

# To video or not to video?

**T**o VDO or not to VDO is the question. And it is extremely relevant in the culture we are being blasted with right now. Like a true venereal disease, the video culture has insidiously wormed its way into the theatre auditor-

## VIEWPOINT

ium much to the discomfort and unease of the audience.

When one goes to see a play, one intends to see the play. And not the back of a couple of guys playing with a camera hoisted onto one of their several shoulders. Why the audience must be subjected to the perfidious machinations and ubiquitous presence of a video camera, operator and assistant, is beyond all reason.

Theatre is a live performing art. It is transient. Which is why it is not film. One is not entirely against the recording of theatre for various reasons, but if theatre must be recorded, it should be done so with no inconvenience at all to the viewer. No backs and no lights shoved into the collective face of the audience or onto the stage, drowning out vision in the former case and totally obliterating the nuances of theatrical lighting and colour.

It had been voiced abroad that the Shri Ram Centre Acting Course students had put up a good play — *Garam Coat*, a dramatisation of Nikolai Gogol's *The Overcoat* directed by Lokendra Trivedi.

No sooner had the lights gone down and the curtain arisen, two bodies oiled their way across the floor to stand right in the middle of the aisle successfully blocking out the view of half the audience seated to their right, since the scene was taking place stage right. Despite angry protests from the much put-upon viewers, they refused to move.

What, one reiterates, does one go to the theatre for? Ostensibly to see drama and not create it. But enough is enough and

no more abuse for the viewer. Who created the *hauwa* of the video ogre? Why is a recording allowed to interfere with the vision of the audience?

People have spent money and given of their time to attend a performance. Perhaps they hoped they would enjoy it. And perhaps they would have, had they been able to see it.

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done during a dress rehearsal or in a way that caused no grief to the viewing public?

Why have still photo cameras been banned from auditoria and not video cameras? Who is responsible for this discrimination? And eventually who is responsible for allowing these VDOs into the auditoria? And who, ultimately, is responsible for not controlling them? Or better still throwing them out?

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