

This is my first visit to this city which I find fascinating in every way. I started, may be at the wrong end, trudging through the plebeian roads of Kadam Kuan and only later discovering the spacious Gandhi Maidan and the formidable hotels Maurya and Pataliputra!

Patna is full of flower gardens, post-boxes, shops selling wedding invitation cards and public conveniences—most of them a distinct contrast with humid and congested Bombay.

I have also discovered my first Patna bore—at a seminar on "theatre as mass media" held on Sunday morning at the Gandhi Museum. (I found the Charkha specimens gathering dust and the names of the British governor and police official made notorious by Jallianwalla Bagh mis-spelt on one of the many informative, photographic panels!)

This bore, who literally looked like a boar, belonged—alas—to our own species, having been local correspondent of a national newspaper for several years and now in charge

The Nritya Kala Mandir has both a closed and a 4,000-seat open-air theatre. It is in the latter that, as I write this, the NSD is staging its hilarious satire "Begum ka Takia" (which I saw two years ago in the NSD's own open-air theatre in New Delhi). A huge stage set was being assembled a day earlier and the boys and girls of the NSD were rehearsing there the whole of this morning as I listened compulsorily to my speechifying nemesis.

Satish Anand, the young director of Kala Sangam, was totally unknown to me but more than one thing suggests that he is the great live wire force behind the dramatic activities of this organisation. That Jayaprakash Narayan is its chief patron and that dedicated writer patriots like Phaneeshwarnath 'Renu' took keen interest in it should adequately prove Kala Sangam's credentials. But, what is more significant is that over the past decade or so all the major plays of Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar as well as domestic significant Hindi plays have been staged by Kala Sangam

Anand in the main, multiple, role was admirably versatile and particularly impressive as Juneja. Bina Sinha identified herself with the difficult role of Savitri, especially during the last sequence when she is put in the dock by her husband's friend, Juneja.

What a revelation the play is! Rakesh does not merely provide the play's main star with five parts (including the "sutradhara" who opens the play). That the three men who feature in Savitri's life are her husband's alter-egos is made clear at different stages. For instance, when her son draws a caricature of the indoluous Singhania, his sister remarks that the picture looks like their father's! Later Juneja tells Savitri how she must have compared her husband with him (Juneja) and found everything lacking in Mahendranath which Juneja possessed.

The manner in which Juneja defends the weak and useless Mahendranath and comes down heavily on poor Savitri makes no wonder if Rakesh, gentle mannered and jovial as he was, was a misogynist! If so, was it because of that wife

play, especially as it was easily understandable and novel in its stage (technique).

Particularly impressive were Parvez Ajahtar (in his drunken scenes), the boy actor Paritosh Shukla, Hrishikesh Sulabh as the fake Guru-dev and Brajeshnandan Bhaskar as the callous Kotwal. The Hindi translation was by Yama Saraf.

For an organisation like Kala Sangam there is a real dearth of Hindi plays. Those who translate into Hindi prefer to deal with Marathi or Bengali plays which have already achieved a critical success. While playwrights in these languages as well as in Gujarati continue to translate or adapt significant western plays, very few choose these for translation into Hindi. The plays of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill, John Osborne, Arnold Wesker and Harold Pinter, let alone the classics of Ibsen or Shaw, have not been staged in Hindi adaptations. The few exceptions have been seen in Bombay and Delhi but they do not represent the general choice of the Hindi-speaking regions.

On the other hand, with Rakesh

quote a strange story which a speaker at Sunday's seminar narrated. Speaking of state apathy towards the theatre, he said that the Ravindra Rangashala in Patna was being used by the CRP to hand their underwear for drying.

In every state capital, a Ravindra theatre has been built as part of the Tagore centenary celebrations held many years ago. The original scheme was to house a state-funded, full-time separatory company in each of these theatres. But things in Patna seems to be as bad as in Calcutta, where theatre and film artistes, as well as intellectuals, have risen in protest over the mismanagement of the Ravindra theatre there and formed the Bangla Rangmanch Pratishta Samiti. (It was in aid of this that a Satyajit Ray film festival was organised some years ago at Bombay's Eros Cinema.)

That Bihar can launch a political movement against repression and still suffer this unusual disgrace of Ravindranath Tagore's memory in silence is a paradox which I have failed to resolve while talking and enjoying theatre in this city.

It is surprising that the news of

EXCHANGE OF PLAYS MAY SUFFER EBB-TIDE

By Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni



of the local branch of a news agency. He obviously liked to hear his own stentorian tones.

In the coming week, there will be another seminar on the subject of "modern theatre, its form and probabilities." These two seminars have been organised by a youthful body called Kala Sangam. Last week a drama festival also opened under its auspices at the Bharatiya Nritya Kala Mandir. Kala Sangam is staging most of the plays—they are by Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Madhu Rye, Vijay Tendulkar and Shanti Mehrotra. Two more productions have come here from New Delhi's National School of Drama,

in Patna. Encouragement for such efforts does not necessarily compare with the public response one gets for avant-garde theatre in major cities like Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta. But the two Kala Sangam productions which I have seen here during the week end definitely project a bright image of the dedicated youngsters associated with it.

"Adhe Adhure" was the fifth production of the Rakesh play that I was witnessing. The others starred Amrish Puri, Shriram Lagu (in Marathi), Om Shivpuri and Manohar Singh, the last two in NSD alumni productions. Kala Sangam's was a well-rehearsed show, Satish

who made life impossible for him, not only in life but also in death?

Badal Sircar's "Juloos", also directed by Satish Anand, was performed on the lawns of the Gandhi Museum. The audience was seated in a circle, and the young actors went about their choreographic and mimic routines in an earnest manner. Although this play now appears thin in its content and repetitive, it had the same impact on the local audience as it has been having in Bombay for more than a hundred shows of Amol Palekar's Marathi production. (It had become a fashion among non-Marathi speaking playgoers to see the

dead and Badal Sircar busy with ideological experiments, neither Tendulkar nor Karnad have provided the theatre with anything significant for some time. An exchange of plays among the major languages may thus suffer an ebb-tide in the near future. Add to this the meagre output of original Hindi playwrights who are now active, and you can visualise the problem of an organisation like Kala Sangam which wants to forge bonds with the country's leading theatre movements through the type of drama festivals and seminars it has started holding since last year.

By way of a tailpiece, let me

Jean Renoir's death has been so sparsely reported in the Indian press. True, he has never been in fashion among cineastes here, partly because they have not been consistently exposed to his films the way they have been to the French New Wave. And, yet, the fact that Renoir made a film in India, nearly three decades ago should bind us sentimentally with his career.

Also, the fact that he was the son and biographer of the painter Auguste Renoir. Jean Renoir's "Renoir, My Father" is as human as it is gay, portraying the colour-

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ful life of a master who was an epicure of painting. Jean Renoir turned to picaresque fiction in his later life and a paperback novel of his used to be available in bookshops till recently.

“The River”, based on Rumer Godden’s novel and photographed in lush colour by Claude Renoir is about the confrontation of a British family with an Indian environment. Jean Renoir had absorbed the sights and sounds of the Bengali mofussil with unique virtuosity. One particularly remembers the poetic manner in which he had captured a scene of a typical Indian siesta in a Sahib’s colour added house and exotic garden.

Satyajit Ray got much inspiration from Renoir who allowed him to watch the shooting of “The River” without any conditions. Anglo-Indian though the novel and the film were in its material, Renoir’s work is far more genuine than the half-baked products of some of our Indo-Anglians. It is a surprising coincidence that not till Ray made “Shatranj ke Khilari” was any Indian director successful in pinpointing the reality about Anglo-Indians. The confrontation between outram and the potentates of oudh is an oblique compliment paid by Ray to his first guru.

