

FEDERATION OF THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED, INDIA

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Press Release

Artists for Democracy – Struggle against the fascist attack on the farmers and labourers of Singur & Nandigram

This manifesto is released on behalf of “*Federation of Theatre of the Oppressed*”. The birth of this collective initiative took place as a result of a convention held in Kolkata in last November in presence of cultural groups and people’s organizations from 12 different states in India.

Federation of Theatre of the Oppressed, India is an alliance of groups practicing Theatre of the Oppressed in India. Theatre of the Oppressed is not a conventional political theatre, this is Theatre as politics. By creating a democratic space actors and spectators, engage themselves in a debate to find out the ways of changing the oppressive social and political reality. The spectators in this theatre are ‘spect-actors’. In India, Jana Sanskriti, one of our principal constituent is the first exponent of the Theatre of the Oppressed. The constituent members of the Federation have been continuously raising their voices against the ongoing human rights violation in the name of ‘Development’ The members have been questioning the present model of development, which essentially deprives the poor from their means of livelihood.

We see the present globalization as the globalization of only capital & not of thought, philosophy, human beings and humanity. The predominance of hegemony of capital in other words is the arrival of neo colonization. This has unleashed repression, human right violation & undemocratic processes in the country. Globalization of capital wants to robotize the human being to make people blind follower of the market system. Where as Theatre of the Oppressed can open a democratic space where people largely can grow intellectually, rationally & economically. The organization believes that rational participation of the people can construct a human society.

Our concept of globalization is based upon the Sanskrit saying “Vasudhaiva kutum bakum” which primarily means, “welcome world citizens”, where the citizens of the world are united, related, and not isolated from one another.

We, the Artists – Activists are agonized by this fascist political and economic growth in India. We are perturbed as the collective desire of the majority people is seen by the ruling elite as meaningless and disrespectable. Continuing protests by the farmers and labourers in Singur, Nandigram, Haripur in West Bengal, Raigad in Maharashtra, Kalinganagar in Orissa signifies humanistic revolt against this culture.

We feel disturbed and troubled because we see that the state machinery is being used to control and dominate people’s lives in a way that can be called Nazism. Ruling political party uses the Panchayat system in West Bengal precisely in that fashion. If the Panchayat system in west Bengal is so strong and efficient and also the expression of a

decentralized political structure and or system, then why did Government not use this instrument in Singur & Nandigram to facilitate a discussion on the whole issue of land between Government & people. Why do they have to use police force in order to bring about loot?

We are unable to understand how setting up a Tata factory in Singur or Reliance SEZ in Raigad, Maharashtra & Salem's SEZ in Nandigram serves the Public Purpose when **the profits are privatized & losses are socialized**. Even the last word regarding the means of livelihood of the people is being taken away by the state and its rulers.

Jana Sanskriti - West Bengal, Sarvahara Jan Andolan – Maharashtra, Delhi Shramik Sangathan – Delhi, Adivasi Chetna Sangathan & Malyagiri Adivasi Sangarsh Manch – Orissa, Bundelkhand Mazdoor Kisan Sangathan & Bagelkhand Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Mukti Morcha – Madhya Pradesh and many others are engaged in democratic struggles against involuntary and forceful evictions in the name of SEZ's, setting up of private & public industries, forest conservation and setting up sanctuaries and national parks, beautification and gentrification of existing cities.

That is why we express our ultimate solidarity for the people in places like Singur and Nandigram where people have not accepted the decision that has been thrust and forced upon them. In this question of their struggle for the maintenance of their daily livelihood, we express our heart-felt solidarity. We too are there by their side, in good faith and in all sincerity.

We, the artists are esthetically, politically and culturally responsible to use our artistic means to fight and protest against this brutal and fascist state.

We demand:

- Immediate withdrawal of Police & section 144 in Singur.
- An independent commission to be set up to enquire whether the land has been given voluntarily. Until this enquiry is over, the construction should not be allowed to start.
- The people should not be forced to give the land.
- A democracy to be established at all levels of society where there will be an atmosphere of dialogue and discussion.
- All political parties must put an end to the politics of murders and killings. The entry of any anti-social and criminals into the political scenario must be prohibited.
- An end to the manipulation and suppression of information and a corresponding honest implementation of the Right to Information Act, of 2005.
- Repeal of SEZ act.
- An end to the culture of lying in politics. Let all those responsible politicians who have been repeatedly resorting to telling lies and have been in openly encouraging the culture of violence be trialed under the Criminal Act.
- The government must initiate a discussion with the people in places like Singur, Nandigram (West Bengal), Kalinga Nagar, Kasipur (Orissa), Reliance SEZ at Dadri (UP) & Raigad (Mahashtra), where people have come out to fight against

We believe that the accountability of the artist is only to the audience and therefore to the people. This is why the relationship between artists and the people for ages have been intimate and based upon trust. The flowering of this

relationship between the artist and the spectators holds the key to the becomingness of art and the artist. That is why we want to remain accountable to the people, to the Oppressed all over the world.

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Ramavtar
On behalf
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