill him without hesitation. The father, however, moves around looking concerned and sensitive. Then they continue their journey.

The Jani has come to see the contractor at the hut. The contractor is still unwell but comes out. The Jani's message to him is that if the Jungle Ma is made happy, She will protect the bridge. The contractor accuses the Jani of being just another swindler. The Jani flares up and tells that he has come only for the sake of his people, not to seek any personal benefit. The thing is: The Jungle Ma wants a human sacrifice. As the contractor is telling the Jani to disappear from his eyes, his father arrives from the hut. Bothering neither about the Jani nor his son, he goes to salute a tree, ringing a bell and making blessings by it. All of this makes the Jani very curious. After the father has gone back inside, the Jani comes to know that that the old man is the contractor's father. Returning back to the issue of the sacrifice, the Jani promises to arrange for a human to be sacrificed, if the contractor will pay ten thousand rupees. The contractor states that the Jani is mad, but then asks if there would really be someone. The Jani tells the contractor to leave that to him. The contractor agrees, and so the matter is settled.

Next, Kazra and Bagra are playing hide and seek. Kazra keeps searching as if he would not know where the boy is. Eventually Bagra is caught and sits on the lap of his father. The Jani enters. He is very keen on the boy. He has a talk with Kazra, who finally agrees. The Jani takes the boy with him. Suddenly the stage is crowded with tribals offering to give their children (dolls) away. The Jani holds to his decision to take Bagra, and not the others. Bagra resists, but away they go. All of the others but Kazra depart. There is slow, melancholic music (the same tune as otherwise before but now in a very slow and blue mode). When Sumni, Bagra's mother, comes back from collecting firewood, she finds Kazra lying down with his eyes closed. She tries to shake Kazra awake, but receives nothing but monosyllabic answers from him. At last, Kazra manages to tell that he gave Bagra away. Sumni bursts into desperate tears. They both cry standing together on the stage. Then Sumni makes up her mind and states that they have to get Bagra back. She leaves, and Kazra follows her.

The Jani comes with Bagra and the guards to the contractor's house. The contractor and his father come out. Suddenly, the father understands what the whole business between the Jani and his son is all about. Though the contractor is making excuses, the father has had enough. He takes his things and leaves. Nevertheless, the Jani insists that the contractor has to follow the original plan and pay him the ten thousand rupees. Then he gives instructions: The sacrifice must be done at the break of dawn. Now it is the time to take bath and feed the boy. The boy eats and eats, and is finally led away from the stage by his plate.

In the forest, the contractor's father comes across Kazra and Sumni. They greet each other and start to discuss. The threads of the narrative begin to come together: Kazra and Sumni realise that instead of being taken care of, their boy is about to be sacrificed. The father reaches a decision and turns back to return to the contractor's house.

The guards, the contractor, the Jani, and his assistant, the executer, walk in a procession with Bagra, whose eyes are covered and hands tied, to the place where the sacrificial death is to take place. At the destination the Jani is performing his rituals, and Bagra is forced to kneel and to put his head on a log. The boli will be complete in just a few moments. The executioner lifts his scimitar. At that very second the contractor's father rushes in and seizes the scimitar from the executioner's hands. Before anyone realises what is happening, he kills the contractor, his own son. All of the others escape in horror; only the dead contractor, his killer the father, and the bound child remain. Kazra and Sumni run in. Horrified by the scene but happy to get their son back, they take the boy and leave.

The father throws flowers on the body of his son. The Goddess Jungle Ma appears on top of the hill in a bright yellow sari and her hair flawing. She comes down to see what has happened, and goes then to stand on the red stool, as if possessed. The father discusses with the Jungle Ma; She is happy.

In the final scene, all the tribals run towards the audience, while the contractor's father leaves to continue his journey. There is intense drumming. Once the drums stop, the play is over; it is time for the last bow.

As a whole, Natya Chetana's *Boli* is a good example of how one storyline can incorporate a number of issues. Notwithstanding the versatility of the performance both onstage and outside of it, as art, as social work, the performance economy, and so forth, in the following my choice is to discuss the play from the perspective of the issues addressed on the stage, namely the position of tribal people, corruption, and the sacrifice. All of these fit into the earlier discussed framework of social justice. Regarding basic needs, the story comments on hunger and thereby need of adequate food.

Hunger deaths in Orissa in 2001 and the issue of child trafficking

In 2001, the play reflected topical issues in Orissa. A number of tribal people were reported to have starved to death in southern Orissa. In the investigation it was found that they had been eating mango kernels, known to be unsuitable for human consumption. This was because they had nothing else to eat. What followed in the local English speaking press that I was able to follow was a debate on whether the people in question had died due to hunger or ignorance.[138] One writer suggested that had the tribal folks dug up some edible roots, could they have survived. I found most of the debate bewildering and detached from the issue. The people were dead and speculating how they might have potentially survived little longer seemed useless. What's more, I was told that if there was evidence that the dead person, however malnourished, ate the day before his or her death, even if it was mango kernels, according to the letter of law, the case was not deemed to be a hunger death[139]. If anything, the need for this kind of public discussion indicated that the reasons for the starvation and death of the tribal people were something other than their eating habits, and obviously a delicate issue. At stake between the lines were timely lack of political interest and responsibility with regard to the plight of the tribal people.

Another issue widely discussed in the local media through small pieces of news was trafficking in children. The newspapers reported that children could be bought from most hospitals, the usual demand for girls being 30,000 and for boys 35,000 rupees[140].

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138 I have later learned that more generally there has been a great deal of debate in India on the question whether there have in fact been large numbers of starvation deaths. According to Kent's observation, those who deny it view starvation in narrow terms, taking it to mean adult deaths directly attributable to an extreme lack of food. However, most deaths associated with the malnutrition are due to a combination of malnutrition and disease, the death certificates usually reporting some infectious disease as the cause of death. Moreover, according to UNICEF estimates in 2000 approximately 2,420,000 children in India died before the age of five, meaning that more than one-fifth of child mortality worldwide took place in India. The estimate was that about half of these deaths of children under five were associated with malnutrition. Kent's conclusion is that in India the denial of the deep and widespread hunger all around the country is a deeply political matter. As long as the government and its agencies refuse to recognise hunger, there is no hope of solving it. (Kent 2005, 146-147.)

139 This convention is also reported by Daniel Lak (1999). Although it sounds so trivial that I am still not sure about its accuracy, at least the belief was widely shared among the people with whom I took up the issue.

140 Later, in August 2007, when I discussed the issue with the Natya Chetana team members again, they wondered whether I had the numbers right, thinking that I might have an extra zero in both figures. As I have only my field notes and not the newspaper clippings to rely on, I decided to stick to the information my notes recorded. Rather than tell the exact price of the day, the point is that babies can be bought and sold.

One investigative TV journalist actually went to buy a child and would have apparently got one. The reasons why people would want to buy children were listed as inability to conceive, need for a servant, even a need for 'spare parts'.

These issues occupied our minds at Natya Chetana. Connected to the issue of giving up children, I was told that it is not rare for tribal families to give their children away, or to just send them to cities with no means to return: children like this come to Bhubaneswar from different tribal pockets every day. To survive, they adopt the habits and the worldview of the mainstream population, and remain silent about their origin. Mamata stated that this denial is the sacrifice they are compelled to make every day. When I wondered about the reasoning behind the decisions to give or send a child away, I was given the explanation of hope and optimism. In the struggle for survival children are a burden, yet in the lack of family planning more and more children are born. In situations of a severe scarcity, giving or sending the child away can still give him or her a chance while staying with the parents would almost surely lead to death due to hunger or poverty. Usually the child is given away with the hope of granting him or her better options, but sometimes the parents are fully aware that that is unlikely the case. In situations of distress it is not unheard of that parents sometimes end up selling their children (e.g. Mishra & Nilofer & Mohanty 2004, 228). In relation to *Boli*, the opinion was that tribal people would never give away their children to die, but they could offer them as servants as the minister is offered in the play.

The role of the tribals

As noted, India is famous both for her ethnic and cultural diversity, and the imbalances in power and prestige that different ethnic groups, castes and classes enjoy. By many indicators the tribal people together with *dalits* have the lowest ranking and are the most disadvantaged in Indian society. This is the case also in Orissa, where the proportion of tribal people is more than one-fifth (see Appendix 3) of the population of the state, much more than the all-India average[141]. The tribal people live mostly in the mountain ranges in the interior of the state, whereas in the coastal area Hindus are a majority, caste Hindus holding most of the political and administrative power. As Ramachandra Guha (2007) observes, "among those who have suffered from economic liberalisation, the tribals of Orissa are perhaps foremost". While changes in natural en-

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141 According to the 2001 census, so-called scheduled tribes (*adivasis*) make up 8.2% (84 million) of the population of India, which means that India has more aboriginal people than any other country in the world. Around one-tenth of India's tribal people live in Orissa.

244

vironment (such as loss of forests that the tribal communities have been dependant on) are one reason, another significant reason is the expansion of the mining industry, for Orissa's mineral reserves are concentrated in the tribal districts. Despite the popular discontent of the tribal people to whom mining brings by and large only displacement and misery, the state government has "signed a series of leases offering land at attractive prices to companies who wish to mine these hills". At times, local police or the companies themselves have protected their interests also with violence, shooting tribal people to death (e.g. firing in Kalinganagar 2006). (Ibid. 707-709.) Having followed the local English-speaking press during my stays in Orissa, I have not recognised the tribal people having 'voice' of their own in them. Rather, despite exhibitions and *melas* (festivals) introducing tribal culture, tribal people seem to be for the main objects of knowledge rather than producers it. (I suppose this is largely the case of *dalits* too.) And it is not rare to see or hear somewhat evolutionary views taken to tribal people, as if they would be living relics from earlier stages of the human kind. Already the term tribal, though commonly used in India, echoes racist and primitivising histories.

Natya Chetana's *Boli*, though suggestive rather than aiming to realistically depict 'real' tribals, has various references, particularly to the *Kuttia Kond* tribe[142]. At the same time, below the surface of the local case, the close observer can find global remarks. The play can be interpreted to address not only the case of tribal people but more generally the position of indigenous people as well as the treatment of subordinate minorities. On the other hand, as none of the performers belonged to the tribal minority, the play could be accused of merely projecting the stereotypes and prejudices of the non-tribal majority. One thing that bothered me in *Boli* was the manner in which the tribal people of the play moved around the stage. Their movement was bent and somewhat gnarled. The manner of representation was rationalised to me on the basis that people who move in the jungle really have to move like that. Once the tribals come to a city, it takes them time to learn to move in the way people familiar with roads and traffic do. Another explanation could be that for most of the performers of *Boli* tribal people remained as the exotic Other, which was then manifested in the way the actors performed them. At any rate, if *Boli* was biased in its presentation, it was it in a rather positive manner, unlike some other Orissan plays presenting tribal people I have run across. *Boli* persuaded the audience to identify with the tribals, their joys and sorrows, to understand and to give value to them. Still, they were not represented as totally pure; they had their *Jani*, in good and bad. Furthermore, kindness and simplicity alone are not enough in the face of starvation and oppression. On the whole, and recognizing the lack of tribal views, I still find it important that the tribal people also do have non-

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142 On Kuttia Konds and their religious practices see, for instance, Boal 1982.

tribal spokesmen like Natya Chetana, willing to address the issues facing tribal people in civic discussion.

In my view, in *Boli*, the main qualities the tribal people embodied were a community-orientation and an emotional sensibility but, in the absence of other options, also submissiveness in confronting exploitation. The tribals of the play displayed their emotions, and appeared therefore simple and innocent in the sense that they lacked gamesmanship (which, from Natya Chetana's perspective, was surely to their advantage, innocence, or a sort of peasant attitude, largely being seen as a virtue). Perhaps because of their innocence, the tribals were portrayed as slightly childlike in their manner of speaking or acting as a group. Despite its possible problems of infantilising them, the depiction can be seen as a strategic choice to take a stand against crookedness and opportunism. Furthermore, it is especially as a collective that the tribals were able to reach a sense of power, however short-lived. Mainly, however, they were the ones who were treated violently. But unlike those who treated them as (violently as) they liked; at end of the play the tribals had gained a reputation of being violent and vicious.

Following the ideas of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, who has drawn her insight from Kalimantan, Indonesia, "the myth of the savage", "is always a strategic myth". In relation to tribal minorities the states are still today represented as agents that integrate and rescue; in other words, sponsor the traditional people towards modernity. This entails also disciplinary aspects. In relation to state the position of traditional people is ethnic asymmetry and low political status. According to Tsing's observation, instead of attempting to integrate the tribals into the core or the mainstream, the strategy of the states tends to be maintaining them in a position of peripheral vulnerability. (Tsing 1993, 87.) In a similar manner, taking an attitude towards what is commonly labelled as development, like the building of the railway through the jungle, the play *Boli* indicates that the tribal people benefit little and at best lopsidedly from such development schemes. Interestingly, Tsing also points to the importance of building as state activity. She points out that in Kalimantan building is locally understood as development, whereas ideas of development as a set of activities aiming to enhance human well-being are not an issue. Not unlike in *Boli*, in Kalimantan 'development', in other words state construction projects, are an issue of state ceremony. Moreover, construction projects are rife with rumours of headhunting – of water buffalos if not humans. For Tsing, the setup suggests a relationship "between core and periphery, city and frontier, such that the ostentation of the first requires the vulnerability of the latter. These are indeed the conditions of uneven development." (Ibid. 90-91.)

In cases where the tribal people are unable to have an impact on the schemes, or in general prospects to formulate their vision and proposals for the future, it is question-

able whether such schemes really serve them and their culture. In *Boli*, the *adivasis*/tribals are forced to carry out solutions that are of benefit to others rather than themselves; their needs do not really matter. Following the notion of Nandy and Jahanbegloo (2006, 65), as an ideology of the winners, modernity does not need the acceptance of the tribal people. The question that remains at the end of the play is whether projects such as the railroad construction serve the tribals, even if carried out properly. At the end of the earlier version of the play, performed for the critics and changed before the première as too moralistic, the father of the contractor replied to the request of the tribals by stating that he is not interested in becoming their leader. Instead, they should strengthen their *panchayat*s. He would be willing to help, but only as a human being, not as a master. His wish was that the tribals would not, despite the difficulties, put all their thoughts solely into day-to-day survival, but to try to figure out long-term possibilities as well.

Politics and corruption in the plot

Systemic corruption and the exploitation of labour in India have long been central themes in Natya Chetana's plays (Table 2; Pattanaik 2000, 89). In *Boli Mantribabu* the minister depicts the shady qualities for which politicians in India are notorious. Being led by his greed, he needs people around him to think on his behalf, such as the collector who warns that it would be politically dangerous to take the malnourished boy as an unsalaried child servant. If bribed, *Mantribabu* can make deals worth *crores* of rupees with complete strangers, as with the contractor. However, *Mantribabu* is not the only one corrupted in the play; the contractor and the *Jani* are as well. In their mutual encounters they immediately recognise each other as significant players, outline their conditions without fear, and are open to being bribed. As each of them has eye for money and power, in their mutual 'fair play' all the three of them benefit.

In depicting the reverse side of power, the play is also about what Subodh calls the "service mentality". The guard, for instance, "has a complete service mentality, no citizenship. He does not know what democracy is." Moreover, the tribals have their share of service mentality and submissiveness in the way they allow themselves to be commanded and oppressed both by the *Jani* and the contractor. In the national context, Rajesh Tandon names the same issue as the crisis of the relationship between citizens and the state in India. In his view, the crisis has arisen because of the apathy and alienation of the people from the government, and the dependant attitude of the people towards the governing institutions. (Tandon 2003.) In *Boli*, those who revolt run the risk of paying a high price, like the leader who lost his leg. Still, from time-to-time they revolt even if the hopes to achieve anything are marginal.

Discussing the reasons for people's submissiveness in front of authoritarianism, Ashis Nandy and Ramin Jahanbegloo (2006, 21) differentiate between traditional feudal-patriarchal authoritarianism and modern 'authoritarianism proper'. In their view, each produces its own version of social pathologies, and contributes to the situation in contemporary India. In *Boli*, the minister, the contractor and the *Jani* have power because others have given that power to them. In a way people, by surrounding them and backing them up, enthrone them every day. This reflects Mohandas Gandhi's idea, according to which use of power does not work, at least not for long, without some kind of consent by those upon whom the power is exercised. Having said this, as the consent is often based on fear in front of repression, refusing to cooperate can be far from a harmless choice.

In *Bol*i, once in a position of authority, the minister, the contractor and the *Jani* do not hesitate to take advantage of it. While doing so they nonetheless know that their position is not that stable. To remain in power, they have to perform that power through actions that legitimise it: To avoid being accused of not taking seriously the plight of the tribals, the minister has to travel to the famine-hit area and hold a press conference – after all, even the malnourished have right to vote. Likewise, the contractor, who claims that he is at the service of the people, has to, besides literally cashing in by the construction work, also get the railroad finished. If this service to the people then requires police protection against those very people, or when things get out of control, *boli* (to perform a modern man he is not that rational in the end), that is fine for him. Among the tribals, the authority of the *Jani* is based on keeping the other tribals in fear. He performs awesome rites, and demonstrates his power by getting the contractor to pay for a big feast for the people of five villages. Whether the *Jani* believes in *Jungle Ma* or not is difficult to say, at the very least the *boli* seems to be his personal means to make money.

As far as corruption is concerned, the world depicted in the play matches well to Dipankar Gupta's (2000 b) analysis of corruption and its causes in India. In his opinion, one of the reasons for the virtual impossibility to combat corruption is the tradition of patronage: Even in politics people do not elect representatives but patrons.[143] The reasoning behind this is that if someone wants to get something, he (or she) is dependent on the benevolence of a patron, for in a country with the size and amount of poverty of India the possibility of making things better by democratic means would take more than a lifetime. The patrons, on the other hand, need to keep their position as well as show their usefulness. Hence a politician, having access to resources and power in political decision-making, is useful only when corrupted, and corruption is blessed at the top, and largely accepted as a 'normal' state of affairs. (Gupta 2000 b, 135-153.)

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143 Rajesh Tandon (2003) calls the phenomenon the *'mai baab'* syndrome.

Darren Zook (2001) points out that in India the systemic corruption is hard to combat even in drama as "political theatre finds itself in competition with an equally theatrical and dramatic state". Being in grave contradiction to each other, prevailing political practice and rhetoric have become so comical and absurd that left-wing, socialist and 'realist' dramas cannot really satirise them any longer: "How can one evoke a people's theatre when everyone claims to speak for the people?" (Ibid. 174-176.) In my view, in *Boli*, Natya Chetana claims programmatically to speak and perform for and in the name of the people, and manages if not to satirise, at least to illustrate the double-dealing of political decision-making. Not unlike leftist dramas in general, *Boli* displays the fabric of oppression. This is also in line with Paulo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1970/1996). In it Freire writes, "A deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as a historical reality susceptible of transformation" (ibid. 66). In this sense, Natya Chetana can be seen as one local interface of a fairly universal theatrical and pedagogical movement. As explained by Subodh, Natya Chetana's wish is: "If a group of theatre workers can artistically portray justice and injustice, perhaps it can transport its audiences beneath the surface of appearances, to investigate truths, and even help to provide the courage to protest against the evils of society" (Pattanaik 2000, 86). At the very least, *Boli* took part in local civic discussion and activated it. As most of the shows easily accommodated an audience of 500-800 people, during its relatively short performance tour the play was received by thousands of spectators. It is also noteworthy that in Orissa, like in many other places in India, the electronic media or print capitalism reaches only a part of the population, and the literacy rates are low. In these circumstances, the potential of theatre as media, entertainment and a civic arena should not be underestimated. What it comes to overall audience reactions, in the case of *Boli* neither the fans nor the opponents of the play were very dramatic; the reception was favourable.

The sacrifice

Lastly, with regard to the issue of human sacrifice which gave the play its name and attracted audiences to come to the show. Human sacrifice has been an enduring subject of interest concerning the eastern part of India[144]. Even now human sacrifice is a powerful topic, which

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[144] As early as 1796, a certain Mr. Blaquiere reported in Calcutta to the Asiatic Society in detail about local practice of sacrificing humans and other victims to the Goddess, in particular to Kali (Blaquiere 1799, 369-391). In the case of Konds, the practice has been later studies for instance by Barbara Boal (1982) and Felix Padel (1995). In Orissa human sacrifice, which was essentially a blood sacrifice to the Earth Goddess, is known to have been part of the religious rituals of the Konds until the early 19th century, after which it was replaced by buffalo and other animal sacrifices (Boal 1982, 86-87).

easily captures the imagination. On the level of the popular imagination, rumours about sacrifices are still going strong, the common understanding being that some people somewhere are still carrying on the practice. The belief is attached to Orissa also outside the state borders, which marks Orissa as the place where "they not only sacrifice animals, but humans", as one lawyer from Gujarat noted.

Rather than being interested, or competent, to gauge the accuracy of *boli* as a cultural practice, there are two things that caught my attention in Natya Chetana's play. First, it is striking, albeit not new, how easily a human being can be killed or injured. In India, as throughout the world, human life is valued low, the more so if it is a poor, malnourished or in some other way 'unimportant' or marginalised life. Within the world of *Boli*, it is the modern man, the contractor, who pays for and thus orders the murder to take place. In doing so, he enforces the notion known both in South and Southeast Asia that construction projects have to be planted in heads (see Tsing 1993, 91). Looking at the play as an account of majority and minority, or modernity and tradition, who should be afraid of whom? Secondly, the twist of *Boli* is that in the end it is the contractor, and not the malnourished tribal boy, who is slain. The killer is his very own father, who was up until then is depicted as a non-violent nature worshipper above all else. Within the world of the play this violent act of murder serves higher ideals: rather than the innocent boy, the corrupt, selfish contractor, the master who is unable to feel the sufferings of others but capable of almost anything that benefits him personally, is eventually the appropriate sacrifice for the *Jungle Ma*.

That a man, a father, has to sacrifice his own son is a theme that cuts across cultures, signifying a sacrifice unbearably high[145]. As Subodh explained at the time of the rehearsals, the sacrifice that Mahatma Gandhi advocated was the sacrifice of one's own selfishness. In the play, the selfish and corrupt son is possibly the most dear and precious thing in the life of the old father. Though we might wonder how come a gandhian father had such a son, we must also wonder how the father was able to kill him. One of the exercises at the *Boli* rehearsal camp, brought to mind also by the final play, was to get rid of master-servant attitudes. The masters should kill their own selfishness, their beloved sons, and the servants should learn to stand up for themselves. Even in retrospect, the play *Boli* offers food for thought: What about us? Who or what are our utmost corrupt, precious sons, and what shall we do with them?

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145 In Christianity, the core of the faith is that the Son of God was sacrificed for the sake of those who believe in him. Abraham was also expected to sacrifice his son Isaac in obedience to God's command.

7.3 WORK AROUND THE ORISSA CYCLONE OF 1999

Sapanara Sapana (Sapan's Dream)

Like *Boli*, Natya Chetana's cyko theatre play *Sapanara Sapana*, made two years earlier, also raised the interconnectedness of basic needs, livelihoods, corruption and the vulnerability of in particular the poorer sections of rural people. Moreover, the play had a strong emphasis on environmental issues, becoming, all over sudden, associated with the Orissa cyclone of 1999.[146]

In 1999, Natya Chetana became interested in one piece of news that stated that deforestation of the coastal mangrove forests increases the vulnerability of coastal area to cyclones[147]. Collaborating with one environmental and one youth organisation, Natya Chetana conducted a cultural survey at the coast in Jambu area, near Paradeep Port. They learned that while now administratively part of Kendrapada district, earlier the land had belonged to the *raja* (king) of Kujang. To pay his debts, he had sold it to the *raja* of Burdwan, who just before the abolition of princely rule sold it in bits and pieces to anyone interested. Persons who had purchased the land came, established their

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146 The work is documented in Natya Chetana's (unpublished) report 'Jambu Theatre Expedition "Sapaner Sapan"' (1999) and later in the book 'Natya Chetana's Creative Response Super Cyclone '99 (A Report)' (2000 c).

147 Extremely powerful tropical cyclones, elsewhere called as hurricanes or typhoons, are supposed to hit Orissa every hundred years or so. Cyclones with lesser intensity are annual phenomena between April and December, when the sea surface temperatures are high, which is one of the conditions for a cyclone to form. The North Indian cyclone basin, divided into two seas, the Bay of Bengal in East and Arabian Sea in West, is historically the deadliest basin. In 1970, the Bhola cyclone killed more than 300,000 people in the Ganges Delta region of Bangladesh. The high death toll was due to a powerful storm surge; tropical cyclones can create high tidal waves that on low-lying coasts may enter tens of kilometres inland. (Suri 2000.) Mangroves, then, are comprised of salt tolerant tree and other plant species that grow in estuaries and intertidal areas along tropical and sub-tropical coasts. From the perspective of the ecosystem, mangroves provide protection from strong winds and waves, erosion and siltation. They increase the nutrient retention of the soil, mitigate floods, absorb and store carbon dioxide, and protect associated marine ecosystems. Coastal populations have utilised mangroves as a source of food, firewood, medicines, fibres, dyes, charcoal, and construction materials for ages. In India, as throughout the tropical coasts, the mangroves are quickly vanishing because of population growth, land reclamation for urban and industrial development, chemical pollution and widespread shrimp farming. In shrimp farming, the mangrove forests are cleared to make ponds for the shrimp business, which is often owned by outsiders who lack knowledge and interest to understand why the forests should be saved. (E.g. Ahmed 1997; Primavera 2006.) "The industry operates on a hit-and run basis, typically on a five-year horizon, sufficient to get a return on investment, and then move on." The commercial shrimp aquaculture has proved itself as one of the most destructive cash crops ever and endangered the lives and livelihoods of millions of coastal people. (Ahmed 1997, 2.)

tenements and started dwelling there. Concurrently, the federation of India took over the princely states, and the land was shifted from the king to the forest department, who declared the area as forest preserve where no one can legally own land. Nonetheless, some of the people later managed to register their lands in their names. Moreover, some Bangladeshi refugees established their dwelling places in the forest. In 1999, most of the inhabitants were second or third generation descendants of migrants from West Bengal, speaking Oriya with Bengali accent and blending Bengali and Oriya culture. Their main livelihoods were fishing and collecting and supplying juvenile shrimp to young prawn dealers, and to lesser extent agriculture and knitting fishing nets for sale. In Natya Chetana's view, politically they were lacking unity and troubled by various kinds of exploiters. (E.g. Natya Chetana 2000 c, 11-16.)

After the survey, Natya Chetana held a play making workshop together with a team of local volunteers, which resulted in a half an hour play *Sapanara Sapana*, Sapan's Dream (familiar to me through its later reproductions in 2000 and 2001):

> *Upon purchasing land from the king, the main character Sapan moves to live in the mangrove forest. After clearing the jungle, he constructs a house and lives a peaceful life with his wife Gellhi. One day the local forest officer cautions him that his rights to the land count for nothing; the land now belongs to the government. Restrictions are imposed. Taking wood from the forest is strictly prohibited. The rules do not, however, apply to Mafioso-type of businessmen, who bribe the forest officer and start clearing the forest for ponds suitable to shrimp farming. They force Sapan and other people like him to cut the forest for them. After clearing, the jungle is finished, the shrimp farmers are doing well, and Sapan is lacking livelihood options. To survive, he constructs a boat and goes fishing in the river. Caught by a patrol of inspectors, he comes to know that he has no right to fish. On his way home, his dream of a fisherman's life is further ruined when a furious cyclone hits him and his boat. The boat sinks but Sapan manages to swim to shore. Running home, he can see his house completely collapsed. His dear Gellhi is crushed to death under the fallen wall, and there is no way to bring her back to life. Sapan falls on Gellhi with utter grief. Other villagers make arrangements for Gellhi's cremation, but as there is nothing left of the forest, there is not enough firewood for the funeral pyre. Finally, the mourners arrive at a decision to give the dead body to the river. The play ends with the scene of the river taking the dead Gellhi away.* [148] (See illustarations 20 and 21.)

In the first half of October 1999 Natya Chetana's performing team toured in the villages between Jambu and Paradeep by boats and on feet, as cycling was impossible

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[148] The situation of the play matches to Ahmed's description about shrimp aquaculture in Orissa: Many of the shrimp farms are blatantly illegal from acquiring the land to the construction of the ponds, ownership and operation, maintaining a reign of terror "as if they are above the law", also introducing alcohol and social conflict into the villages. Further, large-scale aquaculture business, producing luxury food for transport, has resulted in the loss of local food, mangrove forests, rice lands, and devastated local fishing communities. The irony is the business was initially introduced in the name of food security. (Ahmed 1997, 11-13.)

due to the geography of the area. Attached with a poster exhibition and other of Natya Chetana's routine procedures, they put on 20 shows to audiences as small as 70 up to gatherings of 650 people. The audience response to the play varied. Natya Chetana's reports that the play was "touching the heart of people", who were fully involved with the shows, observing each moment carefully, many of them pointing that this is a story of their community. Especially the last scene of giving the dead Gellhi to the river was influential, and directed, together with the poster that took up the issues of deforestation and increased risk of cyclones, talks of deforestation. Realising that it is also their responsibility to see that the forest is not continuously exploited, people came up with ideas whether and how they could avoid cutting trees for their domestic use and allow more trees to grow. They also hinted that illiteracy hinders their access to useful information, and felt agitated against the owners of local aquaculture businesses. In particular, the character of the forest officer generated comments and people got into comparing him with the real officer of the locality. After one show in which one of the forest guards was present, there was an argument between him and the villagers on the issue of corruption. In a few places people became confused about whether the theatre program was by the Red Cross, a misapprehension born because on tour Natya Chetana slept some nights in Red Cross implemented cyclone rescue shelters. In a place called Batighar "there was a long argument about the purpose of the theatre shows". The audi-

ILLUSTRATION 20. The play *Sapanara Sapana* starts with the actors running towards the audience (as performed to one-sided audience in 2001).

ILLUSTRATION 21. Scenes from *Sapanara Sapana*. **1st line:** Cyclone hits at the sea. Loosing his boat, Sapan tries **3rd line:** Sapan finds Gellhi dead. With the help of villagers, her body is eventually given to the river.

to swim to the shore. | **2nd line:** The cyclone also destroys the home of Sapan and Gellhi, smashing Gellhi dead. |

ence was divided between two opinions: Few did not believe Natya Chetana to be honest in its environmental concerns, whereas most of the villagers were happy with the play and its content. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 29-31.)

The super cyclone of 1999

Two weeks after the tour with *Sapanara Sapana*, on the 29th October 1999 a super cyclone smashed the coast of Orissa at Paradeep area, hammering it with winds at 240-260 kilometres per hour and tidal waves up to 8 metres (around 26 feet) high. The storm surges simply washed away several coastal villages, rolling 15-20 kilometres further inland. The wipeout was added to by very heavy rain that in places was equivalent to two average local monsoons (Suri 2000, 12). Afterwards, the official figure of the dead was set up at approximately 10,000 human beings, but as no official count was really possible, the actual figure is widely believed to be more. At the coast nothing but concrete *(pakka)* houses could stand the storm, and not even all of them. Hundreds of thousands of homes were destroyed and millions left homeless. The cyclone hit at the most vulnerable time of the main autumn crop, harvest of which was about to take place within few weeks. The winds and tidal waves brought unimaginable loss, destruction of coconut plantations, paddy fields, sugar cane and vegetables, as well as death of cattle and destruction of infrastructure. In the worst affected areas, in addition to losing their family homes and all too often a number of family members, friends, neighbours and so forth, people lost their crops and domestic animals, for many the only assets of financial value they had[149]. The cities and towns and adjacent rural areas were left almost devoid of tree cover; some 90 million trees were uprooted or snapped. Communication and electrical towers faced the same destiny. Roads were blocked with fallen trees and debris, and because of the communication block the real extent of the disaster remained for several days at the level of estimations only. The survivors had to get by without food, water, and shelter. In the days and weeks after the catastrophe, more people died in lack of timely help due to their injuries, starvation or infectious diseases such as malaria, dysentery and cholera. With army and volunteers clearing the roads and dead bodies, aid started slowly trickling in. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 38-41; Suri 2000; Lak 1999.)

The storm, one of the worst in the subcontinent during the 20th century, directly

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149 Many of those few who got a prior warning of the coming storm decided not go to cyclone shelter (that were in many places anyhow either non-existent or non-functional) or other safer place because they did not want to leave their domestic animals alone to the storm (shelters when available are only for humans). (Lak 1999; Suri 2000.)

affected 12 of the 30 districts of Orissa and lives of 20 million people. The cyclone damaged buildings also in *Natya Gram*, and devastated the natal homes, crops and agricultural properties of many of the full time volunteers' natal families, but none lost family members[150]. Natya Chetana's warning about increased vulnerability to cyclones in the play *Sapanara Sapana* had proved all too timely, and the group felt utterly involved. In a spontaneous meeting with other activism-oriented NGO-people equally shocked but willing to help, they set up a joint relief program named Orissa Disaster Mitigation Mission, ODMM. Though no one had significant experience of a disaster of this magnitude or welfare activities like relief distribution, they shared a strong humanitarian concern and determination to join their forces immediately for a coordinated relief effort. When the roads to the worst hit areas were cleared making it possible to reach people there, the ODMM relief operation was on. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 45-50.)

Accurate information and "relief for the mind" after the catastrophe

As Natya Chetana had plenty of experience in communication of various sorts but not of aid distribution, in ODMM the group's task was to run information systems and help in the coordination of the network. Subodh became one of the central figures in ODMM's quickly established core team as well as the coordination centre called the 'control room'. In a situation in which ordinary information channels like telephone connections had collapsed, other Natya Chetana team members took up to acquiring information from the cyclone hit areas by visits and with the help of hand radios. Publishing a regular bulletin on the field situation and the operations, feeding the press, and responding to inquiries from people of various sectors and purposes, Natya Chetana was soon running some sort of information and help desk. Therefore, documenting the disaster became largely Natya Chetana's task in ODMM, which the team carried out by photographing and videoing. Having seen a video collage and many photographs from those days, the thing they convey is that there were dead bodies, human and animal, big and small, wherever the storm had thrown them. Years later, when I wanted

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150 Immediately after the storm passed, Natya Chetana made a decision to assess the damages in *Natya Gram* after which the team members quickly visited their families to find out their situation. Despite losses no one's life was in acute danger and even the nearly collapsed walls in certain *Natya Gram* buildings could be braced to wait for later repair. Later on, to meet the costs of the needed construction works in *Natya Gram*, Natya Chetana asked and received donations and collections from the public as well as from the group's foreign friends, to Natya Chetana's proof that through its approach and way of working the group had indeed achieved building meaningful friendships. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 46-49.) These donations were eventually enough to repair the broken buildings as well as to construct a new one, the museum building.

to know how those days were, that is the first image that comes to the minds of those Natya Chetana volunteers who were there. Showing death with a directness far beyond what is common in the Finnish TV news, for example, their documentation gives scope to the magnitude and misery of the disaster, which, compared to the media coverage devoted to Hurricane Katrina (2005), made only a few small pieces of news in Finland. In addition to deaths, Natya Chetana documented the loss of crops and trees, relief operations by the military, the ODMM health programme, and so forth. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 52.)

Natya Chetana found out that many of the survivors were apathetic and lacking initiative to the extent that they were virtually unable to get themselves into collecting and burning the dead[151]. The group's conclusion was that most of the survivors were in serious trauma. Two weeks after the cyclone, for example in Erasama, one of the worst hit areas, some were still continuously repeating their personal stories of survival while others had not shared their experience with anyone. Children had no schools to attend, and many of them were forced into begging by their parents. Their homes gone, women, majority of them having up until then spent their lives in the domestic sphere, were panicking[152]. Rather than start construction work with whatever they had been left with, promises of financial assistance for the construction of new houses made people wait for aid and the government revenue inspectors to came to the spot to evaluate the situation and assess entitlements to compensations. In Natya Chetana's view, the people were in a kind of transition period after the disaster, blocked from stepping forward. Learning that the emergency doctors were advising people to take sleeping pills or to go to mental hospitals to get electrical shock therapy, the team wanted to provide a different response. Instead of joining to deliver material relief for the victims, an activity that an increasing number of organisations were already involved with, Natya Chetana conceived an idea of holding a creative camp to try if such an approach could work as trauma counselling. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 42-44.)

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151 People were also reluctant to touch the bodies of someone else's dead that had been carried from other villages by the tidal waves (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 6; Suri 2000), an approach that makes sense also in light of the deep seated ideas of purity and pollution within the caste system.

152 In Orissa, as common throughout India, traditional social norms limit women's roles to the household and certain community functions to the extent that in many Oriya families women are socially discouraged from going out to work for a daily wage. In disaster situations, women face mental stress for being away from home, having left assets behind, and because of the insecurity of living in open in temporary shelters. It is also known that the apparent losses such as damage of crops, houses, and livestock tend to overshadow the reproductive needs to which women have to cater, and their own less visible but crucial needs, for example the need for secluded spaces for defecation. Often, women are on the frontline of bearing increasing anxiety and frustration, and the consequent conflicts and discontent in families. (Mishra & Nilofer & Mohanty 2004, 228-239.)

In Natya Chetana's view, it was time to start orienting towards a more normal life. People should be provided with correct information about benefits available as well as advice how to get them. To gain back their confidence, they should find ways to restore their livelihoods, and children should get back to school. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 43-44.) In practice, to provide "relief to mind", Natya Chetana set up a creative camp in Gada Kujanga in Erasama, and started documenting both fortunate and painful stories with a special focus on listening to and documenting women's experiences. To inform people on different topical issues Natya Chetana produced posters in screen-printing to be pasted at central locations, a practice that at the course of the days led to the formation of a kind of wall-magazine at certain locations. In visual documentation, Natya Chetana used inexpensive VHS cameras, visiting and videoing places that promised some kind of rehabilitation for the local people. With rough editing they then produced a "daily video newsmagazine", 20-30 minutes video news with special feature, and showed it at the camp to the local people every day at 8 pm. The following day the news and the poster of the day were taken to other villages in the area. The villagers also started to help in this activity by moving the equipment, as some of the villages were approachable only by foot. Moreover, Natya Chetana started to run sessions of theatre games with children to find out what to do with them, as well as to provide them some ways to handle their trauma[153]. The children soon started to wait outside the camp for the facilitators' time. Seeing their children play after weeks of depression, "it seemed that the games had also a positive side effect on the adults" who "took part indirectly by giving side coaching to their children." At the request of the local people and with the support of the Action Aid (a NGO), which gave funds for the purpose, the camp, originally intended for seven days, was extended to fifteen days. (Ibid. 55-60, 63-65.)

The video shows were powerful. People were surprised to learn from the video news that other people, some of whom they knew, were already immersed in the job of reconstructing their lives. Importantly, the videos proved false many paralysing rumours, such as the news about a new cyclone approaching the area, or that lot of money was allocated for the people, and so encouraged many to start working again. Natya Chetana also interviewed an agricultural expert on saline soil, who encouraged farmers not to be worried about the coming season. The interview managed to convince people that although their lands had absorbed seawater, cultivation was still possible. In general, the villagers appreciated all kinds of practical information, like being taught to threat

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153 In this they were well served with their earlier experience from Children's Theatre Action programme 1992-1995. Interested to promote "awareness through children's theatre action" Natya Chetana had developed an approach that contained games, theatrical exercises, play making and other social activities with local children in ten villages in Sadar Block of Sundergarh District, as well as training for local facilitators. (Natya Chetana 1995.)

diarrhoea patients with a local herb. Moreover, Natya Chetana addressed the issues of migration, child labour in urban areas, and the dependency on relief. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 61-63.)

The videos further encouraged the villagers to raise two important issues, the repair of the village road and children's education. Initially the villagers had themselves started reconstructing the road, but then the work had been given over to a repairing contractor, a move that the villagers were not happy with. After being encouraged to take up the issue with the administrators of the area, the villagers got the contract back for themselves, as they had wanted from the beginning.[154] With regard to education, the local schools were not functioning because the teachers did not return after the cyclone, and some schools had actually lacked a teacher for years. The villagers collectively pressured the government to appoint teachers to the schools. In another case, local people were encouraged enough to ask one of the NGOs distributing relief to shift its camp to a new place so that the space the NGO was using "was freed for running a school". (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 62-63.)

While most things on the camp did proceed without major problems, it was initially difficult to get local women to share their cyclone experiences. Natya Chetana's report describes how "the outspoken women were responding violently their anger as if we are responsible to create the cyclone." Many others were completely silent, "but at least they were listening the news about other areas." As the days passed, things changed. It started to appear that women were actually "recovering better than men in particular after they started watching the video show". They started to respond and talk about the news, and an increased acceptance towards Natya Chetana's actresses could be seen. Eventually, the video showed the public how in the absence of men the women felt free even to become interested in the children's games – an issue that created lot of dialogue among the villagers. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 65-66.)

Wanting to have a "social audit" of the work done, in the last evening of the camp, Natya Chetana asked the villagers to give their frank opinion of the creative camp as part of the relief phase, especially because the camp had not delivered any material help. According to Natya Chetana's own summary, the villagers' response was that the camp had "no doubt given confidence". Children had gotten hooked on the theatre games and felt motivated to attend schools. Moreover, the people recognised Natya Chetana's role

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154 According to Natya Chetana's report (2000 c, 63), one observation in the aftermath of the cyclone was that the buildings and roads constructed by contractors suffered more damage than others, which suggests that either the quality of the work, the materials used, or both had been poor. Therefore, many village committees were now keen to take over responsibility for new construction work or at least to keep watch over the quality of the work. In many places "the local default contractors felt exposed and expressed their agony."

in dissolving some negative rumours by collecting information from different sources: the camp had served as a source of authentic information. Furthermore, when people from different trades realised that Natya Chetana is videotaping them, they got into a competitive spirit, innovating solutions to various problems. As a consequence, they themselves recognised having had "many new beginnings". The enjoyment caused by theatre games was noted, and there was a general demand for the group's posters. Someone said that they were a fortunate village as for fifteen days they had had a lighted place to spend time without feeling sorrow (which Natya Chetana interpreted to mean that the darkness increased the panic people were left with after the disaster). However, few people raised the question of the actual expenditures and the source of funding behind Natya Chetana's creative camp. "Couple of people could not appreciate the idea of spending money in Creative Camp instead of supplying relief materials to the public. But a large group overruled them by justifying the Creative Camp as the rare useful event." Finally, a few elderly ladies stayed in the camp just to share their gratitude of having had someone to laugh and gossip with. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 66-68.)

Encouraged by the experience, Natya Chetana also set up another creative camp in Jhatipari in January 2000. Starting with a quick survey of 18 villages of the region, the group found that they had many similarities with the area where Natya Chetana had toured with *Sapanara Sapana*. Two months after the cyclone many spots were still without regular touch with outside help, including the local Muslim community which was neglected by decision makers, donors and government officers. Local people did not have high hopes of government help, and migration from the area to find work in the big cities of India had already gone up. On the other hand, there was a big belt of mangrove forest at the seashore, which had saved people from an even bigger catastrophe. And, as Natya Chetana observed, "there was a love for cultural activities (…) people in general being vocal and expressive". On the basis of the situation in the villages, Natya Chetana decided to focus on the villages closest to coast where all kinds of losses had been the worst. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 73-78.)

Natya Chetana set up similar programmes as in the first camp, with few additions. First of all, to the second camp they also invited women volunteers from less affected areas to help with social psychological counselling and exchange[155]. Secondly, finding that the people were confused about legal matters, such as identifying the legal heir in families with many deaths, or where and how to obtain the documents needed to apply for compensation, Natya Chetana organised a special session that gave advice on legal

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155 According to Natya Chetana, the volunteers were educated young women with social work aptitude and not yet fully immersed in household work, with time and interest to help other victims of the cyclone.

matters. Thirdly, realising that instead of starting to reconstruct their homes, people lacked initiative and waited for relief, Natya Chetana rehearsed a puppetry comedy to take up the issue. At the end of the short play that dealt with government schemes, injustice and corruption, a wife (puppet) started to rebuild a house with her own hands after which her husband also "joined hands for the work". (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 84-88.) Fourth, learning that there were many singers in the area and many different families owned musical instruments, and "many groups with the history of doing theatre", Natya Chetana thought that revival of local folk performing arts might in the long run be the best socio-psychological counselling. Accordingly, Natya Chetana persuaded ten local theatre groups "to revive themselves", promising support with rehearsals and needed materials. Altogether seven groups took the challenge and of them five groups were functional to the extent that they rehearsed and came to perform at Natya Chetana's People's Theatre Festival (2000) in Bhubaneswar. The festival had also a second phase in the cyclone-hit Erasama Block, where the same groups performed to other cyclone survivors. (Ibid. 95-114.)

When Natya Chetana started to feel that the emergency relief period was over, the Orissan media had already shifted its priority from the cyclone to other matters. At this point, Natya Chetana thought of addressing city audiences and reminding them of the need to continue to have solidarity with the cyclone victims. After the intense period of work, having heard and witnessed many emotional stories from the people, the team had a lot of anxiety to share. At the second camp they had ran across a widowed woman who had earlier learned to play harmonium (a hand-pumped keyboard instrument) against her late husband's wishes. During the course of the camp, she started to sing publicly accompanying herself with Natya Chetana's harmonium. Based on her story, Natya Chetana made the play *Geeta* (Song) in intimate theatre style, and toured to different towns of Orissa with it in May 2000. (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 115-118, 124.) But that is already another story.

Natya Chetana's post-disaster work in relation to the group's general mode of work

Though covering an exceptional period of time for the Natya Chetana team of volunteers as well as cyclone affected Orissa, Natya Chetana's approach to the disaster was in many ways typical of the group's approach in general. First of all, as both the play *Sapanara Sapana* and the post-cyclone creative camps illustrate, politically Natya Chetana's main aim was (and is) to increase a sense of responsibility and thereby activate civic initiative in the local communities. This is sought by providing food for thought. Even after the

cyclone, the only ones that Natya Chetana supported financially and materially were the local performing artists. Rather than couched in terms of collegial support, the act was justified on the basis that getting them back to performing would be beneficial to the mood of the affected communities. In its own work Natya Chetana stands for both hope and realism, the latter through addressing and giving both name and form to the issues it sees as problematic in the communities in question. Nonetheless, crude facts need not to be dealt with crudely. Just as the puppet play pointed to delaying reconstruction work in the hopes of receiving more aid by waiting, artistic work provides ways to discuss issues that would be difficult to talk about directly. Many other issues were gently pushed to make the talk of the day. On occasions in which the talk led also to practical steps to solve certain problems, it is worth noting that in the end the initiative and thus the ownership over the issues were in the hands of the local communities.

Secondly, the group's approach underlines that problems should be examined taking their history and wider social context into account. For instance, former privileges or marginalisation are seldom totally washed away in catastrophes (e.g. Mishra & Nilofer & Mohanty 2004, 226). After the cyclone, Natya Chetana realised that the most neglected in aid delivery was the Muslim community, which was neglected already before the catastrophe. Suri reports that after the cyclone the educated higher-caste people were better able to garner aid from NGOs than the lower-caste people. This was because the lower caste people either did not have access to information regarding the distribution and conditions of the relief in the first place, or lived too far from the main roads and so never got to the spots of aid delivery in any kind of representative numbers. (Suri 2000, 18.) In Natya Chetana's case, other earlier problems brought up by the cyclone included the dysfunctionality of some schools, sidestepping or non-recognition of local communities in decision making, or the narrowness of socially acceptable scopes of action available to local women. Natya Chetana's consciousness of and special attention to the situation of the cyclone-affected women is actually worth noting. Mishra, Nilofer and Mohanty (2004) point that although there is a clear need to recognise more holistically women's complex roles during and after disasters, most government programs do not pay specific attention to women and gender equity. Even when women are appointed as committee members, (male) government officers tend to see their role as supplementary, with the consequence that their participation is not actively sought. Moreover, relief operations leave women out because women are overburdened with the daily business of sustaining their families, or their inability to access the available resources due to cultural and social barriers. Women's widespread illiteracy and poor awareness of various government schemes contributes to their increased vulnerability and exploitation, as does the intensified migration of men to work elsewhere. It forces women to manage their households with minimal available resources and compels

them to seek out and perform non-traditional roles, which in the local community may generate a variety of responses from ridicule to pity. As essential as emergency aid is for survival, for more conventional deliverers of aid the local face of these kinds of issues may be hard to learn and grasp to similar extent. Importantly, through its modes of work, Natya Chetana was capable to avoid repeating some of the earlier distortions in help and aid.

Thirdly, affected people, and more broadly people in disadvantaged positions, need and deserve accurate and many-faceted information. In information delivery, be it post-cyclone situation or largely illiterate and poor audiences, videos and plays may work at times better than other forms of media. In the aftermath of the cyclone, correct information proved to be a powerful tool as such in reducing paralysing rumours and in the reorientation of the people. Perhaps because of its own expertise in cultural media and pro-people ideology, Natya Chetana tends to be excited rather than startled by the tedious nature of acquiring and delivering information, and can think and realise various formats to make its messages to meet its audiences. An important guideline for the group is clarity, which also holds to the group's plays. Though paying a lot of attention to the form and aesthetics of each play, the aim is to keep them simultaneously understandable and easy to follow to diverse audiences. Interestingly, if anyone, it is educated, urban people that sometimes question the idea of producing multi-faceted, nuanced material for disadvantaged people. Natya Chetana meets every now and then urban audience members who are astonished by the fact that the same play has been or will be performed also in villages, for they assume that the play is too complicated for village folks. Natya Chetana's experience however is that the village audiences have the least trouble with either the form or content of its plays. Rather, as most of the plays depict contemporary dilemmas of marginalised rural people, they can connect with the world of the plays without difficulty, knowing exactly what the plays talk about. Further, Natya Chetana's interest in multi-faceted information and dialogue can also be traced to the group's general willingness to try and do modes of work other than theatre, if it is suits the need of the situation. In other words, the work can be flexibly and quickly adjusted. The challenge is to maintain creative attitude to the tasks at hand, and good practical suggestions are generally welcomed and taken into consideration, whoever is proposing them. This approach is visible in the practice of collecting feedback, such as with the social audit after the creative camp. The experience of conducting creative camps raised a desire in Natya Chetana to develop the approach if need be, as well as train interested people who would like to try a similar approach in other places (Natya Chetana 2000 c, 68).

Fourthly, as the processes of *Boli* and *Sapanara Sapana* reveal, Natya Chetana conceives of its role as contributor and collaborator within wider societal processes and

networks of collaboration, such as in the ODMM network established immediately after the cyclone. From the perspective of networking, being part of the ODMM provided Natya Chetana with opportunities to meet like-minded NGO-people and establish friendships. The culture of cooperation that the experience generated has been important ever since. Later on the ODMM network has, for example, functioned as a state-level pressure group to demand that major new infrastructural projects, such as the East Coast Highway, have to be planned and built taking their environmental consequences as well as the regular occurrence of certain of natural catastrophes into account. Finally, while Natya Chetana sees cultural media and communication as its own particular area of expertise, the group is not possessive of its own know-how. On the contrary, the group is happy to train other groups and organisations in the arts of creative expression. As noted earlier, at the post-cyclone creative camps Natya Chetana taught theatre games also to local teachers so that they could continue using them with children. Regarding the case of adivasis discussed in *Boli*, Natya Chetana has been keen to collaborate with *adivasis*, and if there is interest to promote an *adivasi* perspective through theatre, to facilitate adivasi performers by providing them training.

7.4   FOCUS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND BASIC NEEDS

Social justice

At the beginning of the chapter, I observed that as a rule, Natya Chetana's plays are centred on the issue, or concern, of social justice. Within the broad field of social work, social justice is a strongly held core ideal which means that "all people should have equal rights to the resources of the society and should expect and receive fair and equal treatment" (e.g. Heinonen & Spearman 2001, 352). The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) hold human rights and social justice to be fundamental to social work. According to their statement of principles of ethics of social work: "Social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work". This is further defined as challenging negative discrimination on the basis of individual characteristics (such as gender, socio-economic status, skin colour, spiritual beliefs and so forth), recognising diversity (e.g. recognising and respecting the ethnic and cultural diversity), distributing resources equitably, challenging unjust policies and practices (like situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources is unfair), and working in solidarity (challenging conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation or subjugation

and working towards an inclusive society). (IFSW 2004.) While the above discussed ethical principles are not easily met anywhere, existing hierarchies and inequalities make them particularly challenging in India. Against this reality, Natya Chetana's commitment to social justice is significant. In the group's plays it is manifested in the nature of the dramatic conflicts and the kind of protagonists and antagonists presented at the stage. Indeed, the essence of most of the plays is their analysis of exploitation and oppression. While social justice is perhaps the key to all that is universal in social work, theatre can obviously serve as one arena in which the issue of social justice can be articulated.

As Midgley (1997) reminds, despite all of the stated commitments on the importance of promoting social justice, the profession social work has been long divided about the desirability of involvement in social reform and activism, which the promotion of the goals of social justice would require. Still today, social workers "disagree whether the profession should be concerned with issues of social justice or issues of professional practice". Relatively "few regard social reform and political activism as a mainstream professional responsibility, and few are involved in activities of this kind". Most of those who are involved in social justice issues are engaged in community-based forms of social work and have a close contact with groups of oppressed and deprived people. (Ibid. 173.) Natya Chetana is clearly and unhesitatingly involved in social justice work through its theatre. In so doing, rather than seeking justice for certain individuals or cases, the group's work is more broadly-based. Even in stories founded on individual case histories, the episodes are brought forward with the intention that they reflect a wider social and political reality. Analysing the prevalence of structural violence, the lack of social justice, and basic needs going unmet, the plays offer no short cuts to a less violent, fairer, and more well-to-do society. Rather, they encourage the audiences to take the kind of first steps they are able to: to start thinking critically from their own unique perspective, sharing views with others, and if possible, get together to face the problems prevalent in their everyday lives in a collective manner, not only as individuals.

Importance of natural environment

As Natya Chetana's plays keep constantly pointing out, the natural environment and environmental resources are closely associated with basic needs for food and work, and thus the survival of the poor. Likewise, Samal (2007) writes that environmental resources (such as forest, water, grazing land) are important for the poor in developing countries. However, they have multiple competing uses, which create problems of management and over-consumption. While environmental policy should balance the

short term interest of those who benefit from resource-mining policies at the expense of longer-term sustainability and the interests of poorer people, the under-pricing of environmental resources and their value for local communities is common. Under such circumstances, the economic gain of a small minority often takes place at the cost of degrading the material basis for survival of the vast majority. (Ibid. 17-24.)

Tracing the sources of environmental thinking in social work (mainly from European/North American literature), Aila-Leena Matthies and Kati Närhi (2001) observe that environment has been considered important for social work theory and practice since the times of Jane Addams and Mary Richmond. While environment has been often understood as social, physical and cultural environment, the discussion has contained also more nature or ecology-oriented views. The eco-critical approach, in particular, influenced by environmental movements and environmental sociology since 1970s, has seen people as part of the nature, and taken critical stands towards nature-exploiting modernity. (Ibid. 16-40.) The importance of natural environment is also noted in writings on international social work (e.g. Cox & Pawar 2006; Lyons & Manion & Carlsen 2006; Healy 2008, 29-31), which underline the interdependence of people, and people and nature. Regarding social work responses to disaster situations, Healy stresses that though natural disasters are not preventable, the lack of care of the environment, such as human-caused erosion, worsens them and that "interventions must focus on preparedness and recovery". (Healy 2008, 101.) Interestingly, Natya Chetana's response in the post-cyclone situation, developed ad hoc in the middle of crisis, matches well with the principles and steps of social work intervention in disaster situations suggested by Desai[156] (2008).

While the centrality of the natural environment for survival and social work is perhaps more often addressed in the context of the Global South, it is equally important also elsewhere and for the better-off citizens, who form most of the global over-consuming class (see Ulvila & Pasanen 2009, 22-23). The problems or apparent slowness in taking truly influential steps towards living more sustainably are deeply societal and philosophical, and challenge accustomed ideas of living, personal freedom and enjoyment (e.g. a life without car). As Fred Besthorn observes, despite the fact that person/environment models have been guiding frameworks of professional social work practice, and the concern for both is actually unique to social work, the orientation has become increasingly problematic. This is because so far as the definition of environ-

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156　Desai's opinion about the steps of intervention are highly similar to those undertaken by Natya Chetana: Assessment of the situation, identifying problems to be worked upon, trauma intervention, focus on children (who become easily invisible in disasters), focus on women and other vulnerable groups, people's need of correct information, coordination, reconstruction of community life, and so forth. (Desai 2008.)

ment has been mainly restricted to limited interpersonal realms, whereas the natural environment has been ignored, undervalued or simply seen as the backdrop for personal processes. Besthorn calls for deeply ecological social work to challenge many of the core assumptions and distinctions that have shaped the social work agenda, as well as recognition for the fact that social work profession has, "sometimes unwittingly, cooperated in creating a disenchanted world and desacralized humanity characterised by a kind of synthetic, spiritually muted, alienated feelings and lifestyle." Besthorn's view is that alienation from nature has its part in many individual and social problems, including emotional, familial, economic and class issues. Therefore, issues of environmental degradation "cannot be separated from those systemic forces which function to maintain all forms of injustice, whither toward nature or other human beings". (Besthorn 2003, see also Närhi & Matthies 2001, 16). Would social work want to face the situation, it would need to conceptually develop these ideas:

> The environmental and social justice logic of deep ecological social work portends nothing short of radical change in the social, political, and economic structures of modern, industrial society. It recommends a profession that has to return to and significantly expand upon its progressive, activist roots. (Besthorn 2003.)

Highlighting the centrality of environment in its plays and from its local, Orissa-bound perspective Natya Chetana insists on its part that the natural environment and its crucial importance to communities has to be held at the common agenda. Decisions over the use of natural resources should not be done without taking the views of the people directly dependent on them into account. From the perspective of human dignity, greed or accepting social injustices or environmental damage to secure one's own profit or welfare can be worse anomalies than desperate hunger and poverty. While the rich do have more choice, individually each and everyone can do his or her own part in consuming and exploiting (directly or indirectly) less. There have to be ways to develop the society in sustainable manners and so that people are not robbed of their dignity. Human dignity, then, means not only the fulfilment of basic material human needs (whereas excess easily threatens sustainability), but also the fulfilment of socio-cultural needs such as respect, freedom, and meaning of life (Ulvila & Pasanen 2009, 21). Sustainable development also includes social sustainability (Matthies 2001, 134), and Natya Chetana's plays address exactly that. Whether and how that can be achieved, or even adequately approached, is a deeply political issue, requiring commitment, participation, and moral fibre from all parties.

CHAPTER 8
SOCIAL WORK BY NATYA CHETANA

In Natya Chetana's mode of working and conceiving social work, social work is not a separate entity from their theatre work and way of doing it. In earlier chapters I have described the group and its way of living and working, as well as the conceptions, forms and content of Natya Chetana's theatre work. In the case of certain plays, I have also opened up the issues they commented upon. In this chapter, my aim is to discuss Natya Chetana's work, location and aims further in order to grasp the work in social work terms. In so doing I am nonetheless talking about the very same approach and practices as in the previous chapters. Social work and theatre, the fields that I have mainly relied on in my attempts to locate the group and its work, can be thought of as different traditions of perceiving and analysing the world. As such, they are interested in the kind of things which can be meaningfully located within their tradition, and which connect and communicate with their core interests and questions. As a consequence, in the case of research subjects like Natya Chetana, the same issues or activities are perceived, named and contextualised differently according to respective traditions of inquiry and their approach on the whole. Natya Chetana, existing at the intersection of different traditions, is articulated in relation and through them.

Summing up issues discussed in bits and pieces in previous chapters from a social work perspective, in the first part of this chapter my attention is still on the posture that Natya Chetana takes for itself in Orissa. As it has come up, the volunteers of Natya Chetana are often brief in their formulations of the group's work as social work. Mostly they just note the social work identity of the group and/or themselves. Rather than trying to constantly press each and every Natya Chetana volunteer to give words to what social work means to him or her, I have preferred to look at the group's daily practices of life and work. As discussed in chapter five, much of the theatre/social work lifestyle is *group work* that is nonetheless *combined with personal politics*. Correspondingly, one of the expectations for Natya Chetana volunteers both collectively and individually is the politics of exemplariness. Spirituality is also built into Natya Chetana's lifestyle. Furthermore, the condition for successful group work as well as the realisation of the broader aims of the work is unity.

In the second part of the chapter, as an angle to highlight the political level of the work, I turn to the issue of structural violence, which I pointed to earlier as a central theme in Natya Chetana's plays. Drawing together the concerns of citizenship and structural violence, I back myself mainly with the insights of Gyanendra Pandey (2006) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2008), incorporating their views with my understanding of Natya Chetana and its theatre. The third and final part is a summary of Natya Chetana's work as social work.

8.1 SOCIAL WORK: CURE, IDEOLOGY, MINDSET

Identifying one's niche

As mentioned earlier, Natya Chetana's first steps were essentially student activities connected with the National Service Scheme. Those were the days when the NGO-boom was starting, and working opportunities seemed better in social work than as purely a theatre group. The team had also a strong calling for social and community development. Yet, finding its own identity as a theatre group as well as conceiving its role in social change was not a straightforward process. As Subodh reflected to me (e.g. August 2007), one of the early steps of Natya Chetana was to 'adopt' a village and attempt to combine the two roles of a theatre worker and an ordinary social worker for the benefit of the village community, an ideal situation to test what a concentrated theatre/social work effort can do. The experiment failed. Before admitting this, the Natya Chetana team did its best to be good social workers. From other voluntary organisations they learned that in order to know their area they should do a survey. When conducting it they were questioned by the local people, who wanted to know who they were and why had they come. To provide an answer, Natya Chetana put on a puppetry performance called 'Who are we?', and also did a cycle expedition to establish their role as theatre workers. At that time the reason to use bicycles was that they could not afford anything else – the idea of cyco theatre had not been yet concretised. But work like usual social workers soon made them tired and frustrated. A major reason for this was that they felt they seriously lacked knowledge in their endeavours to entertain the public as social workers. Having only their general knowledge to rely on, they applied all of their energy and intelligence to face the people and survey them. And it was not a cultural survey as was done for play-making, but a statistical one, figuring out how many persons there are in each family and what is their annual income. Doing artistic work in tandem turned difficult, for it would have demanded practice time and scopes for holding performances. The team ended up doing social work all the time (an outcome

known also by other theatre makers involved in social work, see van Erven 1992, 120).
Yet however sincerely they tried to enforce the stereotypical framework they had of so-
cial work, their artistic minds could not get any satisfaction. Concluding that being a
theatre worker and social worker are different tasks at the end of the day, they kept
struggling to fulfil at least the social work part of the work.

Subodh then got into PRIA's organisational management training, which awoke him
and Natya Chetana to stop and think. They came to the conclusion that they were on
the wrong road; combining the two roles was impossible. Thinking that they are art-
ists, not social workers, they saw no other opportunity than to take some distance from
social work. At that point, however, PRIA gave Natya Chetana the idea that the group
could after all have a role in the process of social work. "Just like an engineer or a doc-
tor can be a social worker, a theatre worker can be a social worker." The team came to
the conclusion that "theatre itself is a process of social work as long as it addresses the
life itself, addresses the mass audience, and addresses the tradition and culture of the
society." Natya Chetana came to the conclusion that from the perspective of social work
the play is a success when the follow-up of the play is ensured; whereas without it, the
effort goes waste. "Theatre is the seed for social change, but if someone is not there
to take care afterwards, the tree does not grow out of the seed." Natya Chetana identi-
fied the seedlings as its part. To ensure then that the plants will grow into trees, the
group thought it necessary to "cooperate with right kind of farmers". This is why they
started to cooperate with "many networks, partners, and people-based institutions".
Natya Chetana's understanding about is role in the society is illustrated in the drawing
next page. Theatre moisturizes the soil (the minds of the people), from which people's
organisations grow.

Although known in the beginning more as a team of social workers than as a thea-
tre group, since mid-1990s Natya Chetana was gradually also recognised for its thea-
tre. All in all, Natya Chetana's practices are similar to experiences from other socially
committed, community oriented art forms, fulfilling the promises usually attached to
participatory theatre work. How does theatre then serve the process of social work? In
Subodh's words, theatre is a kind of a capsule. Its cover, the entertainment and beauty
of it, is sweet, whereas the subject, the powder inside the capsule is its bitter content.
Drama is essentially about projecting a dramatic conflict between the antagonist and
the protagonist. In stories that have a happy ending, the protagonist wins at the end.
Natya Chetana's choice is not to project the victory of the protagonist on stage. Largely
performing stories with real life substance, the preference is to leave it to the people to
relate the characters of the play to their own lives, as well as to think what will happen,
whether and how the protagonist could win at the end. Leaving the usual last scene of
dramatic conflict out of the play, the performers anticipate that it could happen in so-
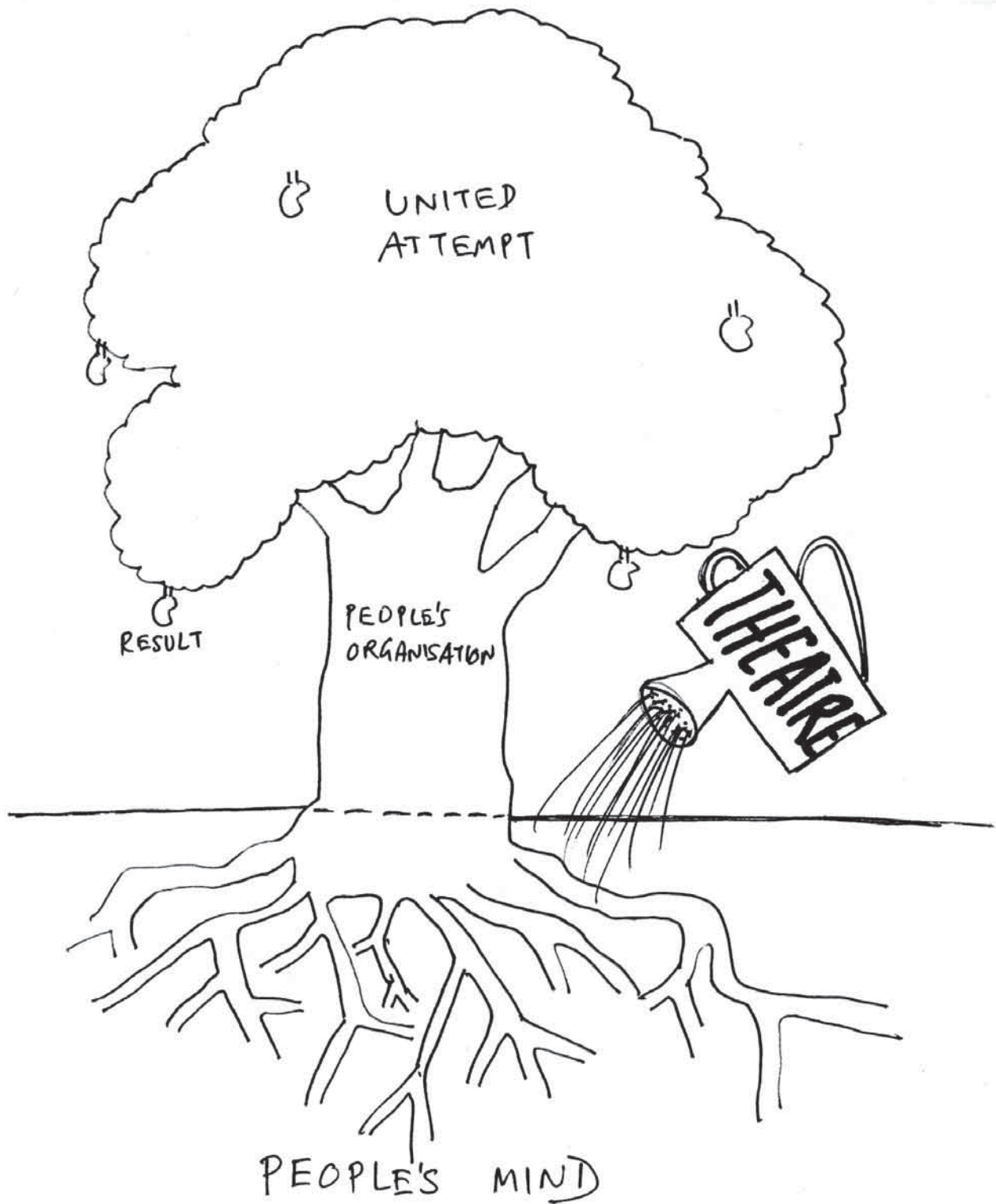
ILLUSTRATION 22. Theatre as social work as conceived by Natya Chetana (drawing by Subodh Pattnaik).

ciety. This then can be projected as social welfare, social development, or social work. (Subodh 12.8.2007.)

Subodh further explains that art is a way to reflect life, and one of the internal objectives of it is to make the reflection a cause for joyful learning. While the medium is sweet, the content should be thought provoking. Therefore, Natya Chetana's suggestion for primarily artistic theatre organisations is that they should also be social workers: "When you are doing theatre art there is politics – then take the benefit out of it!" In Subodh's view, the core of social work activity is to help people create and cultivate a pro-people value system in society. Theatre is not that different; its main aim is also to have an impact on the value systems of the audiences. However, Subodh's observation is that

> Even many serious theatre experts many times give clarifications for their commercial efforts, explaining how they do not want bring about tensions for their audiences, on the contrary they wish them a bit of relaxation and laughter, a chance to forget their pains and sorrows. (…) It is a very established way of telling this. (Subodh 12.8.2007.)

In Subodh's view, if taken seriously, helping people to forget their pains and sorrows, even if only momentarily, can also be considered social work. However, the problem of such approach is that it does not carry very far; it is just like welfare activity, helping for a moment but not longer. Another weak point of the approach is that it is commercialising welfare. Natya Chetana is not interested in the business of providing escapism. This is because the group looks for a society "in which there is not much pain" and "the pain you are facing is not God's gift". Rather than offering painkillers for an hour or two, Natya Chetana wants to contribute to the understanding of the root causes of the pain and preventing it. Subodh stresses that Natya Chetana is not interested in superficial development. "Why? Real development is not making a house ready or rescuing from a disease." Tracing the obstacles of development requires questioning, such as "If you are silent, why? If you are sick, why? If that is because of the water, why? If water is polluted, why? If it is polluted because of the factory, why?"

The above conveys the all-encompassing meaning Natya Chetana conceives for social work: With the ills of society, social work's role is to recognise the disease and identify and understand the mechanisms of the infection. While alleviating the symptoms is valuable, the priority should be improving public health by tackling the very causes of diseases. In principle, social work is then an *umbrella term* for any activity meant to change society towards being more just and equal for everyone, an *ideology* that can be applied to a range of possible practices. By doing their work with a social work *mindset*, doctors, engineers or actors can be social workers. Accordingly, in the

case of Natya Chetana, specifying the group's work with different labels or categories is all right as long as the labels capture something of the respective tasks and contexts. Whether the Natya Chetana volunteers remark on it or not, the work is simultaneously also social work, though a rather particular variety of it. At the intersection of social work, theatre and activism, Natya Chetana's core knowledge, skills and accountability have to do with theatre making. Importantly, as we have learned regarding the group's lifestyle and way of doing theatre, much of Natya Chetana's effort and know-how is targeted at facilitating and carrying on group processes, and contributing to wider societal processes through them. Instead of limiting themselves solely to theatre, Natya Chetana and Subodh have been capable and willing to adapt their know-how also to new circumstances, as for instance after the Orissa Cyclone (see Chapter 7.2).

To the Natya Chetana volunteers, then, the social work nature of their work is a certainty and obviously nothing the volunteers need to challenge or doubt, or for that matter particularly mention. The core of the ideology is to do something good for society; especially its downtrodden and poor. In practice, the work consists of a number of parallel, ongoing processes and their thousand tasks; any work advancing the group's mission and processes is social work. In this sense, weighing the social work nature of isolated tasks, such as buying potatoes from the market for the common meal, would be meaningless. Natya Chetana's work is social work because of its larger goal and social commitment. Again, while single acts are not that determinant, the qualities and behaviour of the team and its individual participants are being constantly evaluated, both in the group as well as by outsiders – also by the potato vendor at the market.

Exemplariness

As pointed in Chapter Five, choosing a theatre and social work life in Natya Chetana means relatively simple and meagre lifestyle. This is only a beginning. The idea behind all of this is that working for social change has to also change its doers. Life in Natya Chetana is life as a demonstration. The group, and therefore each and every group member, has to embody the stated principles, a practice that knows no office hours. Being similar to a kind of internalised image politics, life as a demonstration has many fronts. One of them is the attempt to gradually upgrade the reputation of theatre people, and thus the general acceptability of theatre as a career choice, also for women. Abstaining from addictive substances like coffee and tobacco as well as emphasising the family-like and thus morally acceptable setup of the group serves this end. Yet, while Natya Chetana has an ample amount of rules and principles that state the group's policies and requirements for the volunteers involved, rules alone do not guarantee

exemplariness. At the end of the day, exemplariness is founded on the group members' everyday behaviour, the kind of postures the team as well as its individual members take and the attitudes they convey towards each other, outsiders, society and the world at large. Touring in rural areas by bicycles is done for a reason.

In India, social workers' capability for sacrificing personal comfort and other benefits for higher ideals is both highly valued and frequently tested, perhaps for the reason that despite the image of a country of ascetics and holy men, average Indians are not thought to be particularly keen to practice self-control (e.g. Varma 2004, 86). In order to be respected in their practice, social workers have to personally embody what they preach. This is not necessarily an easy task, for social work is not always seen as the most level-headed career choice, and social workers may face ridicule and attempts to demean them. Nonetheless, the expectation of exemplariness is further connected to the importance of role models in Indian society: A good social worker is essentially also a role model for others. On the other hand, positive role models are important also for the workers themselves.

As discussed in Chapter Five, in Natya Chetana embodying the social commitments of the group as well as meeting the high moral expectations generally placed for a social worker is in many ways demanding, not least for one's close relationships. However, it is not without rewards. Those able to live up to the ideal and achieve unity of personal and political, or thoughts, emotions and actions, have credibility, not an insignificant political asset, not to forget the value of personal wholeness. And though there might be days when the taste of sacrifice is bitter, when chosen voluntarily for personally motivated ideological reasons, simple living can be experienced also as a highly meaningful, even pleasurable way of life. Natya Chetana volunteers are acutely aware of this. They have to be, if they want to achieve the customary Indian understanding of social work 'gone right'. Moreover, their identification as both theatre and social workers provide a defined role in the society. Describing the issue from his perspective, one of Natya Chetana volunteers, Debi, explained that when he got to know Natya Chetana, he was surprised how the team was ready to struggle and adjust regardless of their financial insecurity. But "when I involve myself in this method I am also surprised [about] myself". (Debi 6.5.2002.) Chuni, on her part, points out how theatre work has given her plenty of pleasant personal satisfaction since her early roles in Natya Chetana's plays. For instance, after having performed the role of Goddess Pani, a group of women came from the audience to say their *namaskaars* (greetings) to her, taking her as the Goddess. For Chuni, the fact that the women were able to imagine her as the Goddess evidenced the power of theatre. (Chuni 8.5.2002)

Elsewhere, in the context of the academic and professional discussion on social work ethics and values (e.g. Banks 2006), Natya Chetana's and others' expectation of

the exemplariness and personal embodiment of the chosen values are reminiscent of the character and relationship-based approaches to social work ethics and can be seen as one alternative to the principle-based approach. In short, where principle-based approaches typically set the general targets of social work, they often remain silent regarding the moral life, character, motives and emotions of the workers as well as their relationships and commitments to other people. In virtue ethics, the basic judgements are judgements about character: "An action is right if it is what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances", the virtues of a social worker reflecting "the virtues recognised in the society at large". (Ibid. 54-55.) Natya Chetana's conception of social work emphasises the virtues of the workers. Furthermore, in addition to the many mission and principle statements of Natya Chetana, it is possible to count the group's commitment to the ideals of people's theatre as a basis of ethical principles. Following the logic of doing theatre primarily with, for and about the people, separate acts are justified on the basis of what they possibly mean to and from the perspective of the disadvantaged.

Adhering to ethical principles entails that one sometimes has to refrain from otherwise promising contracts and cooperation if they demand compromising one's ethics (or other equally important principles). One case illuminating Natya Chetana's ethical reasoning is Natya Chetana's refusal to do a set of paid performances for the local electrical company that wanted Natya Chetana to do a play for rural audiences about the importance of paying for electricity instead of stealing it. Natya Chetana's point, well informed by the troubles the group has faced in *Natya Gram*, was that as a rule the electricity supply at the countryside is minimal if available at all. Power cuts are a daily occurrence, and the voltage is commonly far below the required 220V, breaking bulbs and making it impossible to plug in any delicate electrical apparatuses, such as mobile phone chargers, as they would simply break. When and if the rich industrialists and other notables privileged with more steady and frequent electric current are not bothering about their electricity bills, as is well known, Natya Chetana's question was why should those with oftentimes non-existent service? The case illustrates also the complexity of ethical questions. Stealing electricity, however low-grade, violates civic regulations by sidestepping the law. According to Chatterjee, a common paradox of postcolonial democracies is that the unauthorised users of electricity appear before the state both as violators of the law and demanders of governmental welfare as their 'right' (Chatterjee 2002, 177). In the above case, Natya Chetana's criticism against starting the 'pay for your electricity' campaign from fairly insignificant users (thieves) of electricity states that the prime target for it should be the industry and those without major financial troubles to pay their far more extensive bills. What goes without saying is that the electrical company may find the industrialists and other more influential customers scary to make demands upon.

Spirituality

The holistic orientation towards the work also covers spirituality in Natya Chetana. While the group has had some Muslim and Christian volunteers as well as followers of other faiths, and basically volunteers from every rank of the society from *dalits* to *brahmins*, the majority of the volunteers are Hindu. Religious images visible in posters and as statues in the group's premises also belong to Hinduism. While privately everyone follows his or her own religion, as a group Natya Chetana celebrates certain Hindu religious festivals, such as *Ganesh Puja*[157], which have a connection with either theatre or the group's mission. On the other hand, other events are celebrated with equal sincerity, such as the group's foundation day (10th November), World Theatre Day (27th March) and the Day of Independence (15th August). When I stayed longer with Natya Chetana, the team was concerned about whether I was longing for an opportunity to visit a church. Though I was not, I appreciated the consideration and one day visited the two local churches.

Born and raised in a strongly Lutheran (Protestant Christian) culture and country, I soon faced the limits of my own vocabulary when trying to find words to describe aspects of spirituality in Natya Chetana, or more broadly in Indian society. In Finnish, as well as in English, much of the terminology to talk about religion or spirituality keeps sounding to my ears as Christian terminology. Having learned those concepts first, culturally my first language to *think* about religion is Lutheran Christianity. This first learning easily colours my attempts to comprehend other, non-Christian religious concepts. Languages carry not only words but concepts and cultures within them. There are things that do not translate neatly into English, Finnish, or Oriya, let alone the conceptual worlds of Christianity and Hinduism. Though both contain blessed food, *Prasad*[158] and Holy Communion[159] are different things. Similar difficulties of translation apply, of course, to other topics and concepts as well, including the vocabularies of social work (see e.g. Harrison 2007).

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157 The festival for Ganesh, the elephant-headed deity, who is generally conceived as a remover of obstacles.

158 In Hindu religious tradition, *prasad* (*prasāda*), literally a gracious gift, is usually something edible (though it can be other things too) that is first offered to a deity or a saint and then distributed in his or her name. In Hindu religious practice, the desire to receive *prasad* and have *darshan* (*darśana*, to see or get a vision of the divine) are major motivations for temple visits and pilgrimage.

159 A Christian practice of enjoying blessed wine and bread (usually as part of divine service in church). Set by Jesus Christ himself, the meal, also called Eucharist, commemorates the last supper he had with his disciples. At the level of mystery, the bread is the body and the wine the blood of Jesus, and by taking them a Christian is in communion with God.

While I do not find that Christianity-infused English words truly fit any in-depth accounts of spirituality in Natya Chetana, suffice to say that spirituality was and is a seamless aspect of daily life, gently present rather than something to make a great noise about. The days start with a Morning Prayer, the theatre stage is sacred and a ritual blessing done before each performance. Moreover, Natya Chetana's own booklets (e.g. 1996, 6; 2000 c, 75; 2004, 17) mention the Morning Prayer, conveying that in Natya Chetana's view the practice exemplifies something essential about the group. Subodh's explanation (e.g. discussions in August 2007 & December 2008) was that spirituality is behind the aesthetics of Indian theatre and a part of normal life and culture in India. Moreover, "theatre is a trust game". The whole process is around trust and belief. Natya Chetana sets the date of performance in the future believing that that day the play is ready. On that basis people wait to see them and buy the tickets. "Who will give the guarantee?" Spirituality is also a name for an understanding that human beings do have a religious or spiritual dimension. In Subodh's experience, the feeling that there is a supreme power is balancing for a human being. It helps to discover where and what one's place is in the world. For that reason they want to "obey and pray" in Natya Chetana. Finally, spirituality is not limited to religion only; it covers also the spirit of individuals to grow. Natya Chetana's Morning Prayer is actually a common prayer that was recited in Orissan schools during Subodh's childhood. As he reflects,

> Our prayer song is possible by any religion, it is not identifying with any particular religion. It says that as I am a human being, a supreme power please give me some kind of qualities or behaviour, which will make it possible for me to help the progress of the world, and at any point I can sacrifice my life to speak out the truth which I believe. (…) As a child I never understood its meaning. Now many new meanings I discover. One is exactly about social work: Sad, or unhappy people, or people having pain, who are not protected and who are insecure – I should serve. Give me power to my hands and my legs to give service to the people who are insecure and in pain. (Subodh 14.8.2007.)

In this mode of service, the idea is that in Natya Chetana each and everyone can be also a spiritual contributor in the process: "the group members have to believe each other, depend on each other, and get benefit with a united spirit". For Subodh, "this is the whole process of spiritual practices. There is the feeling that you are somehow in communication with the God". (Ibid.)

In Finland, praying is surely not an established routine of social work, with the exception of the kind of social work run by churches. Many would also find the idea of a secular prayer problematic to start with. Then again, when interpreted broadly and allowing a variety of religious or spiritual ways of thinking and believing, spirituality

has recently gained more room also in Northern/Western social work discussions, particularly in the United States. Spirituality has been recognised as an important resource, rather than a problem, in social and therapeutic work (e.g. Becvar 1997), as well as a source of motivation and ethics of individual social workers (Hodge 2005). Spirituality and faith-based services have been at the center also in relation to care, for instance Tangenberg's (2005) stand being that social work has to guarantee non-discriminatory, ethical and efficient care irrespective of the care receiver's or giver's religious beliefs. In Natya Chetana's life as demonstration spirituality is an important source of personal motivation and grounding, while it is by no means reduced only to that. Furthermore, the group's everyday practices of spirituality have a strongly collective nature. In addition to feeling connected with (one's) God(s), they contribute to the spirit of the group; everyone can participate and the content is motivated in relation to the group's greater task. Contrasted to more worldly and comfort-seeking possibilities, practices like prayer further underline the preference for simple (non-materialistic), collective living.

Unity

A central, cross cutting theme both in Natya Chetana's theatre and its societal targets as well as in the collective style of work is unity. As noted earlier, in everyday group life and specific play making workshops alike, the capability for group work is valued before and beyond artistic talents. While mere message delivery as such is not Natya Chetana's purpose, the message that the plays repeatedly do promulgate is the importance and necessity of unity in facing social problems. In the plays this does not remain at the level of dialogue or the ending song alone. Unity and collectivity are strongly underlined through their direction and style of acting, such as use of chorus actors, which altogether contribute to the kind of aesthetics that has become Natya Chetana's trademark (see illustrations 20-21, pages 253–255). Content wise, the lack of unity as one of the root causes for existing problems is usually thematically incorporated into the plays. In short, Natya Chetana's belief in unity, as well as in the capacity of communities to find and learn ways to achieve unity if only there is willingness towards that direction, is fairly unfaltering. From Natya Chetana's perspective, in work with communities the important thing is to get the people to recognise this. The rest can be left to the local facilitators of the process as well as the community in question.

Unity also has its rewards, in the group as well as society at large. Artistic work in a group can be powerful as such. In India, aspirations for individual fame and ownership over a ready product may at times matter less than in more individualistically oriented countries. Cartoonist Katja Tukiainen's experience from teaching cartoon making in India was that the participants of the cartoon workshop were not bothered about the

individual ownership of their personal visual expression; they did not seem to have such a concept but helped to draw each others' cartoons. In her view, the support of the group was also important in particular for representing critical stands. Sharing the view within the group and signing it collectively gave the critical opinion more weight, and it was lighter to be in opposition as a group than alone. (Tukiainen 2007, 55-56.) My learning with Natya Chetana is similar, conveyed also by many of the volunteers' analysis that as a group, their asset is unity. However, unity and group life do not necessarily go together, especially in the long run, and many rules and principles can turn also suffocating. Unity is something that has to be consciously constructed and allowed opportunities to grow, a continuous process rather than a bastion once and forever established. In the moments it is achieved, it can act as a remarkable driving force in the work for a better society.

Interestingly, exemplariness, spirituality and unity, as self-evident qualifiers for social work as they are for Natya Chetana, would not be the first or even second on the list of adjectives to describe social work or other social professions in Finland. Though they are themes that can be recognised and understood in the Finnish context as well, instead of highlighting them they are largely – and I think remarkably – silenced. If anything, they bring to mind the early social workers at the time before academic professionalism, sounding somewhat outdated if compared to contemporary qualification demands, the field's stated reliance on evidence-based knowledge and the society's general mantra of efficiency – sometimes at any cost[160]. In other words, Natya Chetana's formulations of social work cannot be easily captured by the kind of outlining typical of much contemporary 'Western' social work, such as seeing social work taking place essentially as a client – social worker relationships, or seeing eradicating extreme poverty (among others by remedial work, income transfers and so forth) as the core of the work. At worst, the increasingly fragmented and managerial practice set ups can compromise both the unity of the workers as well as the personal sensibility of the work. Nonetheless, also Natya Chetana's dream is the eradication of deprivation. Life without adequate food, water, and other basic necessities is not life dignified, neither for the individual in question nor for the society that bears to witness such suffering. But things will not change unless there are people who demand change, and are willing to work for it, starting from themselves.

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160 My guess is that in Finland social work's unwillingness to speak aloud on issues like a calling or spirituality has to do with the desire to take distance from the profession's religious and thus unscientific beginnings, as well as the fear that talking in these terms would not serve the field's struggle for better esteem and higher salaries.

8.2 TEASING OUT CITIZENSHIP BY DEPICTING AND ANALYSING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Cultural dignity and citizenship at stake

As pointed in Chapter Seven, enduring themes in Natya Chetana's work on different fronts are injustice and neglect that particularly people in vulnerable positions have to face. Injustice and neglect are not mere word mongering; they consist of practical and often multi-level acts, ranging from terror and violence to various ways of non-recognition and silencing. Often, the basic needs of the people in politically and socially disadvantaged positions are chronically inadequately met. But depriving vulnerable populations takes also more indirect forms, such as depriving the natural environments they are dependent on for food, water and protection. Connected to the issue of citizenship, these are the themes of this sub-chapter.

In short, Natya Chetana's broad dream is culturally, socially and economically dignified life in contemporary Orissa. In line with the earlier discussed idea of dignity grounded on the fulfilment of both basic and socio-cultural needs, Natya Chetana's interpretation of dignity, while not assuming material excess, definitely implies that one is neither starving nor anyone's slave. Within the limits of the resources that one has, one should have the opportunity for informed choices. Seeing that wealth is no precondition to a socially and culturally rich life, Natya Chetana stresses the importance of being connected to, rather than resisting, one's own particular culture and history. Just as the rich, the poor, the peasants, the tribals, and so on, are cultured beings contributing to the society and the world. They all have important knowledge and experiences to share and to learn from. So far in India, however, learning and sharing has been largely one-way, hierarchical, and prejudiced. Therefore, it is the time to value the views, experiences and cultural insights that the lower class, marginal, rural and/or tribal people, workers and women can tell.

Like the rich, also the poor, Natya Chetana's "the people", are citizens of India. The thing is to make the rich and the poor alike to realise this and act accordingly. This is not an easy end, as illuminated by Gyanenda Pandey (2006) and Gayatri Charavorty Spivak (2008), both of Bengali origin and connected to the Subaltern Studies collective[161]. Though Pandey and Spivak are unlikely to know Natya Chetana and vice versa,

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[161] The Subaltern Studies Collective is a name for an interdisciplinary constellation of researchers keen to reconstruct Indian historiography and Indian society. The collective produced a series of volumes arguing "against the elitistic views which, according to the contributors, have governed much of the academic work in anthropology, political science and the history writing of South Asia" (Tenhunen 1998).

some of their observations are highly similar, a fact that encouraged me to read Pandey and Spivak with Natya Chetana's plays in mind. Moreover, against the vastness of citizenship discussions, I find relying on South Asian authors to be the most relevant. This is not lessened by Connell's (2007, 63) warning that 'Northern' theory is not at its best in coming to terms with systemic violence, especially in 'Southern' societies. Furthermore, also Sudipta Kaviraj (2002) argues that in non-Western world, political modernity and understanding of civil society do not entirely fit into the frameworks of Western social theory.

In India as elsewhere, one of the determining frameworks for citizenship, education and social work of whatever kind is the state (e.g. Webb 2003). However, as political collectives, democratic nation-states are negotiated and contradictory constructions. India, thought to be the world's biggest democracy, is no exception. Ashis Nandy has criticised that the European origin of the idea of a nation-state does not match with the South Asian experiences of history or with the present reality (see also Mehta 1998, 94). Therefore, in India the idea of modern state is met with a high level of ambivalence. In Nandy's observation, three images of the Indian state are simultaneously prevalent and at interplay with each other: (1) the state as protector, (2) the state as moderniser and liberator, and (3) the state as arbiter. All of these images bend into multiple, contradictory and paradoxical uses. When conceived as a protector, the state is expected to provide protection against oppressors and outsiders, and for native lifestyles. However, when interpreted as protection of 'the mainstream', the idea has been used also to justify ruthlessness against ethnic groups and peripheral cultures in the state. For those seeing the role of the state primarily as moderniser and liberator, then, the main function of the state is to introduce Indian society, including its under-privileged and under-developed members, to the modern world and to create modern Indian culture. According to Nandy, this is the image that dominates the politics of much of India's modern elite and increasingly also the urban middle classes. Its shadowy side is that it has been used as a justification for state violence and bureaucratic centralism. Moreover, it allows the possibility of the elimination of traditions seen incompatible with modernity. Finally, the image of the state as arbiter emphasises state as the sphere where social relationships can be negotiated. The negative side of this image is that it has reduced the Indian state to a marketplace, overshadowing "creative use of the state as a means of cultural self-renewal through the open renegotiation of social relationships." In a way, there are two states functioning simultaneously; the ideal state that deserves, and needs, the unqualified support of all Indians, and the shadowy, illegitimate state that has deviated far away from norms of democratic governance. (Nandy 2001, 36-56.)

All told, nation is *the* modern political community (Pandey 2006, 154), a process of political negotiation whose participants "are recognised only through politics". But

"the communities involved in these national political debates are neither seamless nor obviously and easily identified." Moreover, the negotiations in which "people with very different kinds of commitments and interests have to make concessions (…) are almost always between *unequals*." (Ibid. 173-4.) Consequently, "violence is a general and continuous aspect of modern life". Spectacular acts of brutal aggression are only one aspect of the violence; much of the violence takes place in a more disguised form, in "everyday exercise of power over women and children, politically disadvantaged communities, and the poor", as well as "the production and reproduction of majorities and minorities". Violence further occurs "in the construction and naturalisation of particular categories of thought, in history and politics." (Ibid. 1-8.) [162] Commenting on similar issues from the perspective of human rights, Spivak names the game as class apartheid, in which "the usually silent victims of pervasive rather than singular and spectacular human rights violations are generally the rural poor" (Spivak 2008, 20- 21).

Gosh's (2004) view is that there is a kind of cultural revolution going on between a relatively small but highly visible minority who can engage in conspicuous consumption and display their wealth, and the increased material insecurity, lower real incomes, and more precarious employment opportunities concerning a very large section of the population. The phenomenon is particularly evident in the big cities of the country, but it also features rural India, and reflects reduced interaction between rural classes. One of the consequences is that aspirations of the youth are increasingly determined by joyful material consumption, success (measured essentially as material advancement), and individualism. Achieving these things is seen as a sign of individual talent and achievement in the competition against one's peers. However, the political and social problem all this brings about is that lack of success, or even success deemed inadequate given the ambition, causes alienation and frustration, which can "easily be directed towards any potential competitor" or basically any "group that can be attacked with relative ease". In other words, instead of confronting those who are actually benefiting from the system, aggressive vents of frustration are

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162 Though Pandey writes in the context of India, it strikes me that from social work perspective many of his views can be applied to Finland. The long-term poor or people at the margins for other reasons are easily, under the cover of bureaucratic practices, treated in ways that further marginalise or silence them. For instance, the mentally ill homeless may be outright abandoned from health services, especially if they have substance abuse problems, the explanation being that their problems are too severe or that there is a lack of matching services for them (e.g. Kärkkäinen 2005). According to law, they nevertheless should have similar rights and access to health care as anyone else. All in all, those at the margins are disciplined in ways that the better off need never face. Noteworthy in these developments is that they have taken place in a country that has entertained a self-image of being one of the most egalitarian in the world. Anyhow, the somewhat late-blooming Finnish welfare state development was not obvious to start with, but the result of persistent and determined political struggle (e.g. Uljas 2008).

increasingly finding violent expression, towards the categories of people who are nearer home, closer in terms of lifestyle, and more susceptible to such attack. It is worth noticing that often these groups are already among the most disadvantaged and materially weak sections of society. (Gosh 2004, 305.)

Natya Chetana's plays deal with all the above-mentioned forms of violence. Indeed, they can be seen as testimonies of how life at the margins or in a subaltern position is often life determined by dire oppression, violence, insecurity and lack of protection. For example in the earlier discussed play *Boli,* the modern, well-educated and well-off engineer masterminds the accident that causes the leader of the malnourished tribals to face an injury at the construction site. He loses his leg and is no longer capable to lead the protest against the plan to replace the tribal workers by machines. In *Sapanara Sapan*, Sapan is ripped off first from his rights to the land he has purchased, then (to the benefit of the shrimp mafia and corrupted government servants) his sources of livelihood, only to see how the merciless storm kills his wife. Along with violence, the stories illustrate Orissa's position as a poor, predominantly rural and marginal state. Furthermore, the scenery in both of these plays is peripheral, the nature (forest, sea) powerful even (and particularly) when exhausted and disrupted, and the miseries, caused either by the greedy with an opportunity for exploitation or the nature itself, take place in the lives of the poor. They are people for whom a meal a day is not a matter of course.

In the context of Finland, one of the concerns regarding social work – and more broadly the funding of the welfare state – has been that the more the lifestyles and shared realities of the wealthier citizens and the rest grow apart, as it has increasingly happened, the greater the danger that also the solidarity and understanding by the better-off towards the more disadvantaged crumbles (Raunio 2004, 201-202). In Spivak's (2008, 8) terms, on the basis of her observation on similar phenomena in other contexts, what takes place is that "the other is not simply a matter of imaginative geography but also discontinuous epistemes". Not insignificantly to the scopes of action available for social workers, once the better-off class has diverged from the less fortunate others, it often constructs "the state" and "the nation" according to its own interests, though disguising them as mainstream and nationalist. In view of Pandey, in India "a minority viewpoint and culture (that of a get-rich-quick, consumerist, Brahmanical, ruling class) is being foisted on the rest of the country as the viewpoint and culture of the community as a whole", (…) "as *the* national culture." (Pandey 2006, 18-19, 48.) The modern nationalist historiography has by and large further reinforced such an idea of

national essence "and elevated the nation state (…) to the end of all history"[163]. Those who do not agree can be labelled as anti-modern or anti-national. (Ibid. 18, 44.)

A good example of these issues coined into a play is Natya Chetana's intimate theatre play *Maati* (Mother Earth) performed in 2008, developed from an earlier cyco theatre play *Dhola Suna* (White Gold, 2007). Based on real events in Orissa's Kalahandi district the play deals with the issues of farmers' suicides[164] and naxalism[165], seeing them both as forced and deadly choices at the face of structural and economical exploitation and lack of survival options. In contemporary India, if anybody the Naxalites are established as the antinational, and farmers, suicidal or not, embody the traditional and thus in the visions of many educated urban Indians also the anti-modern. In Natya Chetana's play, the suffering of the farmers and their families is caused by modernity and the new opportunities for exploitation to which the global seed, fertiliser and pesticides businesses make them vulnerable. In *Maati*, a farmer (performed by Dilip, a farmer himself) is persuaded to shift to fertiliser and the pesticide intensive cultivation of hybrid cotton.

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163 The history of Finland would allow interesting comparisons starting from the construction of the idea of Finnishness at the time of Russian rule, and the developments that have taken place ever since, including the economic recession and bank crisis in early 1990s and again on a global scale at the time of writing. One of the keywords of the financial elite has been national competitiveness, making sacrifices for which has been largely presented as the duty of every citizen, also when it means structural adjustment, loss of jobs, and withdrawal or deterioration of services.

164 In India, farmer's suicides, seen as symptomatic of farmers' weakened position, heavy indebtedness, and lack of survival prospects in neoliberal economy, are estimated to have crossed 200,000 incidents throughout India during the first decade of the millennium (see Sainath 2009).

165 Naxalism, or the naxalite movement, owes its name to a peasant uprising in the village of Naxalbari at the junction of India, Nepal and Bangladesh in 1967 when a local tribal peasant was attacked by contract fighters (goonds) because of a land dispute. To fight back, the local peasants attacked the local landlords and the violence escalated. In the view of the former servant of India's Ministry of Home Affairs, Prakash Singh, the insurgency grew into a movement of resistance pursuing a new social order, attracting "some of the finest brains and the cream of India's youth in certain areas". In his opinion, the basic factors behind Naxalism are "social injustice, economic inequality and the failure of the system to redress the grievances of large sections of people who suffered and continue to suffer". Ideologically, the Naxalites are counted as (Maoist) communists. Fragmented into a number of groups that are active particularly in the eastern parts of India (including Orissa), and taking the form of an armed guerrilla struggle, the movement has ebbed and flowed, and is thought to cause annually hundreds of deaths, police and civilian casualties included. While some Naxalites have really been indulging in senseless violence, Naxalism has also become a much abused term: "The authorities playing second fiddle to vested interests (…) use this terminology to brand anyone crying for social and economic justice and justify using repressive measures against him." Despite heavy efforts by the state and central governments, the Naxalite movement has not died down and is unlikely to do so in the near future, "because it draws sustenance from the grievances of the people which have not been addressed". (Singh 2006, ix-xiv.)

Gradually, middlemen and moneylenders deprive him and his family of all their resources, and once their capacity to feed the business and its middlemen is finished, they are left with nothing but hunger and misery. Following her husband, the daughter of the family joins the Naxalites. Refusing such a violent way, the mother of the family starves to death, whereas the father is accidentally mistaken for a Naxalite and is shot dead. Like the world of the play, Spivak points out that nowadays the rural "is a direct front of the global in virtual terms", the place of contestation for games such biopiracy, genetic engineering, seed-patenting, or violent industrialization (Spivak 2008, 169).

In another Natya Chetana's play, *Piblobi Bihonga* (Revolution of the Birds), a malevolent monkey terrorises nesting birds. At the end, the positions change, and the play gives an inkling that after getting to power the previously oppressed birds start to terrorise others. Among others, Paulo Freire depicted such a danger in the process of social change: "almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or "sub-oppressors". (…) "Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity." (Freire 1970/1996, 27.) In the case of India, Spivak points that the joint functioning of `class-race-state' power and the brutality and terror of it is internalised at every level, which "makes the subaltern subaltern and keeps the indigenous elite feudal". In villages, the relatively dominant Hindu culture and its others such as tribal cultures "*share* a lack of democratic training". As a result, "votes can be bought and sold (…) and electoral conflict is treated by rural society in general like a competitive sport where violence is legitimate." To Spivak all this tells of "poverty and class prejudice existing nationally", being renewed through politics and education[166]. (Spivak 2008, 39–40.) While solving such problems is beyond Natya Chetana's capacity, the group keeps them on the agenda, trying to generate reflection and public debate on them.

Can a theatre group like Natya Chetana reach the subaltern experience?

Thinking of citizenship and its possibilities at the margins, the challenge is how to reach and understand the experiences of those who are marginalised, oppressed, sub-

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166 According to Spivak, the schools of the middle class children and above stand out from the schools for the poor by the fact that in the former the "primary use of a page of language is to understand it", whereas in the latter the idea of teaching is based on mere spelling and memorising. Instead of being trained in intellect and self-expression, with the poorer children it is considered sufficient if they learn to write their names and little more. The lack of greater vision and ambition with the poor kids suggests that they are not expected to need more as if, after all, what they need to learn is obedience. To the "feudal authorities" any effort at remedying this situation is "a threat to their own power and authority". (Spivak 2008, 53.)

missive, and ignored: the by now classical question "Can the subaltern speak?" (Spivak 1993). As Pandey reviews,

> subaltern classes and disadvantaged or marginal groups do not leave behind institutional accounts of their endeavours. They appear in the institutional archive only as traces, as fragments, as echo. (…) The narratives that are preserved by the state (…) and other public institutions (…) originate for the most part with the ruling classes, and owe their existence largely to a ruling class's needs for security and control. (Pandey 2006, 59-60.)

In the Finnish context, the editors of the book *Toinen tieto* ('Other Knowledge', 2006) have made similar observations: "official knowledge" is the fruit from the union of power and knowledge. Produced by authorities as part of the game in which the authorities establish and validate their version of the state of affairs as truth, the aim of official knowledge is control over issues and people. Its mode of knowledge production is from the beginning till the end defined and agreed upon by the authorities. Rather than detailed, experiential or wondering, such knowledge about the underprivileged tends to be general and cross-sectional. (Hänninen, Karjalainen & Lahti 2006, 3-4.) The point is not that official or state sponsored knowledge production would be purpose-oriented or untruthful, but that it should be viewed keeping in mind that such knowledge is produced for the purpose of social control. Moreover, terms like poverty, marginalisation, or the disadvantaged are political concepts, which those guarding 'the official' view want to fine tune so that they fit with the official agenda. (Karjalainen 2006, 319-321). In Finland, for example, the existence and calibre of the poverty problem that arose in 1990s has been under constant dispute. In India, Pandey's (2006, 186) observation is that "terms like *poverty, the poor*, and *economic democracy* (or *economic and social justice*) have largely disappeared from the ruling-class discourse". As long as those at the margins are made and kept invisible and anomalous to the extent that they appear only through fragments, they are literally others. Such others are not expected to have anything to say, or, would they say something, their say to have any impact on anything. (Helne 2000, 115-118 ref. Karjalainen 2006, 333).

When the subaltern appear only through fragments (Pandey 2006), such fragments are important. Karjalainen (2006, 321) suggests that since vulnerability is usually an outcome of a number of factors, situations of vulnerability and marginality should be studied in detail, paying attention to their complexity and polymorphous nature. Such detailed research is however both laborious and possible with limited number of cases only. Tarja Pösö further notes that going to the spot and getting close to those one wants to know more of is no shortcut to 'knowledge': trying to learn differently and directly from the very people is not free of expectations and norms, or attempts to resist them.

Still, the force of silence can be felt differently from near than far. (Pösö 2006, 119-120, 127.) Knowledge of the other/ marginalised, or "learning from the below" is anyhow needed. Among other things, it is important for the "work of an epistemic undoing" of the self-image of those in power (that they are not, after all, the indispensable end-products of history, righting wrongs…) and creating possibilities for "democratic civility" and uncorrupted responsibility. (Spivak 2008, 23.)

What chances do Natya Chetana or likeminded theatre groups then have in reaching and representing the subaltern experience? In Natya Chetana's case, though consciously trying to extend their being and understanding to reach those at margins, including lifestyle choices that accentuate the effort, the group is, despite the periodic scarcity of resources, at the other side. After a quarter of a century of determined work, the group (and within the group, particularly Subodh) is a recognised actor in the Orissan civic and theatre field and has plenty of symbolic resources to rely on. This is not to say that running things in practice would be particularly easy. Though Natya Chetana volunteers are for the most part in a better position than the people whose destinies they portray on stage, living a theatre life in contemporary Orissa does not leave one untouched by experiences of marginality. But it is a voluntary choice. The issue of understanding could be further extended to think whether on the whole social work can get close with the people for or with whom it works, but I leave that here and turn instead to the specificity of theatre, as done by Natya Chetana, in the attempt.

In view of Pandey, "neither folksongs nor truncated statements of the kind (…) can give us direct access to the authentic voice and history of the subordinated and marginalised groups." As with the stories that construct the nation, the languages of the dominant and the privileged tend to blend in with folk forms and lower-class articulations and transform them. (Pandey 2006, 62.) Theatre makers Kidd and Bryam have similar experiences from the early theatre for development experiments in Africa (in particular from the Laedza Batanani campaign in Botswana in 1970s, see Kerr 1995, 160-161). The danger of such a turn around is evident also in the kind of theatre work that Natya Chetana does, as the groups picks, borrows and retunes local cultural elements in order to make its own kind of modern Indian theatre. However, my view is that to counter the danger of "middle-classing" the culture and experiences of the subordinated, Natya Chetana's theatrical approach and the practice of seeking background information and material for the script through the survey are of crucial importance. So is the programmatic involvement of new people (from different caste, class and religious backgrounds) from the communities or localities the plays are dealing with.

Depending on success in authentication (see Chapter 6.2), Natya Chetana playmakers have to be sensitive and curious to the whole cultural fabric into which the central themes of the plays are twined. This has similarities with the earlier discussed challeng-

es awaiting researchers who want to reach the knowledge of the other or the subaltern. The aim of the Natya Chetana survey team is to hear, to witness, to learn. The intention being to prepare a play, the survey makers have at least a possibility to supply themselves with notes, sensations, images, body languages and so forth, all of which do not necessarily even reach verbal or fully conscious form. Though all of these do not survive into the final play, the chance is that something does. Such an approach, multi-sensual and widely interested rather than just issue-oriented, also carries the possibility to enrich the actual verbal narratives. Namely, according to Pandey's experience (based on narratives of communal violence in India), people's narratives of their suffering tend to assume a set form. When and if people are made to talk on behalf of their communities, they often feel responsible for filling the assumed expectations and tasks of "authorised statements". (Pandey 2006, 27.) Instead of focusing on suffering only, Natya Chetana is interested in all kinds of aspects of the lives of the people it meets, and mirrors their complex situations intricately in its plays. In theatre, the feedback is immediate and is not reduced to the statements of the most outspoken and dominant alone. If the authentication fails or is inadequate, so is the play. If "the people" do not feel that it is their story, it can be recognised from the audience behaviour as lack of interest and enthusiasm. If villagers do not like the play, they do not bother to stay to the end.

The people at the margins need public narratives of their suffering. If such narratives are missing, "the victims (…) find themselves outside history". (Pandey 2006, 27-29; see also Das 1995.) Actually, as many social workers and therapists know, if one is not able to narrate one's suffering, one easily lacks the keys to one's inner self. Being able to tell one's story, including its painful parts, and getting it heard and recognised is an important step towards recovery on the way to a less divided personality. Natya Chetana is hearing and witnessing, and piecing together narratives. By staging these narratives it also makes its hearing and seeing open to evaluation. While it is still not possible to include everybody's point of view, at least theatrical performances allow a variety of symbolic presentations as well as intimations of the complex power relations between the characters. Narratives of suffering can touch the different layers of one's experience. When Natya Chetana performed *Biblobi Bihonga* (Revolution of the Birds), In April – May 2002, based on a locally well-known story originally written by Mohapatra Nilamoni Sahoo (1926-), the play connected well with audience feelings. During a show in one of the gradually refurbished slums of Bhubaneswar, many of the women in the audience reacted by crying about the hardships and injustices a ladybird trying to protect her nest and young birds faced on the stage. My feeling was that many of the women cried not only because of personal identification with the character of the ladybird, but also because the scene awakened their sorrows for what they and other women face in a still strongly patriarchal society, and who knows what else.

At a collective level, as Das (1995) writes, if communities bear to hear and reflect on the kind of stories they have wanted to silence or give no recognition in the first place, such hearing gives opportunities to learn from the communities' very own shared, collective cruelty. Acknowledging the wrongs done can make way for reconciliation and give important learning for the future. Spivak also emphasises the "importance of mourning", allowing those who have suffered the opportunity to lament the unlamented. In the context of wrongs done by colonialism and latter-day marginalisation, denying the possibility to mourn will all too easily lead to "a troubled and alienating modernity". (Spivak 2008, 145-147.)

The plays of Natya Chetana and likeminded theatre groups are attempts to give both voice and form for narratives of suffering. Through theatre it is possible to deal with suffering, its causes and consequences in a manner which moves spectators, but which is anyhow discreet and simplified enough not to turn them away (about the issue in cartoons, see Tukiainen 2006, 56). Performed at a theatre stage, these are first of all stories that help those who can recognise themselves or their experiences from the story both see and think their own situation from a distance[167]. Among other things, this can serve as an opportunity to realise that their unique experiences have parallels and that there are others who have suffered like them. Secondly, those who act on the stage, and who have been through the process of trial and error to give the stories an authentic form, are indeed practicing self-expression but, if the play and the process behind it has gone as it should, not without some form of personal connection to the topic and the people in the audience. Thirdly, those who recognise themselves as better off or more secure than the characters of the play, can anyhow relate whatever experiences they have of suffering to those depicted in the play, and allow the experience to work as a connection with the humanity of the kind of people depicted in the story. The experience can encourage compassion and sometimes perhaps even critical self-examination to think about one's own position of privilege and on what kinds of costs it is established and maintained. In short, theatre provides scopes for multi-layered, non-blaming ways of presentation, inviting the spectators to put both their souls and brains into the experience.

All of the above-mentioned elements carry political possibilities. Spivak (2008, 3), commenting the role of education and the ethico-political tasks of humanities, names the issue as engaging the imagination of the student to the rearrangement of desires. As noted, the rearrangement of desires can be a healthy exercise no matter what one's social status. Examining and questioning issues of citizenship, de-

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167 In theories of performance reception this is called aesthetic doubling (*esteettinen kahdentuminen*).

velopment or equality through theatre and other arts is nonetheless challenging. In attempts for dialogue, and not further submissiveness and self-blame (noted as possible problems in the context of critical and activist social work by Healy 2000, 105), raising desired kinds of questions requires skill, respect and sensitivity towards processes. Even when successful, the approach is likely to produce desired ends with some audience members but not everyone. Theatre cannot dictate, it can only suggest. However much intellectual discomfort and unsolved ethical questions a play manages to impose, there are likely to be people who do their best neither to take the discomfort personally nor to feel responsible to change their own behaviour. Nonetheless, art has the capacity to touch the everyday lives of people. Discussing the issue in the context of Finnish arts education, Hiltunen (2007) points that silent, subtle changes in attitudes and habits are not insignificant, not to forget moments of stopping and listening. Artistic work with communities can illuminate structural and social situations that have impact on the lives of individuals and communities, and make them more comprehensible. While neither the arts nor arts education can alone change the state and direction of affairs, they are not separate from the rest of the society either. (Ibid. 140.)

One of the questions raised in relation to community art and its audiences is what happens to it (to performances, performers and the act of storytelling) when it is taken away from its immediate surroundings and set into new contexts. The line between the political and exotic, or thought provoking and only entertaining is fine. In principle, the artists have to count that instead of being lumped into the category of the exotic (only), they are able to generate self-reflection in the audience. Another central question regarding the multiple loyalties of community art is to whom the artist is primarily loyal. In other words, in situations in which one cannot get everything, which weighs most – artistic success, the social and political aims of the work, or involving the community. As Suvi Aarnio writes (2007, 258), the worst scenario is that either the artists or the art institutions working with communities make the communities visible only as mere curiosities, an issue further entangled to the ownership and authorship of art. In India, documentary filmmaker Sehjo Singh is of the opinion that the artistic work has to make sense for and from the viewpoint of the people in question. The test of the documentary and its aesthetics is that it has to work for them. Only then it can work also elsewhere, for different audiences. (Singh 2003.)

Utilising the above ideas to Natya Chetana, the group's position at the intersection of art, theatre and activism requires constant balancing. Natya Chetana's choice is to count on its grounded people's theatre aesthetic, at times relatively inexperienced but committed local actors, the Oriya language and the power of its often real-life grounded stories, also when the group is performing outside Orissa or India. As discussed in

Chapter Six, one strong principle guiding the work is that the group's theatre has to be portable so that it can reach large and diverse audiences, including the people of whom and for whom it is principally made. Therefore, in spite of its ambitiousness in the arts realm, the group is not willing to compromise its reliance on the people as the source of its inspiration and most important audience. Rather, Natya Chetana would like to see change taking place also in the strictly artistic spheres of theatre, so that socially committed and motivated, "people" rather than elite-audience oriented theatre would gradually become the mainstream.

Nurturing imagination and learning from below – a way forward?

Both Spivak (2008) and Pandey (2006) have their suggestions for the kind of steps to be taken in the attempt to let the people at the margins matter and have influence over the processes that determine their lives. In Spivak's vision, a possible strategy is a combination of critical regionalism and nurturing the subaltern (children's) capacity to imagine. Pandey's message is that all communities should be recognised as they are, minorities, after which there is no place for a natural mainstream or for that matter a natural nation[168]. While Natya Chetana, being a lover and a mouthpiece of Orissa and Orissan culture(s) surely signs the importance of nurturing skills of imagination, it also clearly identifies a mainstream whose issues and concerns it aspires to highlight. To Natya Chetana this largely unrecognised and sidestepped mainstream is "the people", who in Orissa consist largely of the rural poor. Spivak also writes that along with the importance to rethink the role of rural and the regional, the rural poor must be part of the agenda – unless the well off want them to remain forever dependent on their benevolence. Stressing with many other postcolonial thinkers the importance of change in the minds of "the now poor and diseased", she points that such a change hardly happens overnight. For one who wants to participate in this kind of process of mutual learning as a facilitator or educator, the task is to learn from below. Among other things that means learning local language(s) and giving up one's convictions of superiority. A change of minds requires the capacity to imagine, and if that no longer exists, training and reviving that capacity. And these are no concerns of critical region-

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168 As I obviously think that there are people on the margins everywhere, despite their focus on India, reading Spivak and Pandey has also felt relevant for thinking about marginality in the Finnish context. From a social work perspective, the common idea of the wealthier as the mainstream is easy to challenge, but difficult to get through. The elderly poor, people with mental health problems, or large-scale consumers of alcohol make much up of the nation. On the other hand, those who have made a conscious choice to consume little and earn less are seen as strange.

alists or the rural poor alone, nurturing the "habit of democratic civility" is everyone's task. However, imagining and learning from below may require "distancing from the narratives of progress" to which also colonialism and capitalism belong. Moreover, and importantly, teaching these habits is different from the indoctrination of people into nationalism, identarianism and resistance-talk. (Spivak 2008, 42-44.)

Thinking of Natya Chetana and Orissa in the light of Spivak's and Pandey's writing, the group's determination to keep up the approach of people's theatre and do theatre with and for rural people, in rural villages, is significant. This has been stressed to me also by each and every Orissan theatre person whom I have asked about the field of Orissan theatre and Natya Chetana's role as part of it. It is also possible to think that in the case of urban audiences and intimate theatre, the group participates in the process of negotiating democratic civility. Natya Chetana's aesthetic choices and willingness to cherish traditional performance idioms, and encourage their practitioners to continue their crafts, are hard-headed political choices. So is the decision to stick to Oriya language[169]. On the other hand, Spivak's (2008, 53) cautions about identarianism and nationalism, as well as the temptation to instil pride in the form of pseudo-historical narratives (emphasising the magnificence of the area or community in question) are though not entirely fitting to Natya Chetana, not very far away from the group's at times romantic and populist rhetoric either. First and proudly Orissan and then Indian, Natya Chetana is passionately patriotic, at the side of the broadly defined people. At the same time, the group's patriotism is something else than speaking up for the state be it federal or the state of Orissa. Rather, it stands for commitment and love for the soil, nature, history and culture of India, and incorporates the idea of sacrifice for the sake of the country, as in the time of freedom fighting.

As much as Natya Chetana is an example of creative critical thinking and representation, the group's eagerness to highlight the beauty of local culture and its rural up-keepers may occasionally result in fairly uncritical and simplified articulations of India and Indianness which can also turn against the group's intentions. In its call for an acknowledgement of diversity, the group could well be accused of resorting to stereotypes and essentialism on its own part. Among other things, in its embrace of tradition and heritage, the group's overall conception of the society and culture may at least

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169 Despite the state's population of close to 40 million people, I am wondering the future of the language. On the basis of my personal exposure to local lives, it seems that from the lower middle class upwards everyone who can put their children into English medium schools see it as best for their children to be trained to think, argue and write in English. Though we are talking about millions here, I see it likely that if the present trend continues in the longer run the only ones to talk and write in Oriya are the poorer people who cannot afford other kind of schooling. Same time, however, it has to be noted that when compared to Oriya, the position of the tribal languages spoken in the state is far more marginal.

from a minority point of view look overwhelmingly Hindu. On the other hand, as the group's practice and concerns stress, the equal value of every citizen of India, be s/he Muslim, Hindu, Christian or other, poor or middle class or rich, old or young, ill or healthy, illiterate or educated and so forth, is important for the group. In a society in which the value of poorer sections and individuals is in practice often grossly and brutally downplayed, and in which many in the upper end of the scale have little motivation to question their own superiority, claiming and demanding for equality takes determination, self-reflection, and versatility. And every articulation is always made for an audience. Natya Chetana looks at issues from its own location and standpoint, and uses its understanding of India and Indianness as part of its political and practical rhetoric. In so doing Natya Chetana is an active participant in the attempt to cultivate critical citizenship, encourage its audiences to dream with imagination and engage themselves in civic discussion. On the other hand, these are also largely the limits of its work. As much as theatre can work as a catalyst and a useful medium of communication and conscientisation to build up political pressure to change the state of affairs, a NGO, political party, or some other pressure group would need to take the cause forward.

Teasing out citizenship

What then to think about Natya Chetana's approach and location in social work terms? As this chapter has shown, rather than set Natya Chetana within certain parameters that could have been extracted from the kind of social work discussions I am familiar with, my solution, despite pointing occasional connections, was to try finding words for different dimensions of Natya Chetana's social work from the group's own conceptions and practices, and lastly by connecting aspects of its plays with other Indian judgements about the state, citizenship and violence in contemporary India. To do otherwise felt artificial and violent. While sort of inconclusive, I don't find the exercise fruitless. What I do find is that despite the already heavy rounds of contextualisation that the study has taken, a few more general insights about the state in India are further helpful in order to locate and understand Natya Chetana's work.

Keeping still in mind the role of the state as the determinant framework of social work, in 'Western' political theory the common way to understand society has been the triangle of state (state governmental structures), market (commercial, profit-seeking institutions) and civil society (consisting of voluntary civic and social institutions, sometimes discussed also as 'third' sector). In Chatterjee's (2002) and Kaviraj's (2002) reading, the implicit assumption of the theory has been that societies are in principal traditional or modern, not both. Sudipta Kaviraj's (ibid. 316) view on India as a post-

colonial modern liberal democratic nation state is that "its politics are spinning out of all recognised trajectories chartered by Western political theory", forming a modernity beyond what is imaginable within the limits of the theory.

In India, as in many other formerly colonised countries, various cultural forms of modernity have been "only selectively adopted" (Chatterjee 2002, 175), and accommodated next to local, often exclusive institutions and markers of identity, such as caste, mother tongue, or regional identity. While particularly Western style educated elite groups understood and got habituated to utilise the advantages of associational channels since colonial times, "the large masses of the peasantry and country-dwellers were mainly untouched by these activities, since they lacked the English education which gave elites these concepts and associated practical orientations".[170] Needing nonetheless to influence the state, the majority of the poorer citizens of India, without a very good conceptual grasp or preference over the ways of associational civil society, has had to rely on a repertoire that has stretched "from acceptance of patronage from politicians to wary support to local toughs", all elements "outside the definitions of associational 'civility'". (Kaviraj 2002, 311-317.) Thus, while the legal and bureaucratic apparatus of the state has by and large reached all the population, "the domain of civil social institutions (…) is still restricted to a fairly small section of 'citizens'" (Chatterjee 2002, 172). According to Chatterjee:

> This hiatus is extremely significant because it is the mark of non-Western modernity as an always incomplete project of modernisation and of the role of an enlightened elite engaged in a pedagogical mission in relation to the rest of the society. (Chatterjee 2002, 172.)

Instead of adopting the Western form of civil society as universal, which it obviously is not in countries like India, Chatterjee asks how to conceptualise the rest of society outside the domain of modern civil society. Rather than to apply the most common dichotomy of traditional/modern, his suggestion is that in case of states like India it is useful to differentiate a *political society* between the state and the civil society as "a domain of institutions and activities where several mediations are carried out." (Chatterjee 2002, 172-173.) Menon & Nigam explain this further by pointing to the conflict "between modernity and democracy" typical of India and perhaps all postcolonial societies. In India "modernity is about rights and sanitised public spaces evacuated of all

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170 While civil society is seen sometimes to compensate for diminishing party-political participation, Ferguson & Lavalette (2005) remark that civil society can be also a site of immense inequalities; strengthening civil society does not necessarily mean more democracy. For instance, the remarkable expansion of NGOs over the last 30 years can be taken, among other things, as a sign of increasing privatisation of issues that used to be thought being better dealt under democratic control. Many NGOs are responsible to none but their funders. (Ibid. 217-218.)

the messiness that accompanies democratic practices and politics", whereas democracy "becomes alive at the point where politics meets the popular", which then is bound to be messy. Therefore, in India civil society is primarily the domain of rights and modernity, whilst political society is the domain of democracy and the popular. (Menon & Nigam 2007, 13.) Further, thinking about the place of politics in contemporary India, Ashis Nandy observes as part of his analysis on the images of state that

> Only that which centres on the state and its formal structures is considered politics now. As a result, the struggles of child labourers, women's movements and environmentalism, even the politics of trade unions and landless agricultural labourers, look less political these days than defections and factional realignments in parties. (Nandy 2001, 59.)

Applying the above to Natya Chetana, the group (established as a NGO) is a civil society organisation that functions in both of the domains of civil and political society. Natya Chetana actively takes part in political struggles which, following Nandy's above idea, are not necessarily seen party political in essence and which are indeed often preferred, if possible, to be kept outside party-political games of gain and support. More commonly, such struggles are articulated as struggles over human rights, citizenship and environmental issues. This is also the realm in which many of Natya Chetana's concerns can be placed. Moreover, rather than seeing Natya Chetana's social work as a sign of the ('yet') incomplete modernisation of non-Western social work, it is at least equally justified to see it as an example of modern and on aspects postmodern social work in postcolonial India. In its practice, Natya Chetana is clear about its own task, know-how and location more often between and at the intersections, than fully within 'traditional' spheres and modes of action of social work, theatre, or politics. The postcolonial situation is nonetheless full of paradoxes, and has its peculiar continuities with the colonial past. As in the case of the civilizing mission, Natya Chetana's role is also to enlighten the rest of the society, but with a contrary agenda. Natya Chetana's pedagogical mission is to convince that Indians should examine and rely on the assets they have available in their own culture, its traditions and social set up. In addition this mission could be named as teasing out citizenship, at all levels of the society.

As the examples throughout the way have illustrated, in its mission Natya Chetana is through its theatre and other modes of action simultaneously both a fragile and powerful pedagogue. Fragile, because socially committed theatre can only suggest, hint and persuade but not dictate, and powerful for these very same reasons. By leaving the thinking to the audiences, it can function as a catalyst for complex social processes, and have thus at times influence beyond more ordinary channels of social

work. Pursuing the kind of values it does outside the domain of the state or the modern professional project of social work, Natya Chetana's approach may look simultaneously both utopian and dangerous. Dangerous, if one fears that after recognising their position the victims of injustices may turn into destructive fanaticism, or that becoming active in demanding just and equal treatment, people are likely to face just more overwhelming oppression and nothing else. The problem of both views is that they imply that it might be better for the oppressed to remain so. Paulo Freire, who was exiled because of the political weight of his pedagogical views, thought that for the oppressed becoming aware of their position "makes it possible (…) to enter the historical process as responsible Subjects" and "enrols them in the search for self-affirmation and thus avoids fanaticism" (Freire 1970/1996, 18). As similar concerns are shared also in 'Western' activist social work, Karen Healy's (2000, 108-115) stand is that it is important both for social workers and service users to seek ways to go beyond oppositional approaches so that all forms of power do not collapse together as domination to be opposed. People in various positions of vulnerability need an ability to differentiate between productive and oppressive forms of power, as well as building coalitions with the powerful.

Parallels with critical, activist and constructive social work approaches

So far in this chapter I have relied mainly on Indian resources in my attempts to make sense of Natya Chetana's social work. Simultaneously, however, Natya Chetana's approach allows meaningful connections with a number of discussions in the academic, largely though not solely Western domain of social work discussions. As pointed out earlier, Natya Chetana's work can be identified as social development, development communication, or indigenous social work. In addition to these, I find interesting parallels also with critical, constructive and activist social work approaches. This is despite the professional practice context within and in relation to which texts describing these approaches are mostly written.

Following Erath's & Hämäläinen's (2001) analysis of the polymorphous field of social work theories, Natya Chetana's approach could be located within the terrain of critical theory. "Grounded in analyses and criticisms of 'modernity'", critical theory aims to challenge social institutions and practices through "procedures of critical, dialectic argumentation". The purpose is to promote "critical self-reflection and awareness and emancipation from oppressive social and individual conditions". (Ibid. 24.) Further, critical theory is one ingredient in a social work discussion known as critical social work, which has ingredients also from Marxist analysis, feminism, structural

and postmodern ideas (e.g. Fook 2003). Focusing on the structural analysis of personal problems and critique of oppression in various forms, and aiming for empowerment and social change, the critical social work approach is particularly concerned with issues of power, knowledge and identities (Fook 2003; Healy 2000). At the level of themes and aims, Natya Chetana's political theatre/social work could be discussed in similar terms.

Critical social work's interest in power covers also the power that social workers practice, based in welfare state contexts (but worth considering also elsewhere?) on their generally middle class status, "statutory authority" as agents of the welfare state (that as a structure quells dissent), and professional authority as experts in contrast to the non-expert and marginal position of the service users. Addressing this, the point is to highlight that engagement with social work practice, even in the activist forms of it, does not mean absence of power; there are no grounds to think that the truths that activist social workers proclaim are 'purer' than those of others. Rather, discourses of liberation, like scientific or religious discourses, are fully invested with power. Like other discourses, they include and exclude particular voices. (Healy 2000, 72-73.) Therefore, in a similar fashion with Spivak's warnings about the dangers of self-righteousness, critical social work perspective emphasises the importance of self-reflexivity in any liberatory intentions (ibid. 96). Yet, it is equally important to realise that power can be also productive, not only oppressive, which is why it is crucial not to oversimplify power relations in society and in social work. Many of the issues at hand are political in nature and may also benefit from politicising. However, pseudo-politics, "namely politics without contestation or dialogue, wherein the ethical features of political discourse become empty or righteous slogans" do not serve the needs of the vulnerable. (Ibid. 113-115.) As in social work, so with theatre: Natya Chetana, while making easy-to-follow, political plays, considers odd plays that seem to be mere issue-based promulgation, as some of the educative plays part of administrative or political campaigns sometimes are.

Furthermore, one of the programmatically postmodern approaches to social work acknowledging the contemporary heterogeneity, fragmentation and difference within societies is constructive social work. As Parton and O'Byrne (2000) write, a central starting point of constructive social work is the intimate relationship between language and reality: "persons are seen placed in positions where they can create their own destiny". In other words, people, even the marginalised and the oppressed, have agency as well as capacity to "invent reality". (Ibid. 19, 24.) The nature of constructive social work as "a practical-moral activity rather than a rational technical one," as well as focus on dialogue, narratives and persuasion (ibid. 2-3,) could be easily signed also by Natya Chetana. Further, constructive ideas about the centrality of talk and language in

understanding and coming to terms with difficult and painful experiences as well as taking control over one's life (ibid. 11) connect well also with Spivak's earlier claims of the importance of having a scope to tell and hear also about suffering, and learning to imagine.

When social constructionist perspectives stress the importance of language, listening and talking, Natya Chetana's approach of persuading its audiences into active conversations can be claimed to go beyond the textual and linguistic, extending the meaning making and dialogue to the non-textual, corporeal and aesthetic dimensions of communication. As a whole, Natya Chetana's performance situations can be seen as a particularly illustrative setting for the constructionist idea of "thinking as a rhetorical" and a "micropolitical and interactional process concerned with and categorizing everyday life and developing arguments that justify preferred realities and courses of action" (Parton & O'Byrne 2000, 17). By constructing a play (informed by a survey), Natya Chetana constructs a version of the social world it has witnessed, often further connecting the cases to other topical incidents. In the constructionist mode of thinking, the performances not only describe things, they do things, and have therefore social and political implications, just as Natya Chetana claims. Adapting Parton and O'Byrne further, in constructing and reconstructing reality, of importance is what the act "enables human beings to imagine and do, both to themselves and to others" (ibid. 173). Again, we are talking about the capacity to imagine, but also cultural dignity and patterns of identity. At stake is how we subjectively construct "more meaningful ways of objectively understanding who, what, and where we are and how this might be otherwise" (ibid. 177). In practice, this means problematising and questioning what is taken for granted and trying to open up creative ways of thinking and acting.

To summarise, despite the fact that Natya Chetana's work is not organised as worker—client relationships, as well as other cultural and contextual differences, Natya Chetana's approach can be seen to have meaningful congruencies with selected social work discussions also outside its immediate location. By connecting critical and constructive social work views to Natya Chetana I am not claiming that the group would think of its own work with these terms. Interestingly, however, such premises of work do not appear alien either. I believe this is because both constructionist and critical social workers, like Natya Chetana, wrestle with real people and real structural and other problems of the time. Common for all these approaches is the attempt to make sense of the world and participate in the process of generating agency for the people for and with whom the work is done. Against the possible efforts to downplay Natya Chetana kind of social work as a relic kind of traditional approach, among other things these kinds of connections prove the opposite.

8.3   SUMMING UP: SOCIAL WORK BY NATYA CHETANA

As it has been discussed, Natya Chetana's all-encompassing conception of social work has multiple simultaneously existing levels: political, spiritual, mental, corporeal, ideological and practical. For the ills of society Natya Chetana conceives itself to be like a team of public health volunteers investigating and seeking prevention for the causes rather than the acute symptoms of the illnesses. In Natya Chetana's analysis, informed by the situation and real incidents in both rural and urban Orissa, suffering and social problems are all too often derived from alienation, greed and the lack of unity. Greed leads to exploitation and violence against other human beings as well as the nature. For the poor and the vulnerable people the consequences are no less than degradation and losses of lives and livelihoods.

The main cure the group can provide is its political theatre, itself a principled constellation of a number of components starting from the process and ideology of the theatre making to the aesthetic choices at the stage. Natya Chetana's plays manifest witnessing, hearing, reconstructing and retelling local stories. Aimed to be essentially food for thought, they coin topical themes together with human passions, fears, confusions, and use and abuse of power. So doing they are stories of violence and struggles of survival. Leaving the final analysis and conclusions to the audience, a process that in particular in rural areas is further activated and supported by Natya Chetana's local collaborators, Natya Chetana persuades its audiences to reflect the performances to their own lives, and imagine whether and how things could be otherwise for themselves and others.

Natya Chetana is particularly concerned about the situation of marginal and rural communities living next to natural resources over which they have no control, and which could be, or have already been turned into commercial use, be it shrimp farming or bauxite mining. It is not in the nature of global capitalism to be interested in the welfare of marginal communities. On the contrary, marginal populations may appear as an obstruction on the way of getting to utilise the resources in a big scale, or a source of making money as depicted in *Maati*. In Natya Chetana's view, violence, structural or direct, made to marginal populations and their way of life, often in the name of development, is nothing but a travesty of development and verifies that weighed up against financial profit, the people do not really matter. The group's stand is that the solution to increase the general level of welfare in Orissa cannot and shall not be exploitation of the poor, the vulnerable, and the nature.

In Natya Chetana's own thinking the precondition for problem solving and constructive action is unity, in families, communities, and the society at large. Among other things, this means giving up master-servant attitudes, both by masters and servants, and learning to recognise and undo oppressive internalised hierarchies. To

combat alienation, which has to do with fragmentation of traditional values and social bonds and the kind of confusions modernity has brought in, Natya Chetana's stand is that an Indian modernity needs an Indian foundation. The challenge is to find ways to live culturally consistent and dignified lives in contemporary Orissa and India. To control greed, Natya Chetana's own solution is its own version of "simple living and high thinking" and in general politics of exemplariness and striving for ethically sound lifestyle. Advocating unity, simple and non-exploitative living, and reliance on the Indian cultural base as the building blocks of an Indian modernity in contemporary world can be seen also as Natya Chetana's moral mission. All said, Natya Chetana's large goal, pursued by its efforts to increase and influence the level of civic dialogue, initiative, and joint sense of responsibility is no less than social change towards more egalitarian and just society for all.

Thinking of Natya Chetana's social work approach from a little more distance, Natya Chetana's work can be seen as a form of so called indigenous social work. By the same token, it can be defined as political activism and participating in a broad movement for social justice, which brings together social workers and theatre workers alike. It is noteworthy that for Natya Chetana social justice and survival of the poor are part and parcel with concerns over natural environment, its protection and exploitation. In social work traditions, Natya Chetana's approach belongs clearly to the critical, political side. Its focus is social change, not remedial work or charity. At the same time, it is also possible to think of Natya Chetana as an attempt to find a meaningful location in the field of social work and culture so that the work would bring some recognition and an income that covers at least basic necessities, or even stubbornly romantic attempt of to make the world a better place.

In my view, it is nonetheless important to recognise Natya Chetana's work also as an example of modern, and on aspects postmodern, social work in postcolonial India at the intersections of social work, theatre, and activist politics. Natya Chetana's under-lined reliance on Indian cultural traditions and aesthetics is not at all contradictory to this, and does not come out of the blue. It has connections with the ideas of swadeshi, prioritizing products 'of one's own country', formulated and used as a political tool already by Mohandas Gandhi. In Natya Chetana's strive for a kind of an alternative Indian modernity (in contrast to ruling class driven consumerist modernity, see Pandey 2006) Gandhi is an important figure also as the personification and formulator of voluntary, experimental social work that does not evade touching contested and political issues. Natya Chetana's emphasis on the importance of moral ethics in social work and expectation of readiness to sacrifices in order to be able to serve others, as well as the focus on rural people and idealising their lifestyle is influenced by Gandhi's example. As Gandhi in his time (Gandhi 1941; Parel 1997, lvii; Tähtinen 1970, 55), also Natya

Chetana dreams of India free of deprivation, in which everyone could fulfill his or her basic material needs, but be then content with that. Materially simplicity should anyhow, and importantly, allow time and space for spirituality, thinking, aesthetics and social and political participation – being an aware human being. In a postcolonial society cultural and national self-confidence are however complicated matters. When supporters of swadeshi have seen advocates of globalised consumerism as victims of a postcolonial inferiority complex unable to recognise the superior value of their own heritage, their opponents on the pro-globalisation side have used the same argument, claiming swadeshi to manifest mere self-pity and lack of self-confidence in a global world (e.g. Mazzarella 2003, 8-9). In this debate Natya Chetana is clearly on the pro-swadeshi side.

CHAPTER 9
ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL WORK

When I started this study with Natya Chetana, my aim was to do a work of cultural translation that would enable me to open up Natya Chetana's theatre work as social work in my own cultural context, Finland, as well as in relation to certain social work discussions. My assumption was that the enterprise could also provide insights to think about social work from a broader, global perspective. Since then, much of the study has been orienteering in the midst of universals and particulars. It has made me concretely aware of how much of what has been repeatedly labelled as universal in social work, is actually culturally specific and embedded in particular histories. Yet, there are themes, perspectives, and political stands that are genuinely uniting across cultures, and humanity itself provides bridges for understanding.[171] Natya Chetana actually manifests the importance of both particularistic and universalistic frameworks. Though a mouthpiece of Orissan and Indian culture, the group does not reject global connections and support; rather it is in many ways dependent on them. And while the local problems and circumstances that the group comments on through its plays are influenced by both local and global structures of power and inequality, the group also finds allies both at home and abroad.

The path of cultural translation has plenty of potential stumbling stones. There are incongruities between conceptual worlds, and sometimes concepts have lives of their own – for example, the adjective communal has a different tone in South Asia than in northern Europe. This study has meant trying to make sense of cultural and historical contexts and processes in a limited number of pages, as well as translating Natya Chetana's texts and approach into the terminology of the discussions that I have utilised.

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171 Even so, it is useful to keep in mind that other cultures can be fairly impenetrable. As travel writer Philip Briggs points out, for example, celebrating the wide diversity of human cultures in cosmopolitan cities with variety of cuisines and cultural centres can mislead those able to participate in such celebrations into feeling "that other cultures are more accessible and easily assimilated than is really the case". What one can learn is placing the parochial concerns of one's own cultural background in perspective. (Briggs 2009, 112.)

While I have been often unwilling to make exclusive definitions when incorporating various contexts, the approach has enabled me to coin a narrative, which, as I hope the study has shown, invites rather than limits the kind of questions that the interplay of different contexts can raise.

Attempts to create cross-cultural dialogue are both dependent and limited by words that hold supposedly universal meanings. As Anna Tsing (2005, 7) has pointed out, universals are simultaneously both abstractions that help to speak relatively, and local knowledge, for "they cannot be understood without the benefit of historically specific cultural assumptions". When I have focused on a few such historically specific views on social work, many of my concepts, such as colonialism, voluntary social work, the West, or factual claims regarding India have nonetheless also represented gross generalisations. This happens despite my efforts to address their location- and histories-bound specificity and diversity. However, while universals are neither unproblematic nor politically neutral, they are no longer the prerogative of the few (ibid. 9). Certain universalistic ideas like equality and human and social rights have been particularly important for social work (e.g. Staub-Bernasconi 2010). Even so, social work should not take universals for granted. The danger of universals is that they can become oppressive, as well as be used to justify oppressive practices. Social work which is uncritical to universals may end up serving oppressive ideologies and regimes. In European history, such examples are known, for example, from Nazi Germany and practices related to eugenics. (E.g. Lorentz 2009.) At present, many welfare state social workers wonder whether all the operations expected from them, such as setting sanctions for non-compliant clients, really serve their clients' interests, or for that matter the field's historical commitment to help and protect the vulnerable and the marginalised.

While social work obviously needs universals, the challenge is how to utilise them without compromising the values and commitments at the core of social work. Whether and if maintaining the universal and the particular in productive balance is possible, one necessary exercise is to remain programmatically curious about the basis of their very establishment. Other suggestions that I would like to point out based on this study, and the kinds of opportunities for reflection it has provided both in Finland and Orissa, are: (1) the need for dialogue and combinations between radical amateurism and professionalism, (2) the need to take location(s) seriously, and (3) the need to learn from postcolonial analysis. In what follows, I conclude the study elaborating briefly on these suggestions. In my view, what goes almost without saying is that at all these fronts, creative combinations or fusions of art and social work are not just possible, but needed to enrich the analysis and discussion.

9.1 IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE AND PRODUCTIVE BORDER CROSSING BETWEEN AMATEURISM AND PROFESSIONALISM

As noted earlier, although Natya Chetana's theatre has been met with interest in Europe, many of the central qualifiers of the group's social work, such as its ideological, spiritual and political nature, as well as the idea of self-sacrifice, are issues that have in Nordic academia generated caution and uneasiness. From the Finnish perspective, the Natya Chetana kind of social work that rejects professionalism and related training, and which is located in a highly different social, political and cultural context, appears easily somewhat too alien to be recognised as social work at all. I consider this typical of a particular kind of Eurocentric myopia of thinking about social work, and which implicates the global postcolonial situation. Yet, in the Finnish context, these kind reactions also manifest the centrality of waged work in society. Both professionalism and waged work are strong ideals, and linked together, whereas voluntary work is for the most part seen as subordinate and somewhat wanting when compared to waged work.

Likewise, in contrast to Natya Chetana's emphasis on the importance of calling, commitment, and readiness for sacrifices for the sake of society as the basis of the work, in Finland a calling and vocation are rarely used words at least in the educational context of social work. In my understanding, one reason for this is that in the salary competition against more technical and economic fields such humanitarianism is seen as burden, not an advantage. In social work, professionalism and strict educational qualifications demands convey, that the work requires extensive professional know-how and multiple skills. Emphasising social work as an indispensable and demanding civic profession also serves the need to explicate the demanding nature of the work. The other side of the coin is the attempt to detach from the drawbacks of a woman-specific field, namely the expectation and obligation to work on a meagre salary for the imperative to help those in need. Thus, in Finland like elsewhere, social work is a contested field. Although from social work perspective, the goal is a more secure professional status, in practice the (greatly gendered) societal expectations of service and sacrifice set at the workers are not necessarily very latent (see also Folbre 2006; Kauppinen-Perttula 2004). At the same time, in the wide field of social welfare, social workers form a fairly small professional group working together both with other salaried workers with diverse educational backgrounds and (desperately needed) voluntary workers. At any rate, the story of academic professionalism is neither the only nor the catchall one to be told of field of social welfare even in countries like Finland.

Thinking then of Natya Chetana's work, the division of social work into either voluntary or the professional kind is perhaps neither the most accurate nor most meaningful categorisation. Capable of multifaceted forms of work, Natya Chetana often

goes beyond the role reserved for volunteers or communication groups working in the sphere of social work or community development. What could Natya Chetana's core ideals, unity, exemplarity and spirituality, and seeing social work as a cure for the ills of society, mean in the global context of social work? Surely they address the importance of holistic personal and collective commitment that necessarily has political ramifications. So does Natya Chetana's demand to analyse what actually causes poverty and vulnerability. As noted earlier, in the group's plays, such analysis leads to a closer examination of the economic and political structures, access and control over recourses, and patterns of oppression and submission. Natya Chetana's work also reminds us of the eternal question regarding on whose side social workers eventually are, the poor and marginalised, or the affluent, for sometimes the former are seen as a group of people to be controlled, disciplined, and managed. As Silvia Staub-Bernasconi (2010) notes, though the position of social work is often to negotiate between the two, it is important to make distinction between management and the rights of the people.

Despite Natya Chetana's strong identification as a group of volunteers, it is equally important to notice that the group is not challenging the need and importance of professional expertise. Indeed, though Natya Chetana cannot offer professional salaries or career prospects, it strives to acquire and maintain high, professional-like quality and specialisation in its own work. What the group does oppose is the lack of commitment and/or critical, creative thinking. In India, a country notorious for the commonplaceness of corruption and multiple hierarchies, such reputation lays particularly heavily on people in administrative or gatekeeper positions, often associated with government jobs. The late Edward Said, cited earlier in this study as one of the founders of postcolonial studies, feared that at its worst poorly internalised professionalism might decline into guarding received benefits, the criminal extension of which can be corruption. For such a worker an enthusiastic and committed colleague would be an unpleasant and threatening contrast, shaking up already distorted orders of priority. As Said points out, grotesque 'professionalism' can be reduced to salaried intellectual activity limited to office hours and centred to marketing oneself and maintaining eligibility in the eyes of the influential. Irrespective of educational qualifications Said called for an amateur-like attitude, a desire to act from the standpoint of love and burning interest, rather than for the sake of compensations or convenience. Accordingly, he stressed the need to be concerned for ideas and values important for oneself beyond, and despite, the limits one's profession might set. Said suspected that such passionate, extensive and exploratory attitude is not best combined with pressures of specialisation. He feared that the higher or deeper the knowledge the specialist achieves in his/her field, the narrower the area of applicability of his/her know-how. While Said valued expertise, his opinion was that if it means going blind from the rest of the world, or sacrific-

ing one's individual cultural awareness for the sake of officially chartered views, the knowledge achieved is not worth its price. (Said 2001, 116-119, 126-127.)

Professionalism is not the only and as such not the sole sufficient strategy in social work (e.g. McDonald 2006). Nor is it beneficial to social work to narrow itself into certain methods or concepts only. Interestingly, however, while it is common to divide social work approaches broadly into voluntary and professional (a framework from which I have not found a thorough escape when discussing Natya Chetana's work in different contexts), the word 'amateur' seems to be largely missing from social work vocabularies. Yet, the word amateur[172], particularly when meaning love and commitment to a particular pursuit, often without formal training on it, could on occasions highlight the important qualities of social work approaches that are not primarily professional and not even aiming towards it. In other words, talking about all non-salaried work in the field of social work in terms of voluntary work can sometimes hinder seeing the radical and critical potential embedded in non-salaried, non-professionalism-oriented approaches. While social work is a profession, it is equally importantly a movement and a field of research, and the borderlines between these are anything but strict. Moreover, historically, various radical movements have been gradually incorporated into the more mainstream social work.

Social work is simultaneously many things, and its diversity and various local manifestations should be seen as its strengths. In my view, particularly interesting directions could be found from the dialogue and combinations between radical amateurism and professionalism. But while I don't see that professionalism, amateurism or volunteerism would necessarily have to be in contradiction to one another neither globally nor locally, I am worried for what happens and what scope is available for non-professional, ideological, spiritual or faith-based social work done by amateurs. The danger is that the diversity of both social work and its doers is forgotten, and that the power relations within the field are not thoroughly addressed and negotiated. Such risk is even greater if the only ones recognised as fit for such discussion are professional social workers defending and understanding first and foremost their own kind of qualification. One of the central concerns and ideological commitments of social work has been to stand up for and with those who are vulnerable and poor. It is on this basis that the diverse community of social workers has been built globally, and on which it can be built in the future. Yet, it is clear that this ethical and political task of social work cannot, and should not be a mandate for one movement, profession, or discipline only – with global problems broad-based cooperation and mutual respect is a must.

One of the conditions for a broad-based cooperation and dialogue is that people actively engaged in social work around the world can claim, and are respected in their

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172 The word amateur originates from Latin words amatorem and amator, lover.

right to claim, their own social work, – whatever their educational background or mode of organising. At the same time, it is also important to note that sometimes sincere and committed social justice workers may, if they are successful in their work of mobilising and empowering the people that they work with, end up weakening or challenging the position of patrons or other influential interest groups. The risk of individual social workers who threaten the prevailing status quo is that they may have to fear for their jobs, and in some societies, for their lives. Furthermore, in politically committed and critical work, whether artistic, intellectual, social work, or something else, maintaining one's autonomy calls often for a readiness to live and work on meagre and perhaps insufficient resources, and often also without worldly appreciation. Though oppositional and alternative politics and choices are sometimes acclaimed in the speeches of the cultural and political elite, living them can have anything but a romantic flavour. How can social workers support each other, as well as other people engaged in critical work, in situations like this?

9.2   ACKNOWLEDGING LOCATION

One of the things that this study concretises is that theatre, social work and research are all thoroughly embodied practices, done by particular bodies in particular settings (see also Connell 2007, 217). One's location matters for one's access to particular knowledge and perspective to think about things. Therefore, location can be thought of not only as particular places but as orientations that influence the ways one sees and interprets the world. As my views on social work locally and globally have been informed by my experiences in India and Finland, location influences one's history, identity, and insights about social work. For example, through the ground realities of Orissa, international or global social work appear in quite a different light than in the academic journals. The first things that international social work brings to Subodh's mind are charity work run by Christian missionaries and the activities associated with the United Nations (UN) and its sub-organisations. Further, to him, some of the activities disguised as international social work seem to be capitalised by a variety of sources and defined according to the financier's interests and conditions. If it suits their agendas, many, such as the representatives of Ford Foundation or Monsanto[173], seem to have nothing against going around behaving as social work minded do-gooders. Many Orissans however doubt that the real motivations of such actors. Inside UN business, then, though there are special seats reserved for local social workers and NGO people, mostly they seem to be

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173 An agricultural company, one of the world's biggest producers of agricultural chemicals.

given for speakers whose voices match with the policies and interests of their respective governments. Those that are anyway invited to big meetings to meet representatives of major programmes may be at odds with the air of global social tourism around such events.

In the setting of international social work, aid, development cooperation and assistance – all practices that at the local level are often seen to be social work of some kind – Orissa's position is to be the target area and receiver. But is the work done because of the people of Orissa or despite them? When hybrid seeds are brought in and seeds of local plant varieties collected and locked out of reach in seed banks elsewhere, to whose good and at whose cost is this 'development'? Are things that can be harmful after all imposed on the state and its people in the name of development? Locals wonder about the sources and channels behind the funding, the criteria to choose the possible beneficiaries, and on the whole the reasons behind the desire to invest in Orissa. Interestingly, in this setting Natya Chetana's role is ambiguous. As part of Natya Chetana activities are financed through development cooperation projects, one can ask: is the group a doer, receiver, or both? Critical towards superficial development attempts at the local level, is there any scope for the group's agency in the international or global setting of social work? Based on my touch with international social work journals, so far my guess is that an answer for the last question is: hardly. Actors like Natya Chetana are largely bypassed in and from the global discussions of social work.

Thinking further about the global movement of particular bodies and knowledge, as well as Orissa's concurrently marginal position on the global map of knowledge production and expertise, in the global labour market there are anyhow scopes of agency for certain Orissan people. In the arena of international social work, especially the degree-holding activists and experienced NGO-heads have good chances of getting employed abroad "as social work pioneers or leaders" in societal building processes. Several of Subodh's and Mamata's friends, "people who can adjust themselves with anything", have already experience from these kinds of jobs. Their know-how and experience has been welcomed in particular in disaster situations or "in places of decentralized world war like Gaza strip or Irak". Perhaps little strangely, disasters have started to offer scopes for international professional exchange also for people from peripheral and poor states like Orissa. What's more, in comparison to Orissan standards, such working opportunities can provide a lucrative salary.

The above experiences from Orissa teach the significance of location. Regarding any global agendas of social work the conclusion is that there is a need to negotiate relationships between different actors between 'North' and 'South', adding in the practices part of and around development aid and cooperation. However, such negotiations should not be innocent about factors such as national, ethnic or regional identities,

gender, religion, or local conceptions of social work. While all these variables and the political and economic contestations attached to them make any negotiation challenging, outlining international or global social work without paying attention to them is naïve. Furthermore, as Tsing (2005, 13) points out (in the context of global connections around forests and its uses in Indonesia), there is no reason to assume that collaborators would always share common goals. Rather, "collaborations create *new* interests and identities", but not to everyone's benefit.

In attempts to think about social work in a global scale, acknowledging location also means acknowledging, broadly speaking, the heretofore Northernness of social work theory. As pointed out in chapter three, the profession as well as the academic discipline of social work started to form, like many other social sciences, during the high tide of European imperialism. [Indeed, my own unchallenged assumption is that social work (naturally) is one of the social sciences, although for academic organisations, this seems not always be the case.] Writing particularly about sociology, Raewyn Connell (2007) states that the default assumption of Northern social science has been that "social science can have only one, universal body of concepts and methods, the one created in the global North" (ibid. viii-ix). When social scientists as well as their funding are concentrated in rich countries, the result is that "most theoretical texts written in social sciences are written in the global North, and most proceed on the assumption that this does not matter" (ibid. 50). Under these circumstances, social scientists working in the periphery [be this in the Global South or more peripheral locations in the North – periphery is a proportional notion] have a strong orientation to the Northern world centres of their disciplines. (Ibid. 217-218.) From the perspective of an Indian (Southern) intellectual, this entails that s/he is forced to place local bodies of thought prevalent in his/her society to the past and to treat them as 'traditions' instead of using them as an intellectual resource in contemporary world (Das 1995, 30; Connell 2007). In Connell's view (ibid. 44-48), what takes place is that the non-metropolitan intellectuals have to learn to write Northern theory. The same holds for artists, realised also by Subodh as the general non-recognition of the theoretical achievements made in Orissan folk theatre forms long ago (see Chapter 6.1). Connell suggests that when people in the periphery have to write as if they were from the metropole, they encounter difficulties of perspective and even identity. On the other hand, Northern scholars embracing Southern theory in Northern academy may also realise that the move brings along professional and cultural costs (ibid. 48).

Analysing further the Northernness of the general theory in social sciences, Connell suggests four characteristic textual moves that in my view are relevant also in the context of much Western social work literature: (1) the claim of universality, (2) reading from the centre, (3) gestures of exclusion, and (4) grand erasure. The claim of univer-

sality means that when Northern theory is seen globally relevant, experiences from the South are questioned for their relevance in other (Northern/Western) contexts. Reading from the centre and gestures of exclusion contain that theorists from the colonised world [or the Others of the society in question] are rarely cited in Northern theoretical texts and ideas from South/East/Others are not considered as part of the dialogue on theory. Finally, the grand erasure means that the experiences of the majority of human kind (the peoples of global South) are largely erased from the foundations of social thought. (Connell 2007, 44-46.) Elevating exceptional subalterns to lead South-based global movements is not an adequate solution either, as such figures "are no longer representative of the subaltern stratum in general"; "we must be on guard against both positive and negative subalternist essentialism" (Spivak 2008, 33).

In social work, the same Northernness can be seen as the global hegemony of Northern/Western social work, as well as a particular kind of idea of universalism (different from Nordic welfare state universalism which usually refers to the policy of providing same social services for everyone, and not exclusively for low-income and for other reasons marginalised citizens). In the sense of being globally applicable, even if needing perhaps a little of indigenising, ideas of 'universal' social work have been often grounded on the kind of modernity typical for the countries of Northern and Western Europe and Northern America. Thus, they have spoken largely of and to these societies rather than the world at large. Correspondingly, despite having been thoroughly challenged, linear narratives of progress have remained culturally persistent and dominant (Hutcheon 2003, 17). In Northern social work discussions this is manifested as the sometimes latent, sometimes explicated assumption that professional social work is the culmination of historical progress of the field, and therefore the desired goal where it has not yet been 'achieved'. Nonetheless, recognising the Northern position as a position of privilege means that claiming Northern (privileged) views as universal are "likely to serve hegemony, not liberation" (Connell 2007, x).

Taking the above into account, I conceive it no accident that voluntary social work in India is sometimes suggested to belong to the realm of the pre-modern and the traditional, and suppose such position to convey difficulty to accommodate other than professional approaches within the worldview of modernity. Further, in my view such positive openings, like the emerging discussion on indigenous social work approaches, do not easily get rid of the aura of describing social work in far away, exotic, not (yet?) quite modern places. Yet, conceiving something or somebody as exotic and distant tells above all else about the position and location of the observer. The unintentional consequence can be, in the words of Tsing (2005, 13), that "truths that are incompatible are suppressed." In its attempts to meet the above addressed challenges related to location, social work can find, and needs, support and insights from postcolonial analysis.

9.3 THE IMPERATIVE TO LEARN FROM POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS

Throughout this study there has been plenty of talk about colonialism and postcolonialism. I consider postcolonial analysis and awareness not as an end, but rather as a beginning. For social work, postcolonial theory can offer useful hints and clues especially in tracking past and present oppression, marginalisation, and resistance. While postcolonialism is not the term people in Natya Chetana are habituated to use, in this study it has served me as a useful concept to discuss the nature of the kind of things with which, or against which, the group works. As Linda Hutcheon explicates, the whole point of addressing something as postcolonial is to discuss that issue in relation to colonialism, how that something is *because of* and *after* colonialism. Through addressing the centrality of the colonial narrative and experience, it is possible to examine its political, historical and aesthetic impacts, all issues that Natya Chetana comments in its theatre and the justifications behind the way of doing it. Furthermore, learning from colonialism and its consequences is important because colonialism is neither a thing of the past, nor something that influences the lives and perspectives of the once colonised people and their descendants only. As an experience, it is still and actively evolving. (Hutcheon 2003, 18-19.) In other words, colonial histories keep defining and forming also North/West, and are entangled in global and local structures of power and knowledge production, in social work and elsewhere. Thus, examining different colonial encounters and their aftermaths specifically from social work perspective would surely enrich present histories of social work globally. What's more, understanding and learning from different social work pasts and their contemporary junctures is important for the self-understanding of social work both globally and locally.

Connected to the above ideas of location, postcolonialism means different things in peripheries than in centres. In present global orders of proximity and distance, both Finland and Orissa are often offered the position of periphery, Finland because of her Northeastern location in Europe (agreed also by many Finns as distance and exoticism from the heartlands of Europe), and Orissa because of her present image of poverty and underdevelopment. (However, depending on indicator, 'peripheral' places can turn to centres – for example in natural resources Orissa is not a minor place.) In fact, different peripheral locations may be strangely connective in the way how they exemplify the functioning of global economy. In places far away from centres in both Eastern India and Northern Finland, some of the topics at stake sound highly similar: land rights, mining sites, environmental destruction due to logging, and survival of indigenous cultures. These issues are not without connections to histories of colonialism, conquest and control over resources. But when in Orissa in 2007 a certain civil servant working on tribal development referred to tribal people as primitives and tried to con-

vince me of their easily recognisable, different-from-us skull form, I realised that in Finland such talk about the indigenous people will no longer do. It did hundred years ago, and actually the racist discourse of the time entertained also the idea of Finns as an example of a 'degenerated race'.

Despite opposite reassurances, the spread of globalisation and capitalism have been violent, chaotic and divisive, rather than smoothly all-encompassing processes (e.g. Tsing 2005, 11). Different authors have tried to depict the kind of discontinuities that colonialism caused by terms such as rupture (Hutcheon 2003), friction (Tsing 2005), or disjunction (Connell 2007). As Connell (ibid. 46) notes, for the colonised societies the colonial conquest was mostly a catastrophe, not rationalisation or evolution, introducing "fundamental disjunctions into social experience that simply cannot be represented in metropolitan theory's models of change through time." For Tsing (2005, 4), friction is the name for the kind of interactions in and through which cultures have been and are continually co-produced: "awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative interconnections across difference". As metaphors of cultural encounters, friction, rupture and disjunction also capture something about the incongruities and the paradoxes of life and identities in contemporary India. Modernity in a postcolonial society means often contradictory and competing views, loyalties, interests and learning. In Orissa, Subodh talks about these issues when pointing out that he and others in Natya Chetana are also "victims of the process". For example, dismantling internalised hierarchies, be they of indigenous nature such as caste, of colonial or later imports, or hybrids, is neither easy nor rapid. Often the only possibility is to find a working solution between tensed, multiply tangled identifications and processes.

Slightly off-guard, the thing that connects many of the discursive spheres of this study, social work, postcolonialism, theatre, community art, and ethnography, and indeed me and Natya Chetana, is the shared understanding of the importance of witnessing and story telling. (Perhaps this is the universalist hypothesis of this study?) As Linda Hutcheon notes, witnessing implies the responsibility not to forget. However, when the thing witnessed and retold has to do with violence and injustices, one of the chances is that telling stories of it can invoke also feelings of self-contempt and victimhood in particular in those who have lived the trauma. (Hutcheon 2003, 18-22.) Thus, while lives of most distant peoples are intertwined through threads of power and resistance, for example the act of framing and representing artworks by young indigenous people, even if motivated by allowing them to tell their stories, can strengthen their image as exotic others and actually renew rather than reconstruct prevailing structures of power. (Kantonen 2005, 43-46.) In its ideal witnessing is active, not reactive, supporting agency and not victimisation, or for that matter exotisation. When one can tell his or her traumatic story (or, in the context of theatre, see one's story being performed), the

original trauma becomes transformed into a narrative memory that permits the trauma a form so that it can be communicated. (Hutcheon 2003, 18-22.) Moreover, some of the stories have to be told over and over until they are properly internalised and understood to the extent that they are also acted upon positively and productively. With deep-rooted traumas, dealing with them and learning of them can take generations, and require different kinds and relationships of story telling and witnessing. Such is sense-making of evolving processes that are not over? (Ibid.)

Nonetheless, postcolonial is not a catch-all term to catch all forms of marginality. Rather, it addresses a particular kind of trauma and marginality; that which is because and after colonialism. The overall aim of postcolonial analysis is not to cultivate a melancholic nostalgia or wish for an impossible return to pre-colonial times, but to confront the trauma and its consequences head on. Therefore, when postcolonial reading means reading primarily in view of the traumatic legacy, it does not mean examining the indigenous culture or the particular past or present of a nation for its own sake. While the latter examination may be perhaps the most important object of study, it is not the same. (Hutcheon 2003, 18-21.) This study turned into a mixture of both postcolonial reading as well as an attempt to understand Natya Chetana's work as such, without refusing a dialogue with my own Finnish location. Rather than Natya Chetana, it is perhaps me who needed postcolonial theory in the attempt to understand, locate and translate something of Natya Chetana, Orissa, and India. In the stories that Natya Chetana performs, the postcolonial situation is just one, though deeply embedded ingredient. Essentially, above all else, the group's work is about present struggles in contemporary Orissa. Yet, no matter through which framework, we have all been learning of traumatic legacies and of understanding each other.

As a Finn, writing in English about Natya Chetana's theatre and social work in India, I am not free of the earlier noted inconsistency of identity, or for that matter inconsistency in the composition of this study. As pointed, Tampere and Finland are very definitely North but not quite the metropolis. For instance, the pressure to publish academic texts primarily (in English) in international journals does not withstand Finnish social work research, though it is not the best way to serve the profession at home. When in this study the imperative to write in English is strong for various reasons, the least of which is not that it makes it readable for some of Natya Chetana team members, one of the paradoxes is that I am making a social work doctoral dissertation studying a group outside academic professionalism. Being a researcher from North with data from South, I am further replaying the setting in which knowledge about the South is produced in the North (see Connell 2007, ix). Because of my background I cannot claim to fully reach Natya Chetana's experience and knowledge about the world, especially when the group consists of a good and changing number of individuals. Instead, I must rely

on fragments, at times fragile pieces of observations, as well as told experiences, and my interpretations based on them. While cross-cultural encounters have been proved to be both possible and fertile academic practice, what takes place between Natya Chetana and me is a particular cultural encounter, producing a different account than if a similar study had been made by someone from some other country. For me this study has surely produced a heightened and multi-level awareness of personal location.

When social science, social work and theatre have to be understood in their cultural, political, economic contexts, they do not reduce into those. Texts, and performances, communicate also beyond their immediate contexts. (E.g. Connell 2007, xii-xii.) As Mazzarella (2003, 17) condenses, local and global "are not opposites; rather they are mutually constitutive imaginary moments in every attempts to make sense of the world, whether for interdisciplinary, commercial, scholarly, or radical purposes." I hope the study has proved that different social work backgrounds are no barrier for dialogue, learning, common points of interest, and collaboration. When all differences need not and cannot be undone, they need not to be deadlocked either.

EPILOGUE

As this study has borne out of my collaboration and shared moments with a number of Natya Chetana volunteers, in particular those who were there in 2001-2002, in the following a few words about their situation by April 2009.

As discussed in chapter five, due to many factors in both Natya Chetana's finances as well as in the personal lives of many of the volunteers, in May 2002 a number of long-time volunteers decided not to continue full time with Natya Chetana. Of them, Chuni is mainly a housewife, but keeps collaborating with Natya Chetana, assisting the group occasionally, and doing puppetry performances on her own. Santosh continued his music studies, received a gold medal from his university of his achievements, and has been a music teacher, "Music Sir", already for years. Kunia shifted to work as a free lancer for TV. Mongu is back in his village, giving time and energy to his family and facilitating youth and sport club activities. Purna works as an assistant trainer for NGOs. Nibaran works as an artistic designer and actor in TV serials. Jalahandar is gone to work as a migrant labourer. Tutu is married and holds a transport business. Debi is involved in cultural research in a government program on tribal development. Brundaban, who in 2001 and 2002 took care of *Natya Gram*, has gone back to his own village and helps running a small food store. Taruna is busy as a community and religious worker and in music making, and has at least two more children now. Nira Bhai has big responsibilities in his work as an engineer, and cannot give much time for acting. Somnath is a leftist student leader. Dilip became the main breadwinner of his family, and is engaged in farming most of his time, but keeps nonetheless acting in Natya Chetana's plays, as in *Maati*. Subodh is still the director of Natya Chetana, whereas Mamata is fully immersed in her work as a public health specialist of an international organization. Bebi turned a full-timer long time ago, and besides acting, runs nowadays much of the office, as well as writes and directs plays. Dhira Bhai works as a cook as he did earlier. Sanjaya got married, and after having a little son, sifted to work with and organization running micro credit programs and legal counselling. Prahalad became a full-timer, but takes leaves when he is needed to take care of the rubber and cashew nut plantations that give some income for his family. And Ajaya took for long care of the management of cyco theatre expeditions, but has now shifted to work in another organization. On the other hand, a number of new volunteers have joined, Natya Chetana has now a website (www.natyachetana.org), and clips from the group's plays can be downloaded from internet.

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APPENDIX 1.

TABLE 3. Face to face encounter with Natya Chetana or its individual team members

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2000	First meeting with Natya Chetana, agreement on the research (but first time to India in August 1993)
MAY 2001	Natya Chetana's director Subodh Pattnaik in Finland
JUNE 2001	The performance team of Natya Chetana in Finland
SEPTEMBER 2001– JUNE 2002	Major fieldwork period with Natya Chetana
NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2002	Team of four persons from Natya Chetana in Finland
JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2003	Visit to Natya Chetana's People's Theatre Festival in January and again back for one week during the same trip
APRIL 2005 & SEPTEMBER 2005	Subodh Pattnaik in Finland
NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2005	A seven-member team of Natya Chetana in Finland
AUGUST 2007	Three weeks fieldwork visit to Natya Chetana
OCTOBER 2008	Two weeks field trip to Natya Chetana (going through the research report)
APRIL – MAY 2009	Subodh in Finland

APPENDIX 2.

TABLE 4. Primary data used in the study.

FIELD DIARIES ('FIELD NOTES')	A dozen hand-written diaries full of text, personal and professional issues mixed. Out of them, two first ones from the fieldwork period of 2001-2002 are selectively transcribed into a word-file, making 50 pages with the smallest row spacing. Among other things, the diaries include summaries and observations of everyday events, festivities, discussions, play plots, as well as schedule planning, checklists about things to be done, and outlines and sense making of my own emotions and condition.
MINIDISK RECORDINGS	Tens of interviews (70+ hours) and other recordings. I interviewed most of Natya Chetana team members 2001-2002, couple of local theatre/arts people knowing Natya Chetana (actors, drama teachers, directors, poet), couple of social activists and/or NGO-heads, couple of relatives of Natya Chetana team members. Approximately half of the interviews are transcribed into text.
VIDEO RECORDINGS	Around 20 hours, shot during a three month period in 2001-2002 when I had access to camera, focused at the rehearsals and performance tour of the play Boli.
PHOTOGRAPHS	Around 2000, functions largely as a photo-diary; all kinds of snapshots from everyday life at Natya Chetana hostel, office, and Natya Gram, from rehearsals and leisure, festivals, performances, visitors, nearby surroundings, team members, and so forth.
OTHER MATERIAL	Posters of Natya Chetana's plays, Natya Chetana's publications (many of which I have used as references, as visible also form the bibliography of this study), video- and audio recordings by Natya Chetana.

APPENDIX 3.

TABLE 5. India and Orissa in a nutshell

	REPUBLIC OF INDIA	ORISSA (also known as Odisha)
SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT	Federal republic (28 states and 7 Union Territories), parliamentary democracy, president Pratibha Patil, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh	State of India (see illustration 1), divided into 30 administrative districts Governor: Murlidhar Chandrakant Bhandare, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik
AREA	3,287,240 sq. km. (7th largest country in the world)	155,707 sq. km. (10th largest state of India, 4.74% of the total land area)
POPULATION	2009 estimate 1,198,003,000 (2nd) 2001 census 1,028,610,328 (72% rural, 28 % urban)	2001 census 36,804,660 (85% rural, 15 % urban)
POPULATION DENSITY	364,4/ sq. km	236/ sq. km
FEMALE/MALE RATIO (2001 CENSUS)	On average 933/1000 Rural 946/1000 Urban 900/1000	On average 972/1000 (Among adivasis 1003/1000)
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Hindi (official language of the Union), English (subsidiary official language, in addition to which 22 constitutional languages, including Oriya	Oriya (spoken by about 84 % of the population). Other linguistic minorities: Bengali, Hindi, Telugu, tribal languages
RELIGIONS	Hindus 80.5%, Muslims 13.4%, Christians 2.3 %, Sikhs 1.9%, Jains 0.4%, other religions and persuasions 0.6%, religion not stated 0,1%	Hindu 94.6%, Christian 2.1%, Muslim 0.05%. Sikh 0.03%, remainder belong to other religions, e.g. tribal religions

	REPUBLIC OF INDIA	ORISSA (also known as Odisha)
CASTE DIVISION	Scheduled tribes 8.2% (84,326,240) Scheduled castes (dalits) 16.2% (166,635,700)	Scheduled tribes 22.1% (62 tribes) (8,145,041 people, 9.7 % of the tribal population of India) Scheduled castes (dalits) 16.53%
LITERACY RATE	64.8% (male 73.3%, female 53.7%)	63.61% (female 50.97%, male 75.95%)
GDP	(2008) US$ 1,217.5 (Source: World Development Indicators Database, September 2009, World Bank)	
INFANT MORTALITY RATE	60/1000 births (rural 66, urban 38)	65/1000 births (2005-06) Source: Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Orissa
UNDER 5 MORTALITY RATE	(2007) 72/1000 (Source: World Development Indicators Database, September 2009, World Bank)	104.4/1000 (1998-99) Source: Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Orissa

Sources: Census of India 2001, unless otherwise mentioned.

APPENDIX 4.
NATYA CHETANA'S PLAYS 1986-2008

TABLE 7. Natya Chetana's intimate theatre plays 1986-2008.

	PLAY & YEAR(S) OF PERFORMANCE
1.	**BANAMANISHA** (The Wildmen) 1986, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001 etc.
2.	**GACHHA LAGAO** (Plant the Trees) 1987
3.	**NISA KARE NASA** (Addiction Kills) 1987
4.	**AAHH** (Aahh! The Pain!!) 1988, 1992
5.	**KHADI GALA GADI GADI** (The Chock is Rolling) 1988
6.	**PANI PANI PANI** (Water) 1988
7.	**DUKHIARA DUKHA KATHA** (The Sad Story of Dukhia) 1988
8.	**PANI CHANDA** (Collection for Water) 1989
9.	**PHULA KAHE KATHA** (Flower Can Talk) 1989
10.	**AAKHI** (The Eyes) 1989
11.	**DHAKAA** (Accident) 1989
12.	**BANCHA AAU BANCHAO** (Live and Let Others Live) 1989
13.	**TIPA CHINHA** (Fingerprint) 1990
14.	**SAREE** (A bird; small black one that can imitate human talk) 1990
15.	**SWASA** (Asthma/ Struggle for Independence) 1990
16.	**AAMA GAON** (Our Village)1990
17.	**BILEI BEKARE GHANTI** (Bell the Cat) 1990
18.	**TELIA MUNDARE TELA** (Oil on a Oily Head) 1990
19.	**CHHOTIA NISA** (Small Addiction) 1990, 1992
20.	**BIHANGA BIBLABA** (Revolution of the Birds) 1990
21.	**HO PATARA WALA** (Leaf Plate Makers) 1991

22.	**JANGALA RE CHAHALA** (Havoc in the Forest) 1991
23.	**KAHA PAIN SEMANANKA ATTMAHATYA** (Suicide for Whom) 1992
24.	**JHIA HOICHI** (A Girl Child is Born) 1992
25.	**DUHITA** (Daughter) 1993
26.	**CHAITA CHARITA** (The Story of Chaita) 1993
27.	**SRUSTI RA SWAR** (The Voice of the Nature) 1994
28.	**PACHISI BHUTA** (Ghost) 1994-1995
29.	**MANTRA RAHASYA** (Inside Story of Mantra) 1994
30.	**KHOLIDIA ANDHA PATI** (Open your Blindfold) 1994
31.	**AAU THARE SWADHINATA** (Freedom Again) 1995-1996
32.	**TANGIA CHHAP** (The Symbol is the Axe) 1996-1998, plus tours in Europe
33.	**BIZA BAZAR** (The Poison Market) 1997-1998
34.	**MUN BAHA HEBI** (I Will Marry) 1997
35.	**KALA PANI** (Black Water) 1998, 2004
36.	**SAPANARA SAPANA** (Sapan's Dream) 1999-2000
37.	**AKASHA KAINAN** (The Flower of the Sky) 2001
38.	**SITA ASITA** (Sita and Her Opposite) 2002
39.	**MAYA JALA** (Illusory Net) 2004
40.	**BATARKIRI** (The name refers to an insect species which lives for one day only; used in the play to symbolize suicide by a short span of exited life) 2005
41.	**DHOLA SUNA** (White Gold) 2006

TABLE 7. Natya Chetana's intimate theatre plays 1986-2008.

	PLAY & YEAR(S) OF PERFORMANCE
1.	**MATIRA MANISHA** (People of the Earth) 1990
2.	**BILEI BEKARE GHANTI** (Bell the Cat) 1991
3.	**SUA MUNHARA PATRA** (A Leaf on the Stream) 1991
4.	**KUHUDI** (Fog) 1991
5.	**PRAYASCHITA** (Self-punishment) 1991
6.	**KAHA PAIN SEMANAKA** (Suicide for Whom?) 1992
7.	**KANAKALATA** (A woman's name) 1992
8.	**KAATHA** (The Wood) 1992-1993, 1995, 1998, 2000-2003
9.	**KHARABELA** (King Kharabela) 1993
10.	**BANSHIBA PAIN** (For the Sake of Living) 1995
11.	**AABU** (The Lump) 1996, 1999
12.	**PATAKA UTTOLANA** (Flag hosting) 1998
13.	**BHOKA** (Hunger) 1998
14.	**GEETA** (The Song) 2000, 2003
15.	**BOLI** (The Sacrifice) 2001

16.	**BIBLOBI BIHONGA** (Revolution of the Birds) 2002
17.	**BHOOTA** (The Ghost) 2003
18.	**BABU** (Sir) 2004
19.	**TOTE JHURE MUN RATI DINA** (Missing You Day and Night) 2004
20.	**REBOTI** (Reboti; name of a village girl) 2005
21.	**DHUAN** (The Smoke) 2005
22.	**MAATI** (Mother Earth) 2008