



NAGORIK'S LATEST STAGE PRODUCTION OPEN COUPLE

A major breakthrough

Nagorik Natya Sampradaya is the pioneer of regular staging of plays in exchange of tickets after the country emerged as a sovereign and independent nation-state in the world map as Bangladesh. The word Bangladesh had a magic touch to the majority of people in Bangladesh which inspired us to break the barrier in the fields of art, culture, literature and theatre. Nagorik Natya Sampradaya was established during the later part of 1968 in the then Pakistan.

Nagorik emerged as a flag-bearer of new-wave theatre practice in the country with the staging of *Baki Itihash* in the then British Council stage under the director of eminent thespian, Aly Zaker in exchange of tickets which was not in vogue in our part of the world. In fact, Nagorik played a pioneer role as path-finder in theatre and can only be compared with 'Bhurupi' of Kolkata which rose to Himalayan height under the leadership of great actor-director-writer, Sri Shumbhu Mitra.

Nagorik in its stride of last forty five years of regular theatre practices, traversed at ease by staging the plays of Bengali playwrights of both Bengal. The group also put on stage the plays of both the East and the West with equal proficiency. Nagorik played a worthy role in popularizing the plays of Rabindranath Tagore, German playwright Bertolt Brecht and plays of other playwrights, like Moliere, Samuel Beckett, Shakespeare, Anton Chekov, Ariel Dorfman and above all our country's foremost playwright Syed Shamsul Haq. Nagorik has so far produced about forty



five plays of varied genre.

Nagorik's latest production is *Open Couple* which has been jointly written by the world famed playwright Dario Fo with his wife Franka Rame. Sara Zaker, a gifted actor and director of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya as well as of the country adapted, directed and acted as the central character of the play. It is a two character play; the male character was portrayed by a major actor of the group, Ziaul Hasan Kislu.

I will assertively express that *Open Couple* is a major breakthrough in our theatre practices. It is a rebellious play-production against social hypocrisy and social taboos. While watching the play, I remembered an Irish boss of my youth who once said, perhaps in 1973, that our part of the globe allow debauchery or

wickedness under the veil of chastity and goodness. My boss Mr. Thursby was stationed in Karachi, Pakistan in 1965 and he told me that his wife, when landed in Karachi Airport, was wearing short skirt, everyone thought that she was a prostitute.

Family is a system with a man and woman living together bound by law in order to lead an apparently morally-controlled life. But at heart, physiologically as well as psychologically, human beings remain polygamous; if not practically but in the hidden core of their hearts. The family system is an innovation of the society helping people to lead a controlled moral life. It is working and again not working; as we human beings are unable to check pollution both physically and mentally. Well, this is life. We, in fact, are lead-

ing an open couple's life but at the end of the day, we come back home to rest, in spite of all our pollution. That is the positive side of leading a family life.

Question was raised by a group of audience; spectators as to the too adult dialogue of the play. Vulgarly and obscenity is a long outstanding question for all of us. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Lolita*, *Rat Bhor Bristi* (Bhuddhadeb Basu) and *Projapoti* (Shomresh Basu) had to suffer severe criticism for long time on account of obscenity. But they all won in the court of law and their novels got recognition as great work of literary creation. *Open Couple* is a creation of that category. We must reckon that at the end of the day, we come to a man or a woman who are not bound genetically by flow of blood but by social string and commitment. I saw in Germany, *Lady Macbeth* in completed nudity and the play was directed by a world famed director named La Paz. I saw a scene of *Romeo and Juliet* also in nudity in Munich, Germany. *Open Couple* has some slangs and adult dialogue which are far from being obscene.

Open Couple is well adapted matching to our situation. It is also well acted and all the technical designers of the production deserve appreciation. Kudos to Nagorik Natya Sampradaya, Sara Zaker, Ziaul Hasan Kislu and all the designers of the play.

Monchosoorthi Ataur Rahman
Actor-Director-Writer-Poet
Recipient of *Ekushe Padak*