CHAPTER I

BODY AND CULTURE

“The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of substantial unity) and a volume of disintegration”.

Foucault.

The disavowal of traditional performance is closely related to the misguided perception that such theatre is ‘primitive’ and / or simplistic. Apart from being more complex than most western commentators generally allow, traditional enactments have special function in post colonial societies and are often key sites of resistance to imposed values and practices. Rooted in folk culture these enactments are not only mnemonic devices that assist in the preservation of history but are also effective strategies for maintaining cultural difference, through specific systems of communication aural visual and kinetic and through specific values related to local customs.

The body of the primitive man was ruled by instincts which were nearly animal. The collective consciousness and archetypical images the body percepts were made visible through their ceremonial gatherings and others activities related to his environment namely the jungle.

From the primitive instincts and activities, rituals were formed and performances related to rituals were done. Human transformation in ritual appears to relay on deeper awareness of body as a symbol and as a vessel of meanings.

As civilization culture and human environment changed the ritual theatre gradually made ground to modern theatre. But eventhough the change
occurred; primitive instincts of the body still remained in the modern performance too. So modern theatre performance dynamism related to body is a blend of primitive instincts and the instincts developed through the modern environment.

The body varies from culture to culture and for each performance in different culture the body training and the energy distribution in his body differentiates.

The traditional mythologies of the body adopted by the Asian, practitioner do not assume a physical body which is separate from the mental, emotional, cosmological and philosophical modes of existence but rather a body which instantiates all of the above.

When the actor in the west uses his body to represent reality, the Asian actor’s body becomes a reality.

The Eskimos body living in the ice filled areas of Antarctica is different from the African body in the jungle.

Relating these variations in culture and geography to performance practice, the process of practice, for eg. In Japanese Noh theatre are a set of cultural assumption about body, mind and performer’s energy which are particular to Japan. The subjectively of the performer is hence derived from a culturally linked psychospiritual process.

Antonin Arthaud's experience revolves around the relationship between the body language and theatre. Arthaud shows that the image of the body is the function of the voice.

Grotowiskian concept says that each physical action in preceded by an inner movement or impulse. There are a score of living impulses which can be articulated to design. These impulses which are latent inside the body is
decided by the actors cultural, political and other circumstances, which makes a ‘body memory’.

In the theatre, the actor’s body is the major physical symbol: it is distinguished from other such symbols by its capacity to offer a multifarious complex of meanings. The body signifies through its appearance and actions, as well as indicating such categories as race and gender, the performing body can also express place and narrative. Moreover it interacts with all other stage signifiers – notably costume set and dialogue. Hence the chemistry of the body changes from culture to culture and also seconds by seconds in a performance.

Although the actor’s body has always been “there” as the actor’s sole means of expression in live performance, the degree to which the body and/or a self consciously constructed system of training towards performance is foregrounded, is variable since both are culturally, socio-economically and historically specific.

In the Japanese Noh theatre, there is no specific separate method of training towards performance. This traditionally secret family texts implicit in this process of practice as a set of cultural assumptions about the body, mind, performers energy which are particular to Japan.

In Natyasastra, which tells that there was a specific system for body preparation which included a complex set of preparatory exercises as well as full body massage. Particular modes of training and particular genres of performance demand specific bodies fashioned in a particular environment for particular set of performative expectations. The techniques which constitute a particular technology of the body cannot be divorced from the discourses and assumptions which inform how that set of techniques is that set of techniques is understood and/or represented. For eg for a devoutly Budhist Japanese noh
actor, the subjectivity produced through his practice and experience of no acting assimilated through the tenets of Buddhist religio-philosophical thought may lead toward aesthetic and personal enlightenment of the sort that Zeami discussed as the ultimate flowering of one’s life in art what Nearman calls a “psycho-spiritual process.

The word "culture" has many definitions, so it seems important to rule out those that are not pertinent in the context of intercultural communication.

It is crucial to remember that culture is learned, not something "in one's blood". Children adopted as infants will have the culture of their adoptive parents and their society, although we can't totally discount the impact of their very first experiences, even those in the womb. And of course an Indian child adopted by non-Asian parents in Europe, to take one example, will have to "explain" and deal with the difference between his true culture (say, German or French) and the culture that outsiders may expect him to have based on his appearance. Thus culture is learned through interaction, and shared by the people interacting.

It becomes clear that all human beings "have culture", no matter what their level of formal education.

In any culture the distance was stand from another person varies depending on our relationship to them and the place where we find ourselves, but these norms vary from culture to culture. Things become complicated when people from different cultures interact. People naturally ("instinctively" would be incorrect) try to establish the speaking distance that they were brought up to feel comfortable with. That means that in an intercultural situation one person might want to stand closer than the gestures.
If we observe something concerning body language: What is communicated through posture, movement, gestures and facial expressions, eye contact? We seem to think that only people from certain cultures "use" body language.

Interpreting people's body language is an important skill and can even be a defense mechanism. Once again, however, difficulties may arise when we "Decode" the body language of people from other cultures as if they were members of our own culture.

1.1 Culture of individuals

Just as most human beings speak more than one language, many of us "share" more than one culture with different groups of people we interact with. Where applied to a society, the term "multicultural" can suggest a "mixed salad" and does not necessarily mean that each individual belongs to many different cultures. On the other hand "multicultural" and “bicultural, when applied to an individual, suggest mixing or multiplicity, the ability to function in at least two different groups. This can happen in many ways, and may even apply to most possible in border regions where two groups interact frequently, it can be the case of immigrants or anyone who lives with members of another culture and assimilates aspects of their behavior. Other individuals become bicultural through interaction with a mother and father from different cultures, or with grandparents, stepparents, or caregivers. Yet another group, sometimes called "third culture kids", has lived briefly in many different cultures, usually due to their parents' professions, often military, diplomatic or business-related.

The perception of personal culture is constantly changing, subject to people's image them selves influenced by the feedback they receive from others. This is part of the construct identity, which also includes other characteristics such as age, sex, and profession.
There are many grounds on which people can object to intercultural research and analysis, and two of the primary ones are apparent opposites: the argument that we are all basically the same, or that we are all ultimately different.

All the same: humanity transcendent philosophical or spiritual reasons, some people reject the differentiation implied by intercultural analysis, and prefer to emphasize those aspects that are common to all human beings and the ways in which we are all one.

On a spiritual plane, this argument is impossible to counter. It seems clear that in some circumstances we can achieve a form of compassion or empathy for other human beings despite the barriers of language or culture. This is especially true when we manage to rise above the level of day-to-day experience, or when we are faced with extreme circumstances that remind us of our common mortality. Few people seem able to sustain this level of connectedness as they go about the tasks of daily life. Communication is possible even where languages and cultures differ music and dances come to mind. Likewise some physical activities or sports may create a framework of rules and behavior in which other differences, including cultural ones, are less important. This same argument can be made for Theatre space charged with explorations.

A second objection to intercultural generalizations comes from those who maintain that we are all different, since each human being is unique. Once again this argument is true and impossible to refute. In many Western countries the assertion of each person's individuality and "self is a key cultural value. Related to this fundamental notion is the fact that, due to all the variation in any group of human beings, there will be many exceptions to any generalization.
One of the most frequent criticisms made about intercultural awareness training or about any discussion of "cultural differences", is that they encourage the propagation of stereotypes concerning people from other cultures. Since stereotypes are by definition oversimplified and by nature judgmental and often derogatory, this would certainly not encourage effective intercultural communication. There are those who maintain that if enough people in a culture share a stereotype about another group, then this stereotype must have a "kernel of truth". This is said to be especially true when people from different cultures share a common stereotype about a certain cultural group.

1.2 Colonial body structures

Examining the colonial body, exclusion or suppression can often literally be seen as embodied. From the point of view of the colonizer specifically, fears and curiosities, sublimated fascinations with the strange or the ‘primitive’ are expressed in concrete physical and anatomical images.

In general, the post colonial body disrupts the constrained space and signification left to it by the colonizers and become a site for resistant inscription. The actor’s stylized facial expressions in some Indian tribal forms signify the history of the specific Indian traditions and communicate the carefully preserved systems of meaning through actor’s body.

The post colonial subject is often preoccupied with refusing colonially determined labels and definitions, especially those which operate in the name of race and gender.

The derogated body is degraded, infiltrated with disease or figured as grotesque, it is also frequently denied freedom. There is also the metamorphic body, like the Australian aboriginal dreamer which is a spirit with transformative powers. The metamorphic body of the dreamer supplies a
surrealistic frame that stresses the persistence and resistance of Aboriginal culture.

Transformations of the post colonial body are theatricalised through rhythmic movement such as dance, which brings in to focus the performing body. Dance thus emerges as a locus of struggle in producing and representing individual and cultural identity.

How and what the performing body signifies, are closely related to the ways in which it is framed for the viewers conception.

The ways in which the body is framed by and within the gaze determines to some extent at least how and what it can ‘mean’. The gaze establishes and frequently redetermines the loci of authority.

It is clear that the chemistry of the body in varied cultures are different. They vary according to the status of the body in their culture. The geographical and hereditary aspects also make the body different. Hence there is a common biological body and the body which differs according to the culture and entonement. Hence the centre of power for each body also differs. After examining the Body and the ambience of culture it is placed, we should try to understand the Intercultural aspects and the concept of Interculturality in the next chapter.

1.3 Theatre as a cultural system

Theatre is played in the widest range of different cultures: in the agrarian cultures or so-called primitive cultures based on hunting or fishing; in the sophisticated ancient Middle and Far Eastern civilizations, such as those of Persia, Turkey, India, Malaysia, Japan, and China; and in all of Western culture, wherever there is culture there are forms of theatre. India has a vast diversity and variety of cultures which serves as building brick for
theatre. This cultural patterns are weaved in to new forms of Theatre also considering all the global changes accepted by the Indian body. It can be a cultural resistance through the cultural system by which Indian Theatre will change in to a new cultural system.

Research into other, unknown cultures has repeatedly confirmed just how widespread theatre is as a cultural phenomenon, and its high profile has prompted a wide range of different attempts to interpret it. The existence of theater has been explained, for example, anthropologically, sociologically, and psychologically. When viewed from the standpoint of the cultural sciences, theater appears initially to be one of many possible cultural systems. Theater can, like farming, hunting, house building, tool manufacture, weapons, crockery and clothing, commerce, table manners, rules on clothing, the system of social relations, religious customs, language, law, myths, literary traditions, etc. form a constitutive part of that which, as the sum total of all such systems, we call culture. Yet, cultural studies must provide an explanation for the striking fact that theater is one of the unique constituent subsystems in almost all cultures known to us especially striking because it is not one of the cultural systems that function to satisfy primary physical needs.

Theater is, on the one hand, a cultural system among others, i.e. it exhibits the same general feature as all the others, by virtue of which it can be defined as a cultural system, one that is significantly different from other cultural systems because of the special functions which it alone fulfills.

Culture is understood here in quite a broad sense as something created by humans as opposed to nature, which has originated without human activity. Everything which humans produce is "significant" for themselves and each other, because humans in principle live "in a signifying world", that is, in a world where everything that is perceived is perceived as a signifier which must be judged to have a signified, i.e. a meaning. Every sound, action, object,
or custom produced simultaneously involves the production of a meaning. The generation of meaning can therefore be regarded as the general function of all cultural systems; it is this function which allows them to be defined as cultural systems in the first place. In other words, theater, understood as one cultural system among others, has the general function of generating meaning.

Cultural systems do not produce meaning per se - this would be a contradiction in terms - but always generate something that can be perceived with the senses as sounds, actions, objects to which a particular meaning is attached in the context of the culture in which they are produced. The production of meaning thus ensues via the creation of signs.

According to Charles Morris, a sign fundamentally consists of three nonreductible constituent elements: the sign-vehicle, something that denotes what is designated, and the interpretant.

It can be assumed that within a culture the users of the signs of that culture attribute a meaning to them which contains a common, binding, relatively stable semantic component, i.e. the denotations and, furthermore, possible additional components of meaning, the connotations. Individual families or other small groups can commonly use by classes or social strata; by a particular political, ideological, or religious group; by a group with a certain world-view; by other groupings; by the different subcultures; the latter.

The meanings generated by the different cultural systems will exhibit a high degree of stability and homogeneity in a culture which, on one hand, fixes and restricts the possibilities of experience within quite clear bounds for the different groups (eg. children and adults, adults and old people, men and women, tribe and tribal chief, shaman and the non-initiated) and, on the other hand successfully occludes outside influences. By contrast, a culture which either does not have strict regulations governing the possibilities of experience
by the single persons and individual groups or permits - indeed even induces - frequent contact with other cultures, will be characterized by instability and heterogeneity in the meanings constituted in it. Internal codes are the basis of the respectively specific cultural system; indeed in extreme cases, such as autonomous artworks, they are the basis of a product of that system; external codes are the foundation of several, and in extreme cases of all, cultural systems within a culture. Rathan Thaiyyam famous director and playwright explore Theatre in a Manipuri cultural system and ambience.

Existing views of cultural adaptation in the field of intercultural communication suggest that it is the sole responsibility of people who are visiting or living in foreign cultures ‘sojoumers’ as they are referred to in the literature to adapt themselves to the cultural norms of their host cultures. The concept of "third cultures" offers a better model for understanding how people with different cultural norms interact with each other in cross-cultural situations. The concept of "third cultures" can be applied to a variety of cross-cultural problems in the fields of bioethics and environmental ethics.

The concept of adaptation, as it has been developed in the theory of intercultural communication (see especially Fumham and Bocher 1986; Ellingsworth 1988; Kim 1989; Kim 1991; and the essays in Kim and Gudykunst 1988), emphasizes the necessity of sojoumers adapting themselves to the norms of the host culture. This view is expressed in the popular slogan, "When in Rome do as the Romans do." In this model, the adaptive process is entirely one-way, with the burden for adaptation resting entirely with the sojourner. The notion that host cultures should also make efforts to adapt themselves to the needs and values of sojoumers is missing. While sojoumers are expected to "respect" the values of their host cultures, no burden is placed on host cultures to respect the values of sojoumers. Sojoumers are thus unable to critically reflect on whether the norms of their host cultures are really worth adopting or not, and host cultures are unable to critically reflect on the
possible positive contributions that the norms of sojourners could make to their own cultures.

This view of cultural adaptation is modeled on the concept of biologic adaptation which, in classical Darwinian Theory, sees adaptation as a matter of organisms fitting themselves into ready-made natural environments. The classical theory has been criticized more recently.

While each of the cultures may have something to contribute to the resolution of the problem, each may also be lacking in certain conceptual and normative resources which would help them to solve it. Since all cultures simplify the range of potential human experience, none can regard itself as "universal" and there can be no single culture which serves as a model for all others. Particular cultures offer myriad alternatives for human behavior. By engaging in (cross-cultural dialogue we are able to extend the range of our own potential experience. Holenstein writes, foreign cultures give us access to possibilities of development which are apparently at our disposal by nature and which only circumstances prevent from appearing in our own culture. Different cultures develop different human skills to varying degrees.

This dialectical approach to cross-cultural dialogue involves the ability to not only appreciate cultural differences, but also to integrate aspects of various cultural traditions into our own ways of thinking and behaving. The creation of a "third space," which hybridizes various aspects of both the dominating and the dominated culture, transforms those who were formerly colonized and disrupts the authority of those who were former colonizers.

The creation of third cultures is by no means a simple task and there are still a number of difficulties which must be overcome. For example, there may be disagreements not only over substantive issues but also with respect to the reasoning processes that should be used in conducting the dialogue.
Researchers in the field of intercultural communication have identified cultural differences not only with regard to what is expressed, but also with regard to how it is expressed.

Reference