



Pg 1, 2, 6 & 8 **Centre Stage** Remembering Dubey
 Pg 3 **Reflections**
 5 **What's On** in February
 Pg 7 **Reflections** Confessions of a Guerilla Artist

Centre Stage Remembering Dubey

Extracts from tributes written in loving memory of Dubeyji

Satyadev Dubey:
Director of Words and Ideas
 by Shanta Gokhale

Theatre's Own Truth

Dubey was totally free of cant. He never claimed that he was serving the "cause" of theatre. He was only doing what he enjoyed doing. But in the process, he was establishing a way of doing theatre that respected nothing beyond its own truth. It was for this reason that he fought tenaciously against the censor board over Tendulkar's *Gidhade* (Vultures) which his group, Theatre Unit, was producing. The board had called for the deletion of 150 words of abuse from the play. Doing this, argued Shreeram Lagoo who was to direct and act in it, would turn the vultures of the play into sparrows. At the end of several rounds of talks and much stalling by the censor board, its chairman saw a show of *Gidhade* and discovered that what had appeared offensive on the page seemed perfectly acceptable on the stage. So the script was passed and *Gidhade* became a hit.

There was no declaration of triumph following this victory. Dubey believed that the censor board members had done their job,

and Lagoo and he had done theirs, which was to safeguard the integrity of the play. Dubey was always clear about the duties

of the state and the individual. Institutions like the censor board

were required, but so was individual action. It was the face-off between the state and the individual that interested him most in Anouilh's *Antigone*, which he directed for Naseeruddin Shah as recently as 2007 in a brilliant production.

Abundant Love

Post-1990s, the circumstances of life had changed in Mumbai, and Dubey's health too had begun to fail. But he continued to throw himself headlong into training actors. Although stories abound of how he humiliated them during workshops and rehearsals, believing that they would never give of their best unless their egos were broken down, his genuine concern for them always restored the emotional balance. He was not only respected but deeply loved by many. He himself was always bemused when he saw evidence of it. Sitting on a bench watching old friends, fellow theatrewallahs, chelas (devotees) and admirers throng Horniman Circle garden on the inaugural day of Prithvi Theatre's stunning exhibition on him in 2008, mounted as a salute to him, he

muttered, not once, but repeatedly, "Why do all these people love me so much?" He wore the same bemused expression again last year, when the same people crowded the terrace of the MIG Club in Bandra for the party that his close circle had organised to celebrate his

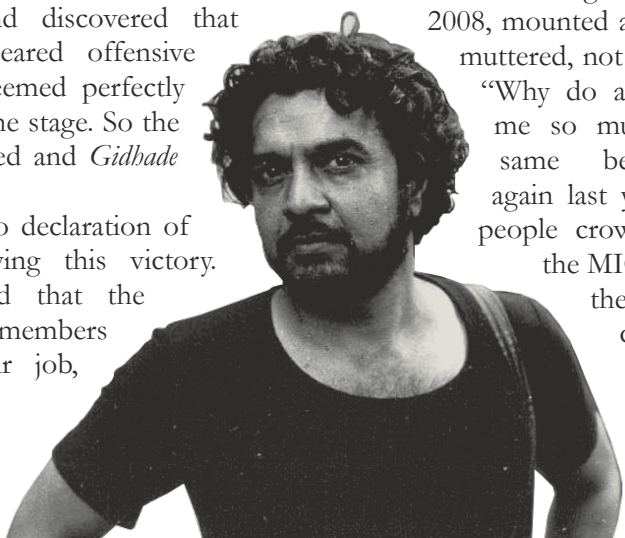
If he was always surrounded by young theatrewallahs, it was not only for the rigorous training he had given them, but because he did not grow old in all his 75 years.

receiving the Padma Bhushan.

What had kept people's love and admiration for him alive over 50 years was his continual concern for them and their work. If he was always surrounded by young theatrewallahs, it was not only for the rigorous training he had given them, but because he did not grow old in all his 75 years. Never once did he betray that sure sign of old age – nostalgia for the past and sentimental glorification of plays he had done. His time was always the present, and he spent it looking forward to a creative future.

Looking back, one wonders whether it was the premonition of approaching death that made him so obsessive about filming *Ram Naam Satya Hai*, based on Chandrashekhar Phansalkar's play of the same name. Perhaps he saw this film, about a group of terminally ill men in a hospital trying to grapple with the imminence of death, as a way of confronting his own anxieties. He managed to shoot the film but not complete it. Before he knew it, he had that fatal stroke on September 2011 that ultimately took him away. But his unfinished film is proof that his creativity was alive and kicking till the end.

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**Satyadev Dubey:
'Let's stir up some
controversy'
by Deepa Gahlot**

If you went to Prithvi Theatre, your eye would automatically scan the cafe, and if Satyadev Dubey wasn't there, holding fort amidst a bunch of young acolytes, you'd feel there was something not quite right with the world. This year, when Dubeyji was awarded the Padma Bhushan, a party was held at his second favourite adda after Prithvi Cafe, Bandra's MIG Club, where he made and lost small fortunes every time he gambled. Everybody from the theatre world was there, and the tributes that flowed were rich and heartfelt.

But for all the adoration and admiration he received, Dubeyji wore his greatness lightly. He did not seem to take awards seriously and would joke that he accepted only the ones that came with cash attached. He was approachable and always willing to share his expertise with anyone who wanted to learn—they had to be able to put up with his temper and his colourful language. So many did went on to do remarkable theatre themselves, and loved him all the more for his generosity of spirit, his ability to be a great friend and also command loyalty from his friends. His friends were always there for him, so much so that it didn't matter that he had no family of his own—everyone who loved theatre was his family.

He conducted free workshops for aspiring actors, and on many a warm afternoon Prithvi Cafe was abuzz with actors furiously mugging his favourite Bernard Shaw passage. He said actors should read lines till they could recite them in their sleep. Then, he laughed about making money from rich NRI and film industry kids, teaching them Hindi diction. He himself was fluent in Marathi too, directed several Marathi plays and called himself an "honorary Maharashtrian". In spite of his grumbling and professed indifference, Sanjna Kapoor paid tribute to him during the Prithvi Festival in 2008, where the apt term NSD-National School of Dubey-was coined and printed on T-shirts. Sunil Shanbag and Shanta Gokhale (she also later edited a fine volume

But for all the adoration and admiration he received, Dubeyji wore his greatness lightly. He did not seem to take awards seriously and would joke that he accepted only the ones that came with cash attached.

of writings on him), along with many actors who had worked with him over the years, paid a lovely, warm tribute to him through an evening of live and AV vignettes of his work. He had never bothered to store photos or memorabilia in his untidy Bandra flat, but stills, clippings and, of course, memories were dug out from fond places in cupboards and hearts; in spite of himself, Dubeyji was pleased.

His lack of interest in the transitory fame that media coverage could bring meant that he was rarely interviewed (he used to demand money for being interviewed) and his later work, not half as powerful as his earlier plays, was not reviewed much. Once in a while, aware that a new generation of theatregoers did not know about his best work, he'd say, "Write something nasty about me, let's stir up some controversy." But, of course, no one could or did. After hearing and reading about his productions of the plays of Adya Rangacharya, Girish Karnad, Chandrasekhar Kambar, Badal Sircar, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar and the works of Sartre, Camus, Chekhov, Pirandello, Ibsen, Pinter and Gavran, the plays that he wrote—*Bekar Ki Bak Bak In London*, *Brahma Vishnu Mahesh*, *Khuda Ke Liye Mat Dekhna* were, to put it mildly, underwhelming. But then, he could stun the audience with a new production of *Antigone* (with Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah), and those who had not seen his greatest productions understood just why thousands of theatre practitioners revered him.

He would periodically declare that theatre was dead, and attempt to make a film. He even shot a film called *Ram Naam Satya Hai*—odd that his swan song should be a film. You can't say Satyadev Dubey RIP to a man who hated to rest and who could not bear to be confined to a hospital bed when he was ill. The best thing his legions of theatre colleagues can do as homage to him is let the show go on.

This article was originally published in the Times of India, Dec 26, 2011

The cheerful political incorrectness of Satyadev Dubey by Arundhati Subramaniam

Satyadev Dubey was many things I ought to have disliked. He was autocratic, overbearing, sexist, politically right wing. He was unabashed about it too. There was nothing understated about him. He was slight of build, but he knew how to fill up a space, how to dominate an encounter. He knew how to turn a party into a durbar. And no prizes for guessing who held court.

And yet, I was fond — deeply fond — of him. And that probably offers a clue to what Dubey was all about. If diverse people were drawn to him, it's because —

for all his cheerful political incorrectness — Dubey had the gift of friendship. He was opinionated and abrasive, but he was also expansive, affectionate, inclusive. He liked people. Yes, he was capable of nursing fierce long-term grudges, but even that was born of a kind of heated, impassioned engagement with the world. And disarmingly, for someone so larger-than-life, he was a good listener. When I met Dubey in the mid-90s, he was already a legend. I knew him as the director of *Andha Yug*, *Hayavadana*, *Adhe Adhure*, *Gidhade*, *Evam Indrajit*, *Educating Rita*, *Sambhog Se Sanyas Tak*, as the man who came to Mumbai to be a cricketer in 1952 but stayed on to become a theatre giant of his time. But the times were changing; a younger brigade already had its foot in the door. It was a vulnerable moment. He had a choice, like so many others of his generation — to retire gracefully or to turn into a benevolent mentor. Dubey did neither. He plunged instead into hectic reinvention — writing even more furiously, directing, conducting workshops, hatching movie projects, even standing for election. "When I have eighty per cent of the energy I had in the past, why should I retire?" he said when I interviewed him in 1998. "They say theatre is good for you. I've never believed it myself. I'm here for my personal enjoyment."

While he did mentor heaps of young 'uns, it wasn't as a benign guru or high-handed cultural czar. "I don't teach to oblige the world," he often said. He taught because it was challenging, revitalising — and on occasion, raked in some necessary shekels. Dubey believed in living on the edge, and that never changed. For me, one of his most remarkable traits was his refusal to bite the bait of institutional security. "I've always known that if I have Saraswati on my side, I can't have Lakshmi as well!" he once said laughingly. Chronologically, he

A strategy for sane living, he told me once, was to shrug off capital letters and accept lower case identities — whether in faith or art.

was enfant terrible no longer. But he stayed vibrant, angry, passionate, provocative. He could be profligate with his time and energies with younger theatre-wallahs, but he could be aggressively critical too. And that's because he was still competing. The race was far from over. The fire in the belly was still alive. And just when you began to wonder if he was just another navel-gazing egotist (capable of making extravagant pronouncements like "Theatre today is dead"), he'd surprise you with his observations about a recent play, a

Reflections

धर्मवीर भारती द्वारा लिखित

“कुछ चेहरे: कुछ चिंतन”

में से ‘दुबे सम दूजा और न कोई’

से कुछ अंश

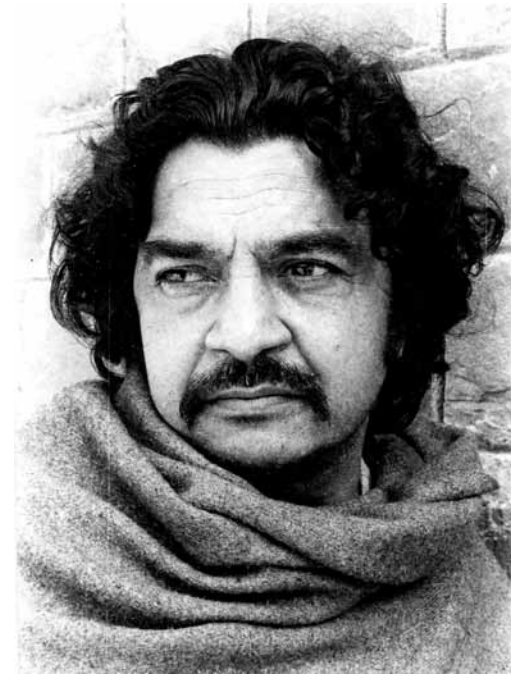
वह सारा माहौल जो धीरे धीरे हिन्दी प्रदेश में बना, नाटक और रंगमंच को नए नज़रिये से देखने का, उस माहौल की नींव जिस अकेले व्यक्ति ने नितान्त विरोधी और साधनहीन परिस्थितियों में डाली, वे हैं सत्यदेव दुबे। लगन के पक्के, लड़ाकू स्वभाव के, निहायत भावुक और संवेदनशील हृदय के, धुनी, प्रतिभाशाली और कुछ कुछ सनकी पं सत्यदेव दुबे।

निराला की एक पंक्ति है ईष्या कुछ नहीं मुझे यद्यपि मैं ही वसंत का अग्रदूत। यह पंक्ति हमारे दुबेजी पर हुबहू लागू होती है। वे निश्चित ही हिन्दी के रंगमंच के इस नव वसंत के अग्रदूत हैं। तीस वर्षों से उनके निजी जीवन और रंगमंचीय कार्यकलाप के सारे संघर्ष का साक्षी रहने का अवसर मिला है इन पंक्तियों के लेखक को। यूँ निजी भी क्या, सच तो यह है कि उनकी अन्दर बाहर की सारी जिन्दगी रंगमंच को एकांत रूप से समर्पित है। एक चलता फिरता चोला, एक जीता जागता स्वपन, एक अनवरत मुख्य साधना, एक मुजस्सम समर्पण। बम्बई तो शरण अशरण नगरी है। कौन यहाँ आ कर नहीं बना? पर, यह अंग्रेज़ी में फस्ट क्लास एम.ए. आधुनिक नगरी बम्बई को आधुनिकतम अंग्रेज़ीदों करोड़पतियों और यशस्वियों के बीच रसावसा, जाना माना व्यक्तित्व दुबे, आज भी रूखे बाल, मलगज़ा कुर्ता, मसली कुचली जीन पहने, झोला लटकाए कभी सिगरेट, कभी वीडो मुलगाये, रंगमंच की धुन में, छोटी गोप्टियों से बड़ी-बड़ी फाइव स्टार पार्टियों में महफिल की रौनक बना मिल जाएगा। एक ज़माना था कहीं पेड़ंग गेस्ट थे। सुबह की चाय पी कर निकलते थे, भूलाभाई देसाई इंस्टीट्यूट में रिहसल करते थे। रात को लौटे तो लौटे नहीं तो कहीं भी चादर तान कर पड़े रहे। आज वमुश्किल तमाम एक सरकारी कर्जे का फ्लैट है। तो भी क्या सत्यदेव दुबे घरेलू प्राणी बन सके? राम कहिए। उनके फ्लैट पर वैसे फोन भी आ गया है, पर ना फोन करने से फायदा, ना कालिंग बैल बजाने से। उन्हें अपने फ्लैट जाने का मौका कहाँ मिलता है। कहीं श्याम बेनेगल के यहाँ होंगे, डॉ. प्रधान के यहाँ होंगे, विनोद दोषी के यहाँ होंगे, अमरीश पुरी के यहाँ होंगे, गोविन्द निहलानी के यहाँ होंगे अपना कोई परिवार नहीं। इन सबका परिवार उनका परिवार, इन सब का घर उनका घर। इन्हीं में लड़ते झगड़ते, खाते पीते, बहस करते, मुक्का मारते, कहकहे लगाते यह रहस्यमय व्यक्ति कब अपनी प्रस्तुतियों की उदत कल्पनायें कर लेता है, कब अभिनय और कविता और संवेदन और भाषा के निगूढतम तत्वों को हस्तगत कर लेता है, कुछ समझ में ही नहीं आता है।

जन्म से उच्चतम ब्राह्मण पंडित सत्यदेव दुबे, विश्वास कीजिए कर्म से कुम्हार, बिलकुल गोरा कुम्हार। चक्का चलता जा रहा है, निरपेक्ष सिगरेट फूंकते बैठे हैं। वस कच्ची मिट्टी में हाथ लगाया और कहीं अश्वत्थामा, कहीं धृतराष्ट्र, कहीं हयवदन की रूपसी कन्या, कहीं

युवा वृद्ध ययाति, कहीं आधे अधूरे की किन्नी, कहीं बन्द दरवाज़े का यमदूत बटलर, कहीं गावों की नायिका, कहीं और बोला तोता का जमींदार, कहीं मायावी सरोवर के गंधर्व, कहीं अवे ओ वेवकूफ के उपनिवेशवादी गोरे, एकएक कर के ढलते चले जा रहे हैं। कच्ची गीली मिट्टी को सत्यदेव दुबे के हल्के से कला स्पर्श की ज़रूरत है, फिर देखिए कैसा निखर आता है अभिनय, कैसी मँज जाती है भाषा, कैसे आयाम जुड़ जाते हैं भूमिकाओं में। कुछ लोगों में एक रहस्यमयी अर्न्तदृष्टि होती है ना ऊपर बालू, धूल, पत्थर पर चलते चलते भी वो जान लेते हैं सैंकड़ों फीट नीचे नीचे कहाँ मीठे पानी का सोता है ऐसा ही कुछ पोशीदा चमत्कार दुबे जी के पास है ज़रूर। किस सीधे सादे साधारण से दिखने वाले कलाकार में कहाँ गहरे में क्या छुपा हुआ है और उसका उपयोग नाटक विद्या में कहाँ, कैसे किया जाये, इसकी कोई रहस्य क्षमता ज़रूर है उनके पास।

और व्यक्ति नहीं नाट्य कृतियों में भी वे कहाँ, कब और क्या छिपी संभावनाएँ देख लेंगे, उसे कैसे कब खींच निकालेंगे और कितना प्रभावशाली बना कर प्रस्तुत कर देंगे, इसका कोई ठिकाना है क्या। कभी कभी तो लगता



है कि लेखक से ज्यादा वे उसकी कृति मर्म पर पैठे हुए हैं। मैंने बताया न कि अपनी नाटक की प्रस्तुति पहली ही बार देखकर मैं वैचेन हो उठा था कि नीचे अँधेरे में खड़ा काँपता रहा, ऊपर जाने की हिम्मत नहीं हुई, मैं जो शब्दों में चाह कर भी व्यक्त नहीं कर पाया था, वह, जो मैं घटनाओं में गूँथते-गूँथते भी हिचक गया था, उसे दुबे का अश्वत्थामा, दुबे का धृतराष्ट्र, दुबे की गांधारी कैसे जान गयी?

इस लम्बी यात्रा में दुबे के कितने साथी विछुड़े होंगे कितने निजी और सार्वजनिक आघात लगे होंगे, कितने अँधेरों से गुजरना पड़ा होगा आखिर जो उनके निर्देशन, प्रोद्धता और अद्वितीय चमक आती गयी, वह कोई ऐसे तो नहीं।

दुबे की असली क्षमता की अभिव्यक्ति खासतौर से भाषा पर उनका पूर्ण अधिकार तब प्रकट हुआ, जब उन्होंने ज्यों पाल सार्त्र का कठिनतम नाटक इन कैमरा स्वयं रूपांतरित कर बन्द दरवाज़े के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया। उसके बाद तो चाहे उन्होंने गिरीश कर्नाड का ययाती उठाया, या हयवदन, विजय तेंडुलकर का

हमारे दुबे जी रंगमंच के इश्क

में इस कदर डूबे हैं कि हम उनको

होशियारी सिखा ही नहीं सकते। फकीरी

उनके रग रग में बस गई है और ईश्वर

करे बसी रहे। हमें अपने दुबे जैसे हैं वैसे

ही अच्छे लगते हैं।

सखाराम बाईंडर या शंकर शेष का अरे मायावी सरोवर, राकेश का लहरों का राजहंस या आधे अधूरे या और तोता बोला या गावों या अवे ओ वेवकूफ या आरक्त क्षण सभी में उसकी निर्देशन कला उपलब्धि के नये नये शिखर लौंघती चली गयी। लेकिन सत्यदेव दुबे ज्यों के त्यों हैं वही विखरे बाल, फटेहाल अस्त व्यस्त, अनियमित, कुछ कुछ वोखलाये से खाली जेब, मुचड़ी जीन और भारी झोला कन्धे से लटका हुआ।

पता नहीं किस सूफी या संत कवि की पंक्ति है “हमन है इस्क मस्ताना, हमन को होशियारी क्या?” सो हमारे दुबे जी रंगमंच के इश्क में इस कदर डूबे हैं कि हम उनको होशियारी सिखा ही नहीं सकते। फकीरी उनके रग रग में बस गई है और ईश्वर करे बसी रहे। हमें अपने दुबे जैसे हैं वैसे ही अच्छे लगते हैं।

दुबे अहंकारी है, दुबे रूखे हैं, दुबे झगड़ालु हैं हॉ मैंने भी सुना है। जिन लोगों के लिए ऐसे हैं ठीक हैं, दुनिया बड़ी अजीब है, जो लोग सीधे हैं जिनमें होशियारी नहीं, उन पर हमला करने या उनसे लाभ उठाने, उनका उपयोग करने को हमेशा तैयार रहती है। ऐसे लोगों के प्रति अहंकारी होना कलाकार की आत्मरक्षा का एकमात्र उपाय है, वरना दुबे का असली स्वभाव देखना हो तो कभी उन्हें उनके कलाकारों के बीच, रिहसल के दौरान सूखी सैंडविच चबा कर, एक प्याला काफी पी कर, दिन गुजारते देखिए। या कभी देखिए जब हमारे बच्चों के बीच बैठ कर दुबे जी ताश खेलते हैं, क्या क्या डॉयलाग बोले जाते हैं, क्या क्या झगड़े होते हैं, कैसे ताश के पत्ते बदले जाते हैं, पटके जाते हैं, रूठा रूठौवल, मान मनौवल, लानत मलामत होती है, बच्चों के बीच में एक चंचल शरारती निर्दोष बच्चा। दुबे के प्रस्तुत नाटकों में और उनके लिखे नाटकों में भी पाप और पतन, संघर्ष और यातना के गहनतम अँधेरों में कहीं ये दूधिया बचपन का निर्दोष भोलापन अन्ततोगत्वा अपने को प्रतिष्ठित कर ही लेता है। या उस बुनियादी स्वच्छ पारदर्शी स्वभाव के खो जाने की गहरी कसक छोड़ जाता है, उनका मंचन। यह सम्पदा रंगमंच में और किसके पास है?

सत्यदेव दुबे अपने तमाम चौंकाने वाले विचारों और व्यवहारों के बावजूद, अपनी वर्जनहीनता के सारे लच्छेदार दर्शन अपने अत्याधुनिक प्रेस व्कत्वयों के बावजूद उनका असली वाना तो फकीरी का ही है, अगर इस तमाम सम्मान और पुरस्कार और रिकॉग्निशन से वे थोड़े उदास हो आयें हो और चिन्ता में पड़ गये हों कि इस सब का आखिर वे करेंगे क्या तो आपको आश्चर्य नहीं होना चाहिए। हमारे दुबे जी है ही ऐसे और ईश्वर करे ऐसे ही बने रहें। ■

Plays for the Month of February 2012 at Prithvi Theatre

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|------------------------|--|---|
| Wed 1 | 6 pm & 9 pm | Motley's BY GEORGE | English | Writer: George Bernard Shaw Director: Naseeruddin Shah | A collection of three short pieces by George Bernard Shaw whose rapier-sharp wit and unique insights make for a stimulating, sparkling evening's entertainment. |
| Thu 2 Fri 3 | 6 pm & 9 pm 6 pm & 9 pm | Motley's KAMBAKHAT BILKUL AURAT (ISMAT APA KE NAAM PART 2) | Hindustani | Writer: Ismat Chughtai Director: Naseeruddin Shah | Celebrating the genius of Ismat Chughtai. |
| Sat 4 Sun 5 | 6 pm & 9 pm 5 pm & 8 pm | Essay Communications' HUM-SUFFER | Hindi | Writer: Javed Siddiqi Director: Salim Arif | HUM-SUFFER is about the need for an individual search for love, closeness and some form of happiness - it is as much about love, as it is about marriage and relationships. |
| Sun 5 | 2 pm | Essay Communications' YAAR JULAHE - JAGJITANJALI | Urdu | Writer & Director: Gulzar Saab | Remembering Jagjit Singh by Gulzar Saab and Bhupendra Singh. |
| Tue 7 Wed 8 | 9:30 pm 7 pm & 9:30 pm | Thespo@Prithvi: Clustalz Mumbai & Allmytea Production's COCK (A) | English | Writer: Mike Bartlett Director: Manish Gandhi | Cock takes a playful, candid look at one man's sexuality and the difficulties that arise when you realize you have a choice |
| Thu 9 Fri 10 | 9 pm 9 pm | Ranga Theatre's KARNA - THE GENEROUS WARRIOR | Hindi | Conceived & Director: Kulvinder Bakshish | The play revolves around Karna, a great character from Mahabharata. It expresses conflicts, aspects and values of humanity. |
| Sat 11 Sun 12 Tue 14 Wed 15 Thu 16 Fri 17 Sat 18 Sun 19 | 6 pm & 9 pm 6 pm & 9 pm 9 pm 9 pm 9 pm 6 pm & 9 pm 6 pm & 9 pm 6 pm & 9 pm | Cinematograph's and The Company Theatre's NOTHING LIKE LEAR | English / Gibberish | Based on: Shakespeare's <i>King Lear</i> Director: Rajat Kapoor | This clown hasn't stopped crying in days. And now- he is being forced to perform this silly play about a king and his three daughters. No wonder he's depressed! |
| Tue 21 Wed 22 Thu 23 | 9 pm 6 pm & 9 pm 9 pm | Ank's KHAMOSH | Hindi | Writer & Director: Dinesh Thakur | A Searing play about a woman at the mercy of social forces that threaten to engulf her. |
| Fri 24 | 9 pm | Ank's JIS LAHORE NAHI DEKHYAN | Hindi | Writer : Asghar Wajahat Director : Dinesh Thakur | The story of two communities, who have suffered first-hand the horrors of partition and still have the strength and humanity to rise above petty hatred. |
| Sat 25 | 6 pm & 9 pm | Ank's RANG BAJRANG | Hindi | Writer & Director: Dinesh Thakur | In drought-stricken times, a stranger claims to sell Rain and dares you to dream! Is he a magician, a fraudster or a miracle man? Can he bring rain? |
| Sun 26 | 5 pm & 8 pm | Ank's HAI MERA DIL | Hindi | Writer: Ranbir Singh Director: Dinesh Thakur | A hilarious look into the life of a well-meaning hypochondriac who turns his life upside down with his irrational fears. |
| Tue 28 | 8 pm | MEMORIAL CONCERT | An Evening of Music | | For details please check www.prithvitheatre.org |
| Wed 29 | 9 pm | Moving Platform's DINNER WITH FRIENDS (A) | English | Writer: Donald Margulies Director: Feroz Abbas Khan | This is a play about four friends; two married couples. We see both couples at different ages and stages of their lives. |

London Talents'
**From here
to there**
(Non Verbal with a few English Words)

Sat 11 | 10:45 am & 1 pm
Sun 12 | 10:45 am & 1 pm | Prithvi House

Writer & Director: Natasha Holmes

It's an intimate and fabulous show that explores the concept of sharing, caring and empathizing from a child's perspective.

Akatha Kahani:
Sun 19 | 11 am | Prithvi House

Akatha Kahani will be presented as a part of the The Kabir Festival Mumbai, a three day celebration of the 15th century revolutionary poet Kabir. The story 'Akatha Kahani' is a song, story and dance presentation on Kabir, attempting to showcase the special alchemy between Kabir and his listeners. The story is punctuated with personal sharing, excerpts from Kabir the weaver poet, abhinaya for select padas, and Kabir's songs. www.thekabirfest.com

Partners@Prithvi

February

Every month.
Entry free, except theatre shows.

PEN@Prithvi

[2nd Sat]

Literary encounters

NO PEN@PRITHVI THIS MONTH

Vikalp@Prithvi

[Last Mon]

Documentaries and short film screenings

Mon 27 | 7 pm | Prithvi Theatre

MUKTIR GAAN - SONG OF FREEDOM

A Documentary film by Tareque Masud

This documentary film by Bangladesh's eminent filmmaker Tareque Masud explores the impact of cultural identity on the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. It is an affectionate portrait of travelling musicians in war-torn Bangladesh who provided a source of inspiration to the freedom fighters.

Caferati

[4th Tue]

Open-mic @ Prithvi Café

Tue 28 | 7 pm | Prithvi Café

You are invited to recite, declaim, sing, dance, perform in any way you like 2 minutes of your own work. Sign up at the Prithvi Café at least 30 minutes before start time to be eligible.

Alliance Française@ Prithvi

[3rd Wed]

Rendez-vous avec le cinéma français

Wed 15 | 7 pm | Prithvi House

INSPECTEUR LAVARDIN (1986) - 100 MIN

Cast: Jean Poiret, Jean-Claude Brialy, Bernadette Lafont
Directed by: Claude Chabrol

Inspector Lavardin travels to a small coastal town to investigate the puzzling death of a devout and wealthy Roman Catholic writer who is found murdered on a beach with the word pig written on his back. When the Inspector arrives to investigate, he discovers that the widow, Helene, is an old flame he hasn't seen in 20 years. In the course of his probing, Lavardin inadvertently uncovers several metaphorical skeletons in the closet.

Home Delivery:
3989 5050
Online booking:
www.bookmyshow.com
www.prithvitheatre.com

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Notes

- P* Premier Show
- NO LATE ADMITTANCE.
- No refund or exchange of tickets.
- Children below 6 years not allowed.
- NO PARKING INSIDE JANKI KUTIR.
- PAY & PARK OPP MAHESH LUNCH HOME.
- This program is subject to change.
- Box Office timings 1 pm - 9 pm.

Thespo@Prithvi [First Tue & Wed]

Theatre by youth (Tickets Rs 80)

Tue 7 | 9:30 pm

Wed 8 | 7 pm & 9:30 pm | Prithvi Theatre

Clustalz Mumbai & Allmytea Production's
COCK (English)
See play schedule

Workshop for youth

NO THESPO WORKSHOP THIS MONTH

Chai & Why?

[1st Sun]

TIFR creates accessible discussions of interesting scientific issues

Sun 5 | 11 am | Prithvi Theatre

**THE SELFISH GENE AND THE
EVOLUTION OF COOPERATION**

Prof. Gyan Bhanot, Rutgers University

In game theory optimal strategies are often "selfish". Paternally and maternally imprinted genes also suggest that genes with the best chance to survive are those that are selfish. And yet, many species, including humans, have evolved complex strategies which require them to cooperate in order to adapt, survive and replicate! Come find out why!

INTRODUCING

Mehfil@Prithvi

[2nd Tue]

Discover and celebrate the beauty and cultural history of Urdu – through casual conversations and discussions in an informal gathering, - with chai.

Tue 14 | 7:30 pm | Prithvi House

Mehfil is the Urdu word for a gathering, and at Prithvi Theatre, it is coming home as a gathering of those who have loved, are starting to love, or want to fall in love with Urdu.

There was a time when the common spoken language was Hindustani, and there was no barbed wire fencing off Urdu from Hindi. Some of our best-loved writers and musicians have used the language to create what we claim as our popular cultural legacy. Few of us have remained untouched by it and we continue to soak in the magic of its poetry through Sufi music, romantic ghazals, qawwalis, or old film dialogues. A sprinkling of Urdu stills soften our lips as we hum a popular film song, so what if we don't know our zulf from our gesu, or the different meanings contained in the word sanam?

We do want to know, however, and Mehfil@Prithvi hopes to turn into a space where people can appreciate the language and its literature, where Urdu becomes more accessible to people of all ages. Mehfil@Prithvi will gather once a month at the Prithvi Adda and will discuss all things Urdu, ranging from the war-camps and bazaars that gave birth to the language, to Gulzar. We will try to pronounce the ghs and the khs, and we will meet singers, poets and lyricists who have carried this beautiful language into a slightly bewildered new millennium

Mehfil@Prithvi will be led by a team of Urdu lovers, which includes laureates like Javed Siddiqui and Salim Arif and passionate Urdu novices like Arwa Mamaji and Priya Nijhara who run a blog on Urdu for beginners (www.urduwallahs.wordpress.com). Through 'open house' discussions, readings, music and film, we hope that a new generation will rediscover a part of our heritage.

FREE unless mentioned otherwise.



Prithvi Corpus Fund Patron
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book, a young actor's performance. The observations were uncannily astute, often generous. As a theatre director once told me, "Dubey's feedback is always bang-on. He may not agree with you, but he knows how to enter the skin of a work and assess it without imposing his terms on it."

A strategy for sane living, he told me once, was to shrug off capital letters and accept lower case identities — whether in faith or art. "I take on my Hinduism with all my liberality, with all its contradictions. That's my freedom. And I refuse to look at theatre as an institution with a capital T. That's my freedom too." Accepting those contradictions meant a precarious life but never an unexciting one. His ability to turn discomfort into creative fuel empowered him, I think, to retain his capacity for wonder. It also empowered him to reach the age of seventy-five without ever turning middle-aged. "What many actors fail to realise," he said, "is that their role models — whether Naseeruddin Shah, Aamir or Shah Rukh Khan — also work incredibly hard. I've watched Shah Rukh work and I admire his energy and resent it as well. It's important that I acknowledge that discomfort rather than ignore it."

This article was originally published in the Asian Age, Dec 30, 2011

A Court Rises To His Honour by Girish Karnad

This book on theatre icon Satyadev Dubey is edited with such care and love by critic and writer Shanta Gokhale that I find it difficult to reconcile it with my memory of Dubey's ire against her. Dubey railed against Gokhale for an hour for some reason that I have forgotten. But that's how he was: at some point or other, Dubey quarreled with almost every one of the contributors who have written so fondly about him in this book. Once, hearing that he had been attacking me at a party, I called him to ask what I'd done to bother him. "Don't worry," he replied, "if there's a problem, I'll tell you myself." His anger was not personal and never lasted long. Whatever it was that bothered him about Gokhale, it didn't prevent him from doing an excellent production of her play.

Dubey came from Bilaspur to Bombay to be a cricketer. He joined the Theatre Unit under Ebrahim Alkazi and P.D. Shenoy, and when Alkazi left to take up the directorship of the National School of Drama, took on his mantle.

...He loved Bollywood and was so desperate to have even a walk-on role that he once agreed to work as a secretary for a budding starlet! He also aspired to be a playwright, writing and producing some ludicrously wordy pieces. His method of showing how much he liked my play, *Wedding*

His method of showing how much he liked my play, *Wedding Album*, was to rewrite it entirely in Marathi and put it on stage without even consulting me.



Album, was to rewrite it entirely in Marathi and put it on stage without even consulting me. When he was honoured with the Padma Bhushan, I sent him an email, assuring him that we would get him a Padma Vibhushan if he would only promise not to write any more plays. He remained unfazed.

But as a theatre director, he was supreme. He loved the stage, made it his home, and became as much a legend on the Marathi stage as on the Hindi one. He presented Tendulkar's Marathi and Adya Rangacharya's Kannada plays in Hindi, Mohan Rakesh's Hindi and Badal Sircar's Bengali plays in Marathi. He discovered new plays (*Andha Yug*, *Yayati*). He brought Marathi actresses like Sulabha Deshpande and her sisters to Hindi theatre, trained new actors (Amrish Puri, Sunila Pradhan, Sonali Kulkarni, Harish Patel) and new directors (Chetan Datar, Sunil Shanbhag), nagging them, berating them, testing whether their love of theatre was strong enough to bear his insults. When Vinod Doshi gave him the entire ground floor of Walchand Terrace in Tardeo, for four years it turned into the crucible of Marathi/ Hindi theatre in Bombay. In recent years, despite his poor health, he turned Prithvi Theatre into a non-stop workshop for aspiring actors, with the patient approval of Sanjna Kapoor.

Although he ultimately managed to buy himself a flat, he was happier sleeping on the drawing-room carpets of Nira Benegal, Saryu Doshi, Sunila Pradhan and Rani Burra in Bombay, Chetna Jalan in Calcutta, and Sunita Paul in Delhi. He had a soft corner for the wives of his closest friends and was,

in turn, pampered by them. I have seen him being thrown out of parties at midnight for becoming too loud or vituperative, but welcomed back again with the same warmth.

This article was originally published in Outlook Magazine, Jan 23, 2012

A tribute to Satyadev Dubey by Shanta Gokhale

It is not possible to encompass all in one go, the enormous and unique contribution to theatre Satyadev Dubey made during his hyperactive, all-consuming theatre career of 50 years. He lived, breathed, talked theatre non-stop from the day he discovered its power to seduce an audience into attentive silence with the voice and body of the actor. He saw it when he returned to the college auditorium of St Xaviers as the first show of the first play he had ever directed, ended, and he heard the applause.

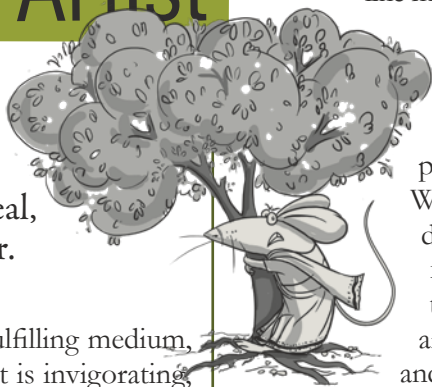
...Human beings, their relationships with one another and with the world, and all the attendant tensions and conflicts it threw up, were the issues that most interested him. That was perhaps the reason why some of his best work was in the realistic mode, where people were embroiled in the problems of lived life. He might do a Pinter here, a so-called absurdist play there, but the plays that he spoke through most forcefully came from the masters of realism—Tendulkar, Elkunchwar, Mohan Rakesh, the early Badal Sircar and Chetan Datar.

It is to be noted that many of these plays had women at their centre. Chetan Datar's *Savalya* was about a family of four women, with a fifth entering as a ghost. Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure* was about a mother and her two daughters. Elkunchwar's *Raktapushpa* revolved around a middle-aged woman going through menopause. Dubey treated every one of these women with an understanding and sympathy that verged on bias. At the end of *Adhe Adhure*, the women stood in the light while the man occupied the shadows. In his production of Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*, the emphasis was less on the philosophical dilemmas of identity and more on the dilemma of Padmini, done out of her legitimate right to a man's muscular body. Although Leela Benare, the chief protagonist of *Shantata Court Chalu Ahe* stirred him, the woman who moved him more deeply was the protagonist of Tendulkar's *Baby* who had struggled to achieve some semblance of dignity in a life of daily exploitation, and failed.

One of Dubey's most delicately nuanced drama of human relations and emotions was *Arakta Kshan*, the Hindi translation of Elkunchwar's *Raktapushpa*. The playwright has gone on record to say that he understood the character of Bhau entirely anew through the way Amrish Puri played him

Reflections Confessions of a Guerilla Artist

The contemporary relevance of guerilla art lies in its ability to connect with what is real, argues **Chirag Thakkar**.



The stage is of course a fulfilling medium, but not fulfilling enough. It is invigorating, but not invigorating enough and most importantly it is a gratifying space, but not gratifying enough. And how real can it get anyway? You could employ the finest set designers who will even manage to aesthetically replicate a space. It still is suggestive. How truthful can it get? Theatre and art shouldn't only be praised, lived and received within the conventions of cushions seats, amphitheatres and auditoriums. At times, it should be infused with life and realness and empowered with mobility. At times, one must stop being a whore to an audience that is perennially dependent on spoon-feeding and is too lethargic to go beyond bookmyshow.com and other symbols and shrines of popular manufactured theatre. The reasons for the complacency to not go beyond these confines could be many, one of them being commercial pressures. Since guerilla art is not an industry, it doesn't enjoy the foothold mainstream theatre does.

I was recently introduced to Namdeo Dhasal's poetry and I was amazed by his acidic yet ingenuous subjects and themes. The dalit poet refuses to talk of beauty, and nature and goodness. He intrepidly uses the Bibhastara in order to arouse disgust. He refuses to paint a rosy canvas of the society that he lives in. Here is an excerpt from one of his poems:

"Man you should eat human flesh,
eat spit roast human flesh,
melt human fat and drink it.

Wage class wars, caste wars, communal wars, party wars crusades world wars.

One should hang to death the descendents of Jesus, the Paighamber, the Buddha and Vishnu.

Turn humans into slaves,
whip their arses with a lash

One should open manholes of sewers and throw them into them

Plato, Einstein, Archimedes, Socrates, Marx, Ashoka, Satre, Hitler, Kafka,

Edison, Madison, Tukaram, Vyas, Kalidasa

And once that is done

One should regard the sky as one's grandpa and the earth as one's grandma
And coddled by them everybody should bask in mutual love."

Dhasal's poetry is a representation of his reality. And that's how I like my art to be.

I like my art at a traffic signal, inside the hostile and sweaty local trains, at bookstores, busy cafés and parks, on streets and buses, at promenades, malls and orphanages, in slums and jails. I like my art to talk to me wherever and whenever I want it to.

I want my art to reflect my reality. The magic real spaces append to a performance is incredible. What such spaces essentially do is metamorphose the four dimensions of space, time, the performer's body and the audience lock stock and barrel. Even if the piece remains the same, every time it is performed in a different territory, the ambit inevitably weaves its energy into the performance.

And it's been here for a while now. Guerilla art has historically been used time and again to comment on socio-political drifts. From protests, to dissent, satire to street art - surprising the audience at the most unlikely places and at the most unlikely time is what it begins at. But that's not all that it is. Like drama performed on stage, Guerilla theatre too, is meant to stimulate a response, direct or indirect, significant or minor. The San Francisco Mime Troupe, in the spirit of Che Guevara's writings, has performed anti-war pieces and pieces on taboo subjects like nudity and sexuality since 1965 in public parks. In the UK, to protest against encroachment of open spaces and rising number of cars, groups started performing 'reclaim the streets,' where artists would stage a party with music, food, colours and dance in the middle of a highway or an arterial road. This early form of street guerilla art that began in 1991 can be echoed in these lines: "Our streets are as full of capitalism as of cars and the pollution of capitalism is much more insidious." This style of art is also a parallel to agitprop or political art, where art, activism and comment are used to present a perspective.

I wish I existed in the 70s to have witnessed the peasants of Uttarkhand who beautifully performed the 'chipko movement' as a silent yet potent slap on man's lust for civilization aka urbanization. Their agitated art gave us our people-friendly forest policies. They were helpless women fighting for their livelihood and forest conservation, but little did they know that they beautifully ended up using art in their form of protest.

In the past one year, I have conceived and performed quite a few guerilla pieces. A few months ago, in collaboration with 'Teach For India,' I performed a guerilla body installation, where one morning, I lay as a dead body in my college cafeteria for 2 and a half hours echoing the death of the aspirations of an underprivileged child



Don't Honk be a Monk

who wanted to study, but had no means to. For a week prior to the performance, a team of volunteers promoted the piece as 'Come and undo a murder' on facebook and college corridors without disclosing details of the performance or the cause. An accusatory installation, it got hundreds of people to sign up and become volunteers for the campaign. One cannot help but feel liberated when one's art helps bettering the milieu one is part of and is liable to be responsible towards.

A month ago, I was part of an anti-honking street performance. A couple of my friends conceptualised a guerilla street campaign called 'don't honk, be a monk,' where I dressed up as a Tibetan monk and stood at traffic signals, and junctions with a finger on my lip and a placard that read 'don't honk, be a monk' and the response we received was diverse. The performance did not create a sea change in the status quo, but it made some difference at some level, it made a few motorists and drivers think, startled a few, and entertained a some. And it did not have fancy dim lights or digitally played music narrating a story. It's a performance of its own kind with the scorching sun as the only source of light and the traffic noise that formed the *soundscape*.

As part of Thespo Theatre Unit, a self-sufficient group of artists and writers, I ideated and curated a guerilla performance in the local trains of Bombay, where the motive of the artists was to attack the hostility that people travel with. Six of us entered a train compartment and split ourselves within the coach. Within no time, we started painting each other's faces and after having caused enough discomfort among the co-travellers, we moved on to dance and silently mime a cricket match and laugh and eat and read. The principal rule was to exclude and ignore co-travellers from the performance and genuinely talk to each other without using words. By the end of the performance, people were heavily discomforted and restless. Having attacked their hostility, the expressionist piece culminated in quickly getting off at a station and wiping out the face paints.

Guerilla theatre allows me to enjoy the rhythm of a real audience at a real time in a real space and it is this confluence of sound, movement and potent ideas that draws me towards it. It has made me more observant, it has taught me to listen to the sound of my surroundings and look for stories within my own intimate spaces. And until the clock stops ticking, my art will shamelessly continue to be guerilla in nature. ■

in this production. When Dubey decided to do Karnad's Wedding Album in Marathi, he hacked out everything that to his mind diluted what the play was really about-- the embittered relationship between mother and daughter and its hidden reasons.

To find fresh new plays, to work on them till they shone forth in their truth (the truth of theatre was one of Dubey's most used phrases), was an obsession with Dubey. It was this that drove him to organising his first playwriting workshop in 1973, with the money that the Homi Bhabha Fellowship had brought him. A dozen young playwrights were invited to read their works-in-progress in the presence of an august gathering of theatre practitioners which these luminaries then proceeded to

He lived, breathed, talked theatre non-stop from the day he discovered its power to seduce an audience into attentive silence with the voice and body of the actor.

discuss threadbare. This exercise was aimed at helping the playwrights understand the strengths and weaknesses of their work for future reference. Dubey continued to work with new writers into the late eighties, egging them on to rewrite draft upon draft

of their plays till he was satisfied that they had achieved their potential. On the one occasion when the playwright simply could not produce dialogue that would stand on stage, Dubey found a way of dealing with it through physicalising the words. Sunil Shanbag was one amongst many who remember this production, Anushtan, as an extraordinary experience. Dubey himself thought it was one of his best and often held it up as an example of what he could do with a non-realistic form if the play demanded it. The idea was always to clear the path for the meaning of a play to come out.

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Backstage at Writer's Bloc

Aadya Shah talks to Deepika Amin about theatre and about her play *Pereira's Bakery at 76 Chapel Road*, a bittersweet comedy about Vincent Pereira who takes on developers who want to demolish his Bandra chawl to make way for Asia's biggest shopping mall.



Deepika Amin

AS: How long have you been doing theatre?

DA: I think I have *always* been doing theatre. As a child, I was in Sushma Seth's children's theatre group in Delhi. Then, in college, I joined Barry John's theatre group TAG in Delhi (this is before he moved to Mumbai) and we did many English and Hindi plays. After I came to Mumbai- TV took over my life and unfortunately theatre took a backseat. Then I lived in Jakarta for 6 years where I was with the expat theatre group Jakarta Players where I acted in many plays and musicals. I also directed one Hindi and two English plays there. Returning to Mumbai, I plunged back into theatre with 3 plays with Lillete Dubey, (*Wedding Album*, *Sammy* and *Womanly Voices*) and another play with Mahesh Dattani.

AS: Have you done plays in other languages?

DA: Primarily English and Hindi. Some years ago, I did a play in my mother tongue -Marathi - *Ammaldar*.

AS: Any favourite playwrights?

DA: I have mostly acted in contemporary plays and I feel I have missed out in performing in the classics. Playwrights like Ibsen and Pinter have fascinated me. I would love to be in a classic like Ibsen's *A Doll's House* or *The House of Bernada Alba*.

Doing more musicals is my longstanding desire (I previously was in musicals like *Annie Get Your Gun*, *South Pacific*, *Pizzazz* etc). I have been learning Hindustani music for many years and would love to be in a Hindi musical.

AS: Can you talk about your experience of performing in *Pereira's Bakery*?

DA: *Pereira's Bakery at 76 Chapel Road* has been a very rewarding experience. I have known Zafar for many years as a co actor and he treats his actors with gentleness and sensitivity. With a cast of such wonderful actors, one has been able to learn a lot from everyone.

AS: Do talk about your character, Maria.

DA: Maria - is the earth mother. She is the binding force of her family and wants to do the best she can for them. Yet, she is traditional enough to believe that the final word of authority lies with her husband and will stand by him.

AS: What are your views about the bureaucracy in Mumbai faced by families like the Pereira's, who have lived in a community for a long time?

DA: As I drove to rehearsals in Bandra every evening...I could see the reality all around me. I'd see a quaint little bungalow and think, "Oh this will probably be the next one to go - how long will they hold out?" We must also understand the problems of those living in these bungalows. Maintenance is a



A still from *Pereira Bakery*.

nightmare and most cannot afford it. But replacing them with glass skyscrapers is not the solution. Old heritage must be preserved.

AS: Tell us more about some of your other work.

DA: I was recently in Shyam Benegal's film *Well Done Abba*. But people still remember me from the well known TV serial *Farmaan* directed by Lekh Tandon - (for which I got Best Actress). That time I used my maiden name, Deepika Deshpande.

AS: What are your views on the theatre scene right now in Mumbai?

DA: It mainly lacks venues. There is a lot of enthusiasm for theatre but unfortunately there is no outlet, apart from NCPA and Prithvi Theatre. In terms of creativity and scripts it's doing great. But theatre is not a revenue generating activity and so a patron is needed. ■

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