

25 *Perspective* ('Drishtikon'in Bangla) is a revolutionary play composed by the theatrical
26 organization Jana Sanskriti. Jana Sanskriti is conceptualized by Sanjoy Ganguly that follows
27 the principles and techniques of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. Jana Sanskriti is
28 located in a remote village named Madhyamgram in West Bengal and has been practicing
29 theatre since 1985. Being an applied theatre form, the plays are dynamic, flexible, and thus,
30 do not rely on a static text script. However, Sanjoy Ganguly took the initiative to document
31 some of the plays in Bengali initially, and later, translated five of the plays in English and
32 collected them in the book *Where We Stand: Five Plays from the Repertoire of Jana Sanskriti*
33 (2010). The concerned play in this article, *Perspective*, is the last play of the collection, which
34 sums up the essence of Jana Sanskriti's ideology of dialogism.

35 **Structure and Methodology:**

36 The present article first introduces the dialogic ideology, and recounts on how Ganguly
37 conceptualizes it through his experiences. Then the study briefs the plot of the play in short.
38 The article then proceeds towards a detailed thematic analysis of the play scene-wise. It also
39 adds a structural analysis of the play to illustrate how the dialogic and multi-logic ideology
40 work both thematically and structurally. In conclusion, the study distinctly addresses its
41 argument by elaborating on how multi-logicity counters fundamentalism. Finally, the article
42 ends with highlighting the unique contribution of the article, and providing a few suggestions
43 on further scope for research in this area. The article employs analytical and comparative
44 method to explore the play-text. It also refers to performance theory and developmental
45 theory to validate its argument.

46 **Conceptualization of the ideology:**

47 The dialogic ideology is a consequence of Sanjoy Ganguly's experience as a party worker.
48 While working in a worker's party, Ganguly realizes that the leaders who represent the
49 workers, are ironically, far removed from the workers themselves (Ganguly, Jana, 12-13).
50 The party leaders are driven merely by their selfish ends and are least bothered or concerned
51 of the people. Ganguly observes the monologic relation between the workers and the Unions,
52 where the leaders of the Unions take all the crucial decisions and give instructions to the
53 workers rather than discussing and taking suggestions from them. This gives rise to the
54 concept of creating a dialogic platform where the workers, their opinions, and their
55 suggestions would be taken into consideration, and respected. This realization of Ganguly led
56 to the formation of Jana Sanskriti as a theatrical form that promotes discussion and
57 interaction of the actors and the audience. All the performances of Jana Sanskriti rely on texts
58 that are dialogic, and involve a number of opinions and perspectives.

59 **Plot of the play:**

60 The play *Perspective* consists of four scenes, depicting and criticising our peremptory
61 perspectives from four different lenses. The First Scene outlines the current political picture,
62 where the leaders of the political parties have completely forgotten their past revolutionary
63 ideals, and are busy in taking benefits of their present political positions. The Second Scene
64 introduces us to the character 'Ranjan', who represents the conscious being that exists within
65 all of us. This scene also gives a call for realizing and stimulating our inner consciousness
66 which lays either unrecognised or suppressed. The next scene very skilfully brings out four
67 characters, representing four sections of people who are patronised by the political parties,
68 and thus defend the party blindly, killing their own conscience. The fourth and the last scene
69 dwells on an in-depth discussion on how politics and religion are interrelated, and how
70 humanity and inclusivity can lead us towards a better political culture.

71 **Thematic Analysis of the Play:**

72 The play begins with a chorus that is very relevant to the current political culture:

73 Don't think about people

74 Don't think about nation

75 Think only of yourself

76

77 Money and Power are my main aims

78 Regardless of the means

79 Political terrorism

80 A new form of protest

81 Leadership worth worship has said so

82 Songs for the party, not people

83 That's what we call love for the party (Ganguly, *Where*,151)

84 The very opening lines thus set the tone and aptly sum up the current political scenario. It
85 lays bare the attitude of the politicians towards common people. They are not concerned of
86 the people or the nation; they are simply driven by money and power, which are easily
87 attainable by serving the party needs blindly. Thus, they 'worship' the party, and 'terrorise'
88 the people conveniently.

89 However, interestingly, the responsibility for this despotic scenario is not thrust only on the
90 leaders, as a woman character points out, "*We are the ones* who gave them the seat and
91 clothes of power." (152) The submission and weakness of the people are further evinced by
92 one of the characters as "We are without consciousness, without intelligence. You call us the
93 people." (153) The representatives of the people manipulate their opinion, take their votes,
94 and then mock the people's intelligence and consciousness. The scene thus questions the lack

95 of consciousness of not only the political leaders but also of the common mass who surrender
96 unquestioningly to such leaders.

97 The second scene is an in-depth discussion between different symbolic characters,
98 representing our country (Mother), conscious beings (Ranjan), and politically patronised
99 professionals, such as police, bureaucrats and government teachers. This scene emphasizes
100 that it is not the lack of understanding of the people, nor their lack of will. However, the real
101 problem lies with the lack of a platform to express their opinions. As Ranjan says, “They do
102 understand. But the problem is: Where is the space to express their understanding? Where is
103 the opportunity?” (158) And this lack of space to express is intentionally created by the
104 current political culture to keep the people deaf and dumb to realities. As soon as the people
105 start talking to each other and gather courage to discover their inner consciousness, the leader
106 and its team arrive and exercised control on them both ideologically as well as forcibly.

107 The third scene is a very relevant deliberation on the ideas of social revolution and the path to
108 it. It is an attack on fundamentalism and extremism of any kind, be it ultra-Left or ultra-
109 Right. Whenever an ideology becomes institutionalised, it tends to be dogmatic. As Ranjan
110 remarks, “Religious fundamentalists are taking on an aggressive path today which is basically
111 hatred. Their religion cannot be responsible for that. Just as Marxist thought cannot be
112 responsible for everything that Marxists do, and Gandhian thought is not responsible for
113 everything that Gandhians do.” (168) Thus, the difference between the ideology and the
114 institutionalization of the ideology needs to be understood. It is also suggested here, that if
115 institutionalization is removed from politics and religion, both would complement each other,
116 as aptly put by Ranjan, “Real religion is bound to support progressive politics.” (170) Here
117 the meaning of religion is defined as the possession of the qualities of “sensitivity,
118 conscience, to be able to love, truthfulness, the strength to fail, to see yourself in someone

119 else, accountability, determination..." (171) Thus, real religion promotes humanity, while the
120 institutional banners and political agendas assign different meanings and values to them.
121 The last scene concludes Ganguly's non-institutional political approach very clearly. Ranjan
122 remarks, "I am dying to know the name of your party, but let that be. I can do without it.
123 Even though you're different in name, in deeds you are more or less all the same." (174) It
124 highlights that all the political parties irrespective of their names, behave similarly when they
125 are in power. The scene also levels revolutionaries and reactionaries as equal. Though the two
126 sections have opposing ideologies in theory, practically, both of them prefer an autocratic and
127 monologic outlook. The only hope is the awakening of Ranjan within us, which means,
128 realizing our own identity, consciousness and political will. Thus the scene finally ends with
129 a positive note and a hope in the prevalence of humanity.

130 Thus, the play touches upon a number of ideas to pinpoint the primary theme of non-
131 conformity towards any fundamental or institutionalized agenda. It is an earnest appeal to
132 realize the true potential of religion and politics and not get trapped into the party-based
133 political web. History has many references to collective social revolutionary movements
134 where people have broken all institutions of power and liberated themselves. The play
135 suggests that there is no right or wrong party; every party can function rightly, if it respects
136 its ideology and the people it represents. Every individual's voice needs to be represented by
137 the respective parties, and that is possible only when the monologic structure is re-structured
138 into a dialogic, rather a multi-logic one.

139 **Structural analysis of the play:**

140 Not only thematically, but Jana Sanskriti adheres to its multi-logic approach in its operation
141 and execution as well. This play primarily focusses on long conversations and logical
142 exchanges. Generally, discussion-oriented plays involve dialogue between two people or two
143 countering ideas. However, it needs to be noted that in this play, in all the scenes, there are

144 around eight to ten symbolic characters, again symbolizing more people. This technique helps
145 in including more people into the discussion revealing more opinions, more reactions, and
146 more perspectives.

147 The composition of the plays also evinces the inclusive approach of Jana Sanskriti. Jana
148 Sanskriti follows ensemble methodology to create its plays. It means, the plays are not created
149 by an objective author or playwright, but these are created collectively by the entire team.
150 Interestingly, the team here doesn't mean the performers only; it involves the residents from
151 the village. The team of Jana Sanskriti interacts with the people and all of them together
152 decide the theme, the dialogue, the characterization and other technicalities for the plays.
153 Thus, the texts already carry the perspectives of a number of people, even before it is
154 performed on the stage.

155 These collectively created plays are performed on the stage employing the popular TO
156 technique of 'spect-acting', where people from the audience can replace any actor and act on
157 his/her place. There are many instances where the audience and the actors engage in
158 constructive discussions during the play, and plan some course of action to deal with some
159 specific issue. There are various campaigns, rallies and awareness initiatives taken by the JS
160 team along with the local people to bring about positive changes in the society.

161 **Conclusion:**

162 Thus, rather than just being dialogic, Jana Sanskriti functions on the principle of multi-
163 logicity. Right from creating the plays to performing them on-stage, to organising post-
164 performance activities- during all the stages, Jana Sanskriti involves the people and their
165 multiple perspectives. This collective approach helps in countering fundamentalism, as
166 multiple voices are expressed and respected. The creation of the texts also illustrates how the
167 authority of an author can be countered through an ensemble creation. Furthermore, the plots
168 are structured in a way that does not allow for any protagonist character. Thus, the authority

169 of a single actor or character is also countered. Then, during the performance, as spectators
170 can also perform on stage, again, the actor's dominance is countered and the audience are
171 equally involved. Thus, in all the stages, Jana Sanskriti attempts to break all kinds of
172 conventional monologic structures and to create an all-inclusive dialogic framework. With
173 mutual involvement and interaction people get to know, understand, value, and support each
174 other. And where mutual understanding prevails, there can be no space for monologic
175 dominance or institutional violence.

176 **Contribution and further scope:**

177 Being an applied theatre form, there is very little academic scholarship available on Jana
178 Sanskriti as a whole. Furthermore, there has not been a single work on the play texts till now.
179 A few references and instances are there on the very popular plays like *Sarama* and *Shonar*
180 *Meye*; however, the play *Perspective* is not even mentioned anywhere except the play text
181 itself. So, this article is the first attempt to analyse the play both thematically and structurally.
182 As can be deduced from the discussion, the play is a very relevant account of the current
183 political scenario, although it is composed around twenty years earlier. Thus, there is a huge
184 scope of theoretical analysis of the plays of Jana Sanskriti. Though there have been a few
185 studies on the socio-political relevance, there is still a huge scope on conducting case studies
186 and surveys on developmental aspects of Jana Sanskriti.

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