

Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing
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Lecture - 33
From the Playwright's Perspective

Shall we continue, so we start of with second act, like before Christ, after Christ my life could be neatly divided into pre 14th April 1944 and post 14th April 1944. A new dance Bale call Kovalan was coming to Bombay in April, it was supposed to have a bit of Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri and what not, one of those modern kitchadies, very fashionable. The story of Kovalan was a story of my life, it was better man Shankara Panikar who is turned between two lovers, Nalini Sarabhai and Nandita Kriplani, but that was art. In real life I was Shankara Panikar and the two women were Yejuvendra and .

Was not 14th April Shashi ji's birthday, maybe she is having a Shira and Poha birthday party, may be I should stitch a new bush shirt for the occasion, may be I should carry pedals. May be I am not thinking straight, may be Yejuvendra has returned or maybe is not happy with my work, and wants to substitute me with his nephew from , that reminds me. I better go and meet Kanversab and get a list of ships visiting that docs; that way we can plan our provision supply.

These are difficult times, the black market is flourishing, one gallon of kerosene costs 1 rupee imagine the war must end, Mountbatten is planning to make an all out of efforts on Japanese positions in Burma, and Malaya. The Bombay port resembles the military headquarters with officers, and man of the fighting wings of the allied forces, armed with my special permit I take the trains from Wadala to on 12th April, this is a special train. Otherwise, my III class monthly train pass of rupees 8 from church gate to car could have .

Love is such an irregular idea, it is so difficult to express it honestly why? I mean look at man and his progress, he is planning to travel to the moon, explore the depths of the ocean, discover of careful TV do jugglery with numbers of the stocks exchange. And yet man is not been able to come up with better option than I love you. It is so unfair to reduce all the great world and world of grand emotions, to three blind words, I love you.

Plus when do you order it, in the in the beginning, after three meetings, after a life time, there should be a hand work, especially for first time as like me. Unless ignorance more frequently begins confidence than does knowledge; I complicated , love is too hassles business to leave the description of humans. So, I examine the ships in the manila port in conversable office, he returned for lunch hungry and angry, apparently he had examined the British ship the fort Stikine, a single screw coal burning vessel of 7142 tons.

The ship had a unusual cargo, conversable had made a meticulous list, he showed it to me forcefully itself, in whole number 1 sulphur weighing 325 tons, and cotton weighing 268 tons, above the sulphur bag they live fresh manual and 13163 pieces of timber. In whole number 2, 187 of categories C ammunition, plus cotton weighing 769 tons, then there were 11567 timber pieces, scrap iron 42 own dynamos, cases of wireless sets and 168 tons super sensitive category A ammunition.

1089 small drums of oil, whole number 3, 573 tons of lubricating oil and 58 tons of category A ammunition and 20 tons of RAF inflammable or aircraft dope, along the 214 drums of oil. Whole number 4, 523 tons of exploser, 405 tons of cotton along with dry fruits; whole number 5, 196 tons of cotton dry fruits plus rasons, pieces of timber and 6220 drums of oil. But, what grabs my eye was a timely detail, which mentioned that number two whole had an interesting consignment gold, 1 million pounds tureens addressed to a bank in Bombay, 31 wooden plates of gold.

Love is like gold and all that glitters is not gold I suppose, one of mans genuine failure is been love, he has been able to remediate or find the solution. Man has had three grand failures, he has not discover the a saucer and a cup that is not spilty, a pressure cooker and which the handle does not come up, and a proper protocol for love with rules and regulations. was furious, with the captain of the fort Stikine for not a biding by for the rule 46 of the port rule of international port, where by a ship carrying a dangerous cargo should display or red flag.

But, captain Nick Smith of fort Stikine did not want to advertise the cargo of the ship to the enemy, everyone was expecting a per harbour type attack on Bombay port, a few days ago madras port has been bombed.

That evening on my way from the hospital, I picked up a lime juice from the shop, that along with batata poha, bhel puri and chiwda would be a fine nashta for a Cambridge

sushi, DDA arrived it was 14th April 1944. It was 14th April 1944, there was something unusual in the air, German defences had collapsed, a black sea coach is about to fall into Russian hands, Gandhi Ji had malaria.

While I was reading a news paper I have noticed a very young chap, his name was Devda Kishori Lal Anand, he left Lahore in 1943 got down at Bombay central railway station with only 30 rupees in his pocket. He managed to get a clerk job in military accounts office, he wanted to become a movie star, it seems what a thought, he is nothing going for except he jumped all over the place, talked a lot and humbled soul. You know I thought Nehru was much more handsome than him; anyways this Devdas was ranging about the film called jawab by P.C. Barua.

I asked was not Barua the director of Devdas you know I failed to understand why anyone should make a film about a drunker. Then Bapurao Pendharkar he told me I am a Buddhu, he said Devdas , tragedy even 100 years from now people will say . Now, that was the name of Pendharkar's film, he never lost an opportunity to publicize it. 14th April 1944, it was a straitening hot Friday, every year it gets hotter, something must be done about the pollution from the motor cars, mills, really , I was stuck in a precession in , it was a 51st birthday of doctor Ambedkar, there was huge crowd.

I followed to group of women perhaps with a went a price, I could have placed ground and flowers around his neck, mother would have been proud of me. 14th April 1944, I must have courage and enter bobby talkies, the name it was rumoured came into being, because the owner had a one of the jackpot of the bobby, the film was Jawab. This was my first movie I could have watched V. Shantaram Mali at Novelty, but that was not to be fake played apart, anyways it is not also cinema lost be in me.

Subsequently I saw only one other film, Gandhi by attend bough I never sat through either films. In Gandhi I loved the movie theatre, you know I could not tolerate the assassination of Gandhi Ji in the first 2 minutes, it was very real; that is why I say that art must never imitate life, it is not good for the health you know. 14th April 1994, I was passing through the streets, everything was it should be was as it should be, automobiles spare parts, Kanthi photo studio, , 2 men were sitting on chair and discussing of united defeated sports club I want gold, because the match was fixed, the referee was purchased men will be men no.

14th April 1944 Jawab was ok, it had a rich hero called Manoj who sent to his future father in law for the rescuer, but Manoj loses his way and offer shelter by railway station master. This master has a pretty daughter called Kanan Devi, whose main objective in life is to make funny faces and sing songs, Manoj falls in love with this Kanan Devi, and then even as the love story was about to climax there was a huge explosion, the screen was ripped apart.

14th April 1944, it was 5 minutes passed 4 I had reached Razap Chamber just the I reached tremendous six explosion, a Havildar was standing on the pavement his head was chopped off by a piece of a metal, that flown through the air I was stunned, people were running everywhere. 14th April 1944, it was 10 minutes passed 4 there was a stumped in the theatre, some how I managed to jump over the gates, the sky was filled with flying white hot metal.

14th April 1944, it was 10 minutes passed 4 buildings were stumbling, splinters from glass through shutter the windows, played some hot limit and ash and fire falling hop hastily. I could not recognise , a few minutes go here lovely wavy black hat, now he was balled, he kept shouting the Japes have come, the Japes have come , I really ran all way to Bandera full speed. 14th April 1944 burning base naphtha, , then smoke and one huge of boiler blocked the road, I ran and ran and reached an open ground, burnt lean shoot was falling falling all around me.

14th April 1944, I limbed and scrambled over the rubble, I wanted to get in Teen, Sakina Manzil. 14th April 1944, there was second explosion 34 minutes after the first explosion louder and much more brutal. 14th April 1944, in front of my eyes the Teen Sakina Manzil was scrambling, there was a big hole in its centre. A piece of moulded lead a crash crash and through, and fallen through and through all 5 floors; from roof to ground floor; Baba's shop was no more, where was Baba, where was Cambridge Shashi?

In the open ground my mind was racing, someone mentioned the explosion worked from a British ship at the docs, I put 2 and 2 together, it must be the fort Stikine with its 100 of tons of a explosive bombs, oil, cotton, timber, sulphur. Fort Stikine was a time bomb, was right, the ship Leyden with the explosions should not have been allowed into the docs, it was illegal, and an accidental pass would have been trigger of the ammunition in the whole. I was hurt, bag iodine or a pain killer, I needed to get to hospital Saint

George was the closest, but it was on the dark area , so I decided to go towards GT hospital.

In the gatar there was a dead man clutching on two a copy of Mumbai Samachar, he had been charged by a heat, a pit of the dead man cycle it was torching hot, I raced to Teen, Sakina Manzil it had a hole in its heart, where was Shashi Ji. At GT hospital I was treated, there I heard the which is to organise drills, it is prevention against a was hiring temporary nurses, I volunteered I was taking in a fancy Victoria to bicolour , I reached the dormitory be such talk. So, un mind full of the class at my face, I got to work every minute more and more injured persons were brought, in every fourth person would die in front of us, the Bombay doc explosion.

Even today a 6 minute passed 4, I have nightmares about the Bombay doc explosion, if I am sleeping I wake up, am trapped in a fire everything is a blaze, me and 5 blacks skeletons which dance. Flaming drums of oil hurdles towards me, my hair burns into fireworks I ran, but blazing blaze of cotton chased me, and dive into a see huge fire envelops ships and warehouses from a crowd Komraj Shashi appear like Kanan Devi and tries to rescue me.

Just then there is a blast in title way lifts fort Stikine, 60 feet into the air and smashes at down and Komraj Shashi hair, both drown in the sea forever, this nightmare plays and replays in my head daily, that is why I have stopped sleeping it is easier, rather sleep less than I am wished.

14th April 1944 was the day of the Bombay doc explosion, the official count was 336 deaths, 1798 injured, 2 days later I saw some men, come crawling towards me . When they were near, I realised they have lost all the no hands, no legs, day after day the floor was unabated, as usual the unofficial the 10 times the official count, all bodies except those identified were bedded at boiling.

The Bombay doc explosion, when I visited the doc to search for three of , the whole area was filled with European bodies, when examined it was found out all of these were indian doc workers and fire staff, their outer skin had spilled off that is why they looked white. I shifted to Munjo church, this after had a help Nehru's daughter gave birth to her first born, they named him Rajiv, bony baby while sitting in the first class boggy and the

cool by slides, Baba told me that Bombay doc explosion transpired on the 32nd anniversary of the day the Titanic stuck in ice berg Titanic .

Almost all the fire engines belonging to the Bombay fire brigade were destroyed by the first explosion, fire men were moved in from Pune, Thana, Nasik, and soldiers destroyed specific buildings with army teams to prevent the fire from spreading to new localities. Petty officer T. Lewis of Southways steered the truck load of ammunition out of the docks, the truck had no windows, no wing screen, no tyres, and no steering wheel.

The Bombay doc explosion, but why were we so careless, the whole thing was started in security, because of the work, news was suppressed innocent lives were lost. Beggars, workers, street entertainers, hackers, street women, family, friends, spouse, the travel with the world it is stupid of cock show and intelligent of full of doubt. The Bombay doc explosion, a Shareef Shantidas Askaran requested people not to pay heat to rumours, but you know people did not pay heat to the shaded; one man was arrested in Sholapur for rumour mongering.

Food godown which was built in 1875 was destroyed, 55000 tons of food grains were lost, lorry is fitted with loud speaker informed 2 million Bombay Wales, that there would be an uninterrupted supply of food grain, no one believe them. There was another irony merchants who were engaged in the black market lost heavily, because they kept items illegally in the godowns. The Bombay doc explosion, I recall the overhead tramp wire snapped, local train services to VT station was suspended at Bicala, there was a boom period for taxi drivers.

Baba says a in Shimla recorded a trauma on this on the station see some graphs, I can believe it on that day the world shuddered; I lost a piece of me. My soul lost it is steering, the government could not ever compensate that no, but it was keen to compensate owners and tendency of ruined building. So, it decided to forego paper work and prove, this was because it wanted to earn the good will of the people during the war, one Harshth Bhai to get one and made an unscrewable claim for a non-existing building.

Up to that time the government has paid 85000 rupees against claims for damage for fire or loss, traders like Gala set who had shops on the ground floor of the building never locked the cash. In the days of after the Bombay doc explosion he lost his money,

valuable jewellery due to vandalism, since then the sellers of safe locks and keys are profited in Bombay. The Bombay doc explosion, there was fire on the horizon for 3 months all the building in a couple of mile radius of the docs mouldered, a fire has spread rapidly, all though everything was right, the people showed courage in fortitude the city bounds back to life, but not me.

After 14th April 1944 my life was started, you see I am not a strong person in any case, just did enough to keep body as soul together, I left the city travel for many years, there was so many disasters. Since, but the Bombay doc exclusion was the worst, everything turned into a dull shade of grey, my night had began. I never saw Komraj Shashi again, I never met Shashi Ji she must be living happily with Yejuvendra, must have raised the family open three more shops built, one more building got insured for health.

Started a nursing, home manage finances, become religious at earliest age, what a calamite, what a mistake my life has been, come on mouth you must not at as just speak able things. cannot go around with such a negative outlook, shut up this is not the time for a regress, I have seen worst dumb, terrible tragedies minus of fairytales in comparison. One I loved and the other I lost, sad no, Komraj Shashi was the apple of my eye and Yejuvendra was missing in the action of the Naga hills, the two men in my life both vanished within a...

My dear mouth strange as if may sound, unknowns to you good things happened to, you recall that filmy chap Devdas, he dint report to work on 14th April 1944 touchwood, I am told he became movie star changes name to Devanand. I am hoping is earning some good money in the movie business, it such a pickle industry, but much more importantly there was the gold, I see some of your waking up finally, sitting bolt of tried. Should I get down of it my dear mouth, well here goes due to the Bombay doc explosion, the gold bars in the 31 pairs in the fort sty kin flew into the city yes sir, it rained gold bar, the rich the poor the cheery the unhappy, so many people benefitted as gold bars scraps through the roofs, and on to their heads as it is said that .

You know who was a retired civil engineer in Bombay dyeing returned to gold ignites, I know since I used to pass this building Cocanada house in Girgaum, he was rewarded by the authorities Shashi Ji would have said . Whether fact is of all the 130 gold ignites only 43 were found, that two after a 3 years search of a docs surrounding locality houses. So,

what you have to say to that my dear mouth, 83 gold ignites and porous 83 million milliners as out there somewhere, as for me I was half deaf of to the explosion, I never married remained a , I loved ones and for me the first was the best.

Unless there is a miracle and the tuckered screen derby talkies comes alive, and lady with the funny face sings a song and brings back my Shashi Ji to me. That was that 14th April 1944, it is now 14th April 1944 I told doctor Bhavana Parek, am a birth day girl today, she wished the happy birth day and said am still beautiful with beautiful eyes , sound is a bell. Except the some respiratory trouble, but am covered medically that is, all those here is a nurses is benefitted, see see am repeating myself bad girl, then even as am exiting doctor's clinic I hear the sound of Komraj Shashi, that must be Komraj Shashi.

No, no I am become seen eye Komraj Shashi must be a happily married grandfather with an 101 grandsons, but she is passed away at the Bombay doc explosion, I never heard about in since. No, no no perish the thought, what here in talk after him here down the glass of two of a lime juice, talked to though he is Gandhi Ji the second, today if he were alive he would be walking out to the dispensary together hand in hand, he would say Shashi latest film , I the in exhaustible rest of our sorrow.

Why I am hiccupping that old women has left or else it would be embarrassing , the old women has left something behind, what is this ribbons. So, many of them , it reminds me of some one Shashi Ji, come on do not dream your impossible dreams silly fellow. The girl must have married Yejuvendra and must be living happily ever after, no no do not value in self pity, eye cry or laugh the driving up of a single tear of the more of honest fame, and shading seeds of gold.

Often I was wondered what have Shashi Ji and I had kept her appointment of 14th April 1944, I would have lived the different life no, but promises are like the full moon, if they are not kept at once they diminish day by day. May be one day I should go to the Teen, Sakina Manzil, am told it renovated and it is up an about, perhaps one day in the new of future to really hole memory is the possibilities, the missed opportunities. But, time is passing by in a hurry, and men like me cannot see the reflection, because the water runs rapidly, I need still water, yes still water that is why I swim in this day and age in the see, how I wish the , that must be the doctor, it is my turn. Finally, coming doctor , coming do not go away, do wait at least some one wait for me.

Next topic

How's amazing

Every one

Sure

Sir, I want to ask you what was your motivation behind the play, why this story and sir how did you go around documenting and collecting the ?

So, the story was not known to me, I was not round when this had happened in 44 and so like a mentioned in the introduction, there is very dear friend we have who was a film guru for a lot of us, he used to run a film society club in the good old days called screen unit Amrith Ganga, Amrit Bhai. So, he was very familiar with this entire incident, and also knew a few of the people who are important, so you know some of these names like Gala set, Himmatbhai some of the names that are mentioned in, passing is also tribute to the a few of the people we had met.

So, initially it was basically we divided the work on the plane three parts, he wanted me to make a film, I unfortunately I do not know how to make a film, I know how to write place. So, I said that man , so we divided the the work on the plane three parts, initially it was some reading material that he shared with me, some which he had collected there were a couple of books, there was one by cadet officer which was documentation.

But, some his point of view and his perspective, then he himself had taken a small handle camera, and very done a very amateur shooting of the area and actually the area and which the sort of you know one of the this thing. The parts of the ship had fallen through a building it, you know two those like lucky mansion , some other places actually visited, and then we went to the zoo to the synagogue. Because, of boiler at fall in their, and they were not able to take of for almost year to 2 years, and children to turned it into kind of children's park, because you could slide inside and so on, and so forth.

Then for examples, sandals throughout the lot of path for wedged in over there, some of the path in near the railway station, a railway track it is still over there. So, that was one part of it, then the second part was meeting some of these people which was the most

important, because fantastic story is to tell each of them, they had lived that you know like this central character, some you know somebody at last is hearing simply, because of the the sound of the explosion. And the do not forget about two explosions, the first one at four or five, and then immediately, so a lot of people escape from the first, but because of the impact of the second record affected, because they we are locked in the middle of the whole thing.

Another third was documentation at which was the hard work, which was to go back and see what else was happening, in terms of contraction other parts of the country, other parts of the world, what was happening with Indian congress movement. So, these are the three, these are the method methodology and I mean the characters and things has not come that time, it obviously evolved much much later. But, lot of hard work went in to it and collecting a material, so there was enough material to write say a probably, you know 100 are player or 200 are play, because you know there were, so many people over affected by this. And businesses were affected, peoples lives marriages, you know all those sort of things and the topography of Bombay at least in that part changed quite a bit, after post 14th April. So, lot of that, and then of course, one thought of these two characters and worked on that, so that that.

Ideal characters we shown the documentation that you did

To some extent, yeah see there was a challenge, I write sort of very boring history ways place, there was the challenge given to me by some friends saying love story, love story is traditionally something I do not like, I mean I mean I like great love stories, but I am not I am no I am incapable of writing. So, this was my effort of writing a love story, so I said that, this is the best I can do, I have boy and girl and and if they are caught in the situation like this what might have happened. So, I mean so that was the kind of the starting point that, I would try to write a love story which is un requited love, not love that is realised and then and lot of the people have also why is the ending so tragic, why do not they just meet at the end, and why do not you resolve it.

And the answer to that was is very simple, because you know though 6 and a half month amount of anguish that I saw, and you know the kind of tragedies the people have gone through, it is unfavourably. Also and wanted to get the sense, at least share a sense of that would be audience or the you know person who is reading the play that, the tragedy

that unfolded in those sort of few months was unfavourable. And you know you know that beyond your own sort of volume of, sort of understanding of things and to give a sense of that; so at the personal in way becomes a sort of you know you never sell in that the story or the fact that, they are not able to share so many things and so on. That becomes representative of the story of Bombay in a way, what happened to people in the city as well, so that was one of the main reasons for the, so that was the risk that we had, they took.

Sir, along that reducing that when our contributions or the this is the way which we could, the stories of these peoples or and was it your was it your what should I say

Was it your aim to tell the story, what what what had happened in 1944

Yeah I mean that is of course, one part of it, but if I had only done that it might have become you know documentary, pure documentary in, about which I personally do not have a problem, but the idea was also to sort of you know make a connection with what is happening in Bombay. And I knew that the play would be you know performing in 2004 in India, in Bombay wherever, so there was always a need to you know also look back at this whole process of history.

The more important thing is that, you know the way we are fortunately or unfortunately taught history or anything in our class room, other way process of pedantry is that we always look at the main stream history in a largest sense. So, the little story is a smaller character and never sort of you know in the in the context, we never ever able to understand the contribution that they have made to our entire national building process. So, there is another place that have written which was performed here called Mahadev Bhai, so again that was an attempt to look at what is the second and third tear in the congress hierarchy.

We always get struck with Nehru, Gandhi, Sardar, you know Azad and the fact, that you know whatever it was about the congress at that time when they created that whole thing, it was the a very strong party enumerable or the people down the line. So, when all these great national leader are in present the movement was continuing, there was obviously a reason for that, a divide fantastic men to follower you know which is a which is problem we call, keep calling saying political vacuum, political vacuum.

So, an I an attempt to also look at what is happening below the scene, in the sense in not be obvious, so this play Mahadev Bhai to some extent caught on 56 that is another play that we have we have written. So, in that again we looking at the 60 from in, the other perspective that you you obvious history in there is always the other history we nobody talks about, because it is not covenant talk about it or our next people are comfortable. So, that is the history one stage to represent on stage, but important chapters in our life which we should be talking about, shouting about, so yeah.

Sir, Mahadev Bhai and Teen Sakina Manzil, they are not based on contemporary history; I mean they are part behind in history. Also a the people who know about the history, can say connect with those place, but what about a how they connect with the play.

That was just 4 or 5 shows not too many shows, with Sakina Manzil I do not think they had a problem I mean it is a love story, so I mean suggested love story. So, at that level it interest any one and every one, I mean the great stories are, I mean the great novels, the great cinema is based on that. So, you use that as device to tell the other thing that you want to discuss about, if I went into any place, even if I go to say you know Bihar, , Bhopal and start talking about 1944 doc explosion, it will not make senses. Just a character that hope fully, you know is the peg to bring the audience attract the or with Mahadev Bhai what we try to do, I mean how successful we do not know.

But, what we try to do is that the story is store from the point of you, a one of you I mean it is the it is a very young man who is telling the story, and the story keeps going back in forth in time, but the time that is happening is now. And again it is very interesting you now there is if you seen the play, there is the bit very talks about Godhra and that it was a symbol of Hindu, Muslim, and we when the play was staged it is happen precisely, I think 4 and a half, 5 month after the Godhra incident in Gujarat.

So, you know the look the the location of that scene in the play, and the context of that suddenly brings the whole player alive, that you are talking about an incident 100 years ago, 50 years ago whatever, but because of a important and relevance otherwise who would have bothered about that particular convention, it is a very small convention that to place and the Panchmahal in Godhra you know. So, it is a location of that history in today's time that makes that relevant or makes it is come alive you know.

So, for instance even she is discussed the lot of things like you know her character that is that, automobile you know, motor pollution and other too many migrants coming into the city refugees , these are all today's issues as well. So, even that discussion or theory on organisation what we have been talking about, you know we have realized that one be no momentum that a taken place in the last 60 years in the city you know. So, in that sense, the issues then an issues now broadly a similar.

I understand that translated in other Indian languages

That is right.

If you feel, if you are part of the audience that represents the slight difference between, the audience , in other which regional languages

So, in when it was translated in, Marathi was translated by , but we had written this again very close friend that my called Chethandatha, he had translated it, so it seems the production in you mean was in Bombay, knew in Bombay very well. So, there was no difficulty in that part of it, because he is probably has passionate about this incident and the you know we both share common love for the city's. The problems surprisingly was in Dutch and Dutch, the problem was not really with the text or the character or the incident itself, the problem was with food items.

You know things like when she talks about sevpuri and , the local it is very very very difficult to explain to them what these things are, so initially we sort of show them some photographs, but then again tastes again relative, then Kinady had to that is my wife, she had to join me later. So, she actually pack some of these things and brought it 2 weeks later, because we were seated in brassels, so she got some of these food items and they shared, and you know they ate it, not that it to do the improve the translation.

But, suddenly started making a lot more sense to them, what are these local side food you know, so food was a one concern that was there, and then again the sense of you know their idea of organisation, and our idea of city planning is sort of vastly different. So, when we talk of these thing and we talk of lack of civic sense or overcrowded, or the certain lack of planning, what then we talk about it we are you know, we can compared ourselves to , not to a brassels or to amsterdam, so that was again a issues that day had.

And of course, this some of a city, you know a city politics that is something that we do not understand so.

Right

So, this part, so Teen Sakina Manzil was produced by groups on working title, it was directed by Gemini Patak who played Mahadev Bhai those of huge, so a Gemini was someone with whom, I was working with and we were I was writing a few place for him or his group. And Pooja's character was played by Surujia, who is married to him at that time and so so the the stage direction I sort of was that keep it very simple, keep it absolutely minimum list. Let let it be like a story telling session that you have a somebody seated under a tree, and narrating a story; let it let it convey sense of that, do not get into too much of around 2003, 2004, we are all going through this crises in Indian theatre, that actors act too much, Indian actors act too much.

So, we were all trying to sort of find a way in which or a mechanism or a whatever, a method through which take and cut down on their acting, so one of the things we were trying to do with Sakina Manzil was ensure actors do not act. So, if they are playing the only characters, they do not do this for , you know very over stated and over done kind of thing or when the falling in love, we know it is again guessing and so. So, the idea was to play the line tell the story, so this was the one big dream, the other thing which I think from Gemini's point of view was very scary, he was getting two pages at a time.

And this was I think opening at the festival, and there was the deadline and a date given to you know Prithvi, and these guys are obviously rehearsing the play, so they do not know what was going to happen next, and they were getting this two pages, three pages he may would be rehearsing. After two days, and next two page would come, and till I think the very end they did not know what the end was, so and I remember when I finally, wrote the last scene I had to fly out, and to go to Egypt for some reason.

And I was in Egypt and I got an SMS no, they have to meet, and they have to they have to remarry, this cannot this cannot be the ending, there was sort of huge protestation, but they had no time, they had week to open. So, that was it and I think the opening happened it was pretty good, there were a little unsorte of rehearse for the opening shows, then as the play they kept performing the grew and I think that was, the music was mainly minimal.

They used just two chairs and so that was the area, and then to depict the doc's explosion they had a mat on which they used some red lights, and then they played with siren as a sort of sound tracks. So, that was what they did, there was nothing sort of over done, that you know or nothing they were, it was left to the imagination of the audiences at, the work would hopefully convey the sense of whatever.

The writing of the , you were centralized right from the beginning or you know it is happening slowly as well working on the script

Yeah, I have no clue no clue, I mean I have no memory, I know it is a good question and some times when I read this play, I say wow that is really cool I mean, but I have no clue it was done yeah. I I know I had a I know who my clue, I knew who my two actors was Gemini and Surujia, I knew what their strengths are broadly speaking, I also knew that they are going to play it in the particular way. So, these are the given for me of course, I had a material in the story, the no I do not remember this at all, I I.

And any special behind any .

My mothers Shashi, so ya and no I am this is sort of typical Indian thing no Kiran, Shashi, Divya these are names we never know the you know gender of the, so it was just playing on that. So, in every play I have characters who are people from my life or around my life, so small way of say thank you to them, so this was for my mother. And she was very thrilled, because she when she saw the first show, she he saw it with Shashi Kapoor, she was mega thrilled, because after the show she walked up to him introduced to herself and said, hi Shashi I am Shashi, so she was quite happy about it.

Sir, can you give some tips actually we are why undertaking a course, while creative writing, so can you give by some tips or some exercises which we should practice to improve our writing skills or something.

Right now, yeah no I mean we can sit and doing it here, is a bit difficult, I mean the best thing in I think everybody would say this to you use to keep writing number one. And the second thing is to read a bit, which we sort of increasingly turning into a ray sort of

Sure

Sure

True true true.

I think the affection, if I understanding where a it comes from this desire , curiosity or the writers.

Each one is happier , she said something that, he would like share in terms of how you got to starting

Yeah yeah

, of the process that you can share.

Sure, so I I three thing are in my case, I am slightly fortunate I belong to a collage which was very strong, in Bombay you have a tradition of the inter collage, that you as a sort of Marathi, you would know about that, this was a very strong tradition. So, the the the tradition helps you in many ways, in the sense, you know for certain that what write you produced, then you broadly working with the bunch of friends or colleagues from your class or the neighbouring class or whatever it is. So, it helps you to write this 30 minute thing, and you are able to rehearse for x amount of time, for which the college commits some amount of money and space, so that was a big help.

And the other thing is because you are part of by the tradition of you know having in Ashutosh Gowariker and and Mahendra Joshi, the seniors would always be around to guide you. So, there was always this process of mentoring, which is a very Indian way of doing things, you know there is always someone around to mentor you. So, if you role a really bad play there would be, somebody there to tell you to rewrite it or to re do it or save the play, you know they did not have time or something like that. So, broadly speaking you would read a lot of other plays, and so you knew that these are the 25 to 50 really good one act plays that had been, you know produced or published in this country.

That is and so basically what probably some some other young person, and another part of the country might have taken 3 years you learn all that in sort of 6 months time, during that inter collage it phase. And that is invaluable experience and once the play a stage, you know because the amount of resources and all that that is pooled in, that plays a big role in doing all these watching the process of rehearsing. So, again I was very lucky, I

wrote a play in my my first play, I think it was called I am I and we had a fairly noted stage director in those days called Akash Khurana, so he had directed it.

And so two things happened, one was he brought and up professional expertise, so it was good to see how professional theatre director is dissecting your text, you know adding element to which you never thought and imagine. So, then you know the process became you automatically the level goes up, straight away from you know playing the league cricket, you go straight away into time shield and you know, so that helps you straight away.

And then after that you go up the other thing, the other thing about writing is, you know it is hard work, I mean there is no mystery to the process, his hard work is very lonely work. All the great writers that you, whether it is a markov or it is you know Bashire or a Premchand, they would have a you know a they say a job of wimp sickle, and you you know inspiration , but a lot of the great writers have been known to getup at 6 30 follow a very very hard ritual, right for 4 hours come what may good bad in different, learn to reject those text.

So, that habit of writing for 4 hours daily is invaluable, you could write whatever you want, you could be writing letters to the editor, you could be writing short stories, you could be writing poems, songs for movies whatever, the habit of writing is constant one. And it is something that you can get, you know good at only when you only keep doing it day and day also, I think most of the greats do it, even now I mean there is a fantastic book I have of Borges biography one of the writers at my Iron. Even though he was blind, he could constantly be the writing, you know and that is you cannot it is not like Tendulker going to nets and doing it everyday, so it is like writers have to write, there is no escaping there.

Sir, the people who ere there in 1994, like whom you talked to, sir were they did they have a chance to watch this

Some of them did, some of them yeah, it is a bit difficult, because a lot of them very emotional about the whole experience, and for them it all it all came back, so they obviously, did not look at it as piece of theatre or piece of art or anything, for them it was

much much more. So, it was at two level, one was certain amount of catharses, because of what and you know they were meeting them, after the show used to be a terrible experience, because you know they would be very very stirred by the whole experience.

The second thing used to be that, they were very great full, that you know somebody had taken the effort of recording this whole thing, documentation which is something as a country we are quite careless about. I mean not just this incident, but innumerable other thing we are very about that whole process, and that they were I think quite great full about.

When they had this conversation with them,

No no, never recorded yeah yeah

But, was spontaneous right.

Yeah see I have told you, I had two friends two friend Amrith Bhai, Amrith ganged and there is another friend of us called Dharamshi Bhai, who is like the age old Socrates of Bombay. So, I have been very lucky with all my plays that I have had, someone like that who has opened up sort of doors for me, so so it is you know, so that opportunity was that is what access to people who otherwise would be bit difficult, also the other thing I am slightly lucky is that I can speak about 6 or 7 languages.

So, the it is not that you know language is is is a great sort of, so English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil whatever, so in this case it used to be a Gujarati a bit of you know broken Marwadi and so on. That those are little things that matter, no recording because people get uncomfortable no making notes while they are talking, because that look becomes a kind of formal chase here. Here this would be interesting, and you know these all these all wonderful people, so they would sort if they felt adequately they would jump into a cab and say , and I will show you , whatever.

You know, so those kind of things are a when this this Keshavrao naik's incident which I mentioned you know, when we meet some in the way sided one of them actually took us to that and today, even today that statue is still there in of Keshavrao naik's, it is there in and so on. You know again it is typical Bombay, because they have built a T stack

around it, and so that is why it is the that whole thing is under mind, but that actually a legacy, if you look at historically, it should be something that we should celebrate.

Because, you obviously contributed a lot to labour law in that particular area, but those kinds of things they would feel inspired and actually take you to those spaces you know, and this one gentleman who I had met he was fantastic, because he was born in 87 or 88. And used to in the morning I said , I go to chapatti for a swim, and you know in 87 and his body was body was very very weak, but he would do that swimming exercise everyday and for an hour. So, when I met him actually I met him at , and from there we went to his home, so those kind of things and he had lost about partial eye sight.

Because, the second blast when it took place, the glasses had smashed in the house, and the some of those pieces had here here.

So, the quality that was there in your experience of gathering

What she had yeah

Correct, yeah yeah that is right

Right

Yeah in the text again, we are confined because what is written, but the actors play that upper little more, did that a little more Gemini himself is multilingual likewise Suruchi was. So, we play that upper little more, I mean know today whatever one we say about Mumbai, I mean we hated, whatever it is love, it or whatever the choices, and the fact it is the beautiful city. And the fact is it did a lot of things normally, and you know very very in very casual way which a whole lot of other cities are struggled to do, and this was one of them, you know this whole thing was shared histories and many stories.

You know being able to exist simultaneously that is a wonderful thing, it does not happen in other parts of the world you know, and that so that was something that we got a sense of when we were there. And what we did with the actors or we where spent a lot of time, not lot of time we spent some time, because actors are actors they need to do other things, they need to do rehearse plays and learn lines. But, we took them for a small tour around, and a couple of these people they met, so they got a sense of we know where all this is coming from.

One last question, the very exact information that you have the cargo on the ship

Yes

That was got from the

So, that was got from this one book that I picked up on the cadet, and then I cross reference that and I got what form the Asiatic as, because there is the gazetted there is something called the gazetted, I have my notes somewhere, but something called the gazetted in which there is a documentation of this whole thing. And that cargo was yeah that is exact, that is not a item which have remove nor an item which have added here.

Yeah yeah

And it was very interesting you know speaking about translation and other language, when, we you know when I used to always very uncomfortable with that scene, because even Gemini commented you know just rattling out this is like statistics in audiences switch off. And when Roody, Roody is a friend of us in Brussels who did translated the play into Dutch, and when he saw it I said so now, we come to the really tough part of the play, and he said why and why do you say that, and he said this is poetry. You know and and it is because if you read the items and the row, it is it is such as a unnatural sort of gathering of eight totally different items in that one hold.

And how could that have happened, I mean how can a human being even think of doing that, so and but they played it very differently in Dutch, they had this two here the actors are much younger, there the actors are much older. There was there this apparently very sort of renowned actors over there in Europe, forget her name she is like the like the merry's steep of European theatre. So, she and these other gentlemen who was who was a retired actor, but come out of retirement to play, and then they had this one man, one sacks who is there to give the resonance to the whole thing.

But, they played they dint move from their chair, and I mean I did not understand I do not understand that it at all, but it was a stunning experience, very very beautifully done; and they use, they use huge screen, it was in normal state, so if you been like to the Jamshed Bhabha theatre, it is as big as that in terms stage space. So, this has two solitary actors, and then the scraps of paper piece keep coming, and I do not know how they do

that, but these scraps of paper piece keep coming and at the end of the there is on the mosaic on the floor.

And they have this beautiful back drop which keeps changing, a very slightly done it is not as of it Bombay Bombay, but they just touch of that, again very nicely done, very very. But, there is very understated is very European is not like us, you know we are little .

Thank you very much

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.