

Abstract

The paper introduces Indian People's Theatre Association's (IPTA)ⁱ performance of *Afīm Ke Phūl* (Flowers of Opium) to tease out the grammar of *transgressiveaesthetics* in political theatre. Articulated through the two characters of Daadu and Peelu, the performance of *Afīm Ke Phūl* commences on a comical note, wherein these two characters, Dadu and Peelu have taken a heavy dose of *afīm* (opium) and are constantly ranting about their inability to distinguish between reality and non-reality. Having committed the "illegal act" of consuming opium they are hallucinating in a dilapidated state as the affect of opium leaves them in a pathetic situation of verbal overlapping. Yet, their act of *senseless* jabbering and fearful contemplation about oppression of police and jail warden at the behest of elected representative makes 'sense'. Following which they articulate their senses by pouncing on an opportunity and detrude (push/force down) the elected representative from stage. Herein, their act of detrusion is read in terms of *transgressive aesthetics* which showcases a vector of 'sensibility' towards justice and rightful existence for all.

Interlinking aesthetics and politics in the domain of political theatre the paper attempts to address and investigate *transgressive aesthetics* in conjunction with the register of 'realization in *now time*. Herein, an attempt of the paper is to deliberate on *transgressive aesthetics in now time* while establishing a conversation with Walter Benjamin's *Theses 'On the Concept of History'* (2009). The paper on one hand foregrounds a paradoxical element in Benjamin's philosophical endeavor against "history's" theory of progression, and on other hand inform an aesthetics which has a transformative potential in *transgression*. As the performance of *Afīm Ke Phūl* is conducted in the backdrop of Emergency, *now time* of the performance takes a detour *with* the 'present-ness' of historical condition and preempts *through a future*. Which is why the *transgressive* act of Daadu and Peelu performed in the *now time* of theatre also correspond to contemporary times. In conclusion of the paper *transgressive aesthetics* is put forth as a mode in mediation thatimbibes *inexhaustible possibilities* to muster a *historical time* out of any history.

Keywords – Emergency, Transgression, Aesthetics, Now Time.

Performed several times before 1974, it was not until the declaration of Emergency that performance of *Afīm Ke Phūl* would catch the public imagination in its full scope.ⁱⁱ The play starts with two characters, Dadu and Peelu who have taken a heavy dose of *afīm* (opium) and are constantly ranting about their inability to distinguish between reality and non-reality. Since they are hallucinating, the affect of opium leaves them in a pathetic situation of verbal overlapping of similar statements.

Peelu: Now I'll go home... You don't have *afīm*. Just check it for once.

Dadu: How come your slippers have changed into shoes?

Peelu: Like that of a M.L.A. who moves from one party to another !!

Dadu: Hmmm...

Peelu: But your shoes also...

Dadu: Oye...My shoes also seems to be different. But Peelu... How did this happen?

Peelu: You are a faggot... It's simple, I wore your shoes and you took my slippers.

(Translation mine, Radheshyam: 1)

These initial dialogues between Peelu and Dadu set up the tonality and structure of the play. The two drug addicts appear as down-trodden figures who are contemplating about their personal belongings while interjecting satirical puns on opportunistic tendencies of elected representatives in politics. Peelu leads the exclamatory comment by drawing on an analogy between his modified slipper and that of an M.L.A. He expresses the analogy in a form of banter by stating that his slippers have altered its reality and into a shoe, just like the way a M.L.A switches allegiance in a split second. This analogy of opportunist move from one party to another magnifies the sarcasm while communicating the underlying meaning of selfish attitude of elected representatives.

Dadu: I'm very sorry Peelu...I guess, I have had too much of *afīm*.

Peelu: You always say the same thing. I had too much of *afīm*...

Dadu: Peelu...Not you...I.

Peelu: That's what....You always say that I had too much.

Dadu: Tch Tch Tch...I, I... Look at me.

Peelu: Yes, I do understand. You always say that I had too much of *afīm*. Now don't fool around.

(Translation mine, Radheshyam: 2)

Stemming from such a misunderstanding, one can get a sense about the two characters whose conundrums are aggravated under the influence of opium. And at the same time their narrative through dialogues are being intercut by profane political positions. Considering their pathetic situation, a profane declaration as this one can be the last thing to expect from them. Whereas, for them even such a declaration, is just another passing reference as a part of hard known truth in which they are used to live. Then it is rather prudent here to look at the conjunction of a performance like *Afīm Ke Phūl* during Emergency, where direct political puns are subjected at the

ruling class and also at the state machinery (Police, Prison Warden) through two *dilapidated* entities – for whom it is always, already an Emergency in declaration.

Dadu: You can never be a good person
Peelu: Good person...
Dadu: Yes...A good person
Peelu: What is a good person? How can be a person good if it's a person?
Dadu: A good person like me...
Peelu: You...A good person...?
Dadu: You and me both...
Peelu: That means, we both are good persons. Wow. It's amazing that even being a person, we are good persons...Then how come the police always beat us?
Dadu: Their wish or you can say whims.
(Translation mine, Radheshyam: 8)

Here above, their contemplation over a good person, results in a logical malady – insignificant and entirely indifferent to whatever is happening around them – are they subject to maltreatment or are being used as a scapegoat to fulfill the fantasy those who are in power? Through the figure of Peelu and Dadu the performance of *Afīm Ke Phūl* uncovers the gut-wrenching brutality of police force. It exposes the colonial styled functioning of enforcement agency.

Peelu: Had we been doctors..!!
Dadu: And then we wouldn't have to go to jail
Peelu: How?
Dadu: My father went to jail.
Peelu: My father went till the door.
Dadu: It's a bad omen to go till the door of a jail.
Peelu: Ya...
Dadu: And inside...?
Peelu: We are scared by the jail warden.
Dadu: And outside...?
Peelu: We live in a world of jail...
(Translation mine, Radheshyam: 9)

With regard to this, when asked about the characterization of these two figures of drug addicts, Mukhtar Ahmad recalls, “it's a straight forward political satire on the system”ⁱⁱⁱ but refuses to surmise on the very logic of a political satire through two *senseless* beings. The paper argues that even if the direct sardonic statements are toned down, the figure of Peelu and Dadu still do not remain immune from a situation like Emergency – they are those, whose condition cannot be more deplorable than their present state, and they will still be ill-treated at the whims of the State. Thus, if they are the most susceptible beings to repression, subjugation and tyranny then a condition like theirs can open-up a legitimized facet of such despotism. The only difference being, consuming *Afīm* is just nothing compared to other “illegal activities” under Emergency.

Thinking about Emergency it is rather more important to also look into the operational aspect of a situation such as Emergency. My point of precession is toward the restraints on numerous functions of things – (abolition of free press, impediment in terms of distribution of political literature, and a putative logic of efficiency contrary to the ‘lackadaisical functioning’, etc.) – within this, somewhat challenging parables addressing at the state (underground literature – handbills, cyclostyled printed materials) were nonetheless circulated. These circulated materials were printed and distributed by members of certain organization or concerned individuals. Many of these literatures were confiscated as it would be detrimental for the State to pass it through – read by the *common intelligentsia* and further being passed on. Though, maintaining its vigour for the correct, truth and moral righteousness to prevail over the censored affairs of everyday life which was concurrent with upheaval and moorings of the people under Emergency, these manuscripts were always and till date are taken as *holistic vestiges* which by their very forte – their speciality of being ‘still existing’, in the absolute domain of seizure, repression and annihilation.

Writing in his introductory lines of the preface, Sajal Basu instigates, “For the first time in recent history perhaps, floating rumour could be so authentic and illuminating to the masses. In fact, the Emergency solemnised the role of rumour in public life.” (Basu 1978: Preface). These lines not only explicate the rigour of these underground movements but also accentuate a phenomenon – clearly putting forward a sense of ‘truth value’ which were innate in their very conception. Hitherto the *truth value* of any underground literature was only seen in the logical culmination of an *exercising excess* (Indian Emergency in this context; excess in terms of Emergency like situation given onto its people) by the State at the first place. As the promulgating power of exercising such a situation like Emergency rests under the government – actions that happen under coercion (ideally those which are restricted under a situation like Emergency) do tend to channelize its inception from a power, a power which is not given by the State, instead whose franchisees are the people themselves. And in this case, a censorship law implemented under the Emergency rule portend a *disenfranchisement* of the people, which otherwise is rested onto the State/Government. Not to overlook that this is just simply and blatantly told to the people and that their fundamental rights are no longer in practice whether they want or don’t want to exercise it. So, in a way their *disenfranchisement* stems from the fact that its better be told in a blunt manner.

In the article, “Underground Literature During the Emergency: A View from Delhi” (1978), Amiya Rao & B.G.Rao (1978) offer a key insight into the discourse of reacting to such a bluntness. They relate it with the centripetal force of truth. The Raos comment,

it was only after the Turkman Gate tragedy that both of us decided that a serious effort should be made to produce a news bulletin giving at least some genuine, uncensored

news items.... With the material thus available we produced on May 1, 1976 a news sheet in 18 copies. We called it 'Satyasamachar' (True news). On May 15 we produced the second number.... Our emphasis was on the 'satya' (truth) of the 'samachar' (news): The emphasis will always be on truth. Our self-imposed code will forbid incitement to violence, to communal passions and to anti-social behaviour; we will scrupulously avoid character assassination and tendentious writing; our constant endeavour will be to remind people that a personal dictatorship is working to perpetuate itself and that they have to fight it.^{iv}

Much to do, about this above quoted text is to sense that knowledge of *being betrayed, individual rights being curtailed* and the binary of domination, that of between *oppressor and oppressed* (in this case, State and its Subject); and in order to overcome, whatever a "personal dictator" (1978: 3) is imposing, should be fought tooth and nail – but clearly depositing and prescribing, what all should not be done. The most invigorating part of this is that of "self-imposed codes" (1978: 3) which demarcates a sharp line between lines of functioning – should and should not. Thrashing out this debate between *should and should not*, I would like to emphasize – does the State goad violence, communal passions gives a free hand to the police, operates high-handedly, fussily does character assassination or censors news reports only in a situation like Emergency? Amiya and B.G. Rao contemplate, "what happened in one neighbourhood could not be known to people living just five miles away" (1978: 1) In effect their observation tells a tale of how the transference of news particularly as a mode in communication was shaping their sense of disconnectedness. Both of them lament that how the "happenings in Turkman Gate, we found, were not known to our friends in Defence Colony even three months later. In such circumstances two human traits asserted themselves to fill the vacuum created by the pusillanimous behaviour of our Press – a desire to spread news and a desire to hit back at the oppressor with whatever weapon one could" (1978).

Herein, it is imperative for us to understand and grapple more with this thought of "a desire to spread news and hit back at the oppressor" (1978). Because this desire is not a procedural derivative but rather evokes an instinctive human element of recantation – in this case when censorship is imposed, the logical fallout leads to provocative desire of refusal of any sort of directive. Then in one sense it can be argued that a situation like Emergency unfurls a declaration of power by promulgating in front of the subject about the conspicuous affair of anarchy. And under the pretext of which, the State severs its ties with democratic principles by claiming that it can no longer uphold the same, and in return leases itself at the supreme command by offering a 'organized-anarchy'.

we were doing *Afīm ke Phūl* only, at Prayag Sangeet Samiti and somebody from the audience came and told our friends at the backstage that the police is waiting for us to finish the performance...we finished the play and our friends who were not involved in

the play, asked us to wear saaris and veil our faces...we got out and ran from the back side of the building....we didn't expect this because earlier the same production was done by other members at P.D. Tandon park and the police was there but did nothing on that day.^v

Concomitantly an exposition of *transgressive aesthetics* can be located in the performance of *Afīm ke Phūl* when Peelu and Dadu disavow their allegiance from listening to the third character (a defeated M.L.A). As this defeated M.L.A continues with his spree of illogical dialogues that why should be he again elected as a M.L.A, Peelu and Dadu in a moment of resentment and rage, detrude the defeated M.L.A off the platform.

Peelu: Dadu, I am feeling sleepy

Dadu: Me also

Peelu: Can't we stop him from doing this

Dadu: Why not, let's try.

(Both of them push the man off the stage with full force. The man falls on the ground with his face down)

Peelu: Now what shall we do?

Dadu: Come on, let's get rid of this stage

(Translation mine, Radheshyam: 9)

Contrary to their act of *senseless* jabbering and fearful contemplation about the police and jail warden, here they pounce on an opportunity to mete out their deep seated anger. Up until, if it was their very trepidation of being subjugated at the mercy of State machinery then their existence was living always/already in a mode of humiliation and utter disgrace. On the one hand it is comprehensible that in terms of action, they finally commit something which until now, within the text was far more suppressed. Their act of an outburst in such a form of tangible violence draws a vector towards *transgression*^{vi} – in this case, a cultural-political directive which can propel an audience to act and even call for a 'realization' of such an event in/of *now time*.

At the conjunction of *transgressive aesthetics* and *now time*, the paper attempts to map out a contradistinction of the two by building on Walter Benjamin's *Theses 'On the Concept of History'*.^{vii} By engaging with the pulsating nature of an encounter the endeavor is to engage with *transgressive aesthetics* and work through the moments in/of *now time*. Herein, the task is to tease out the grammar and the nature of the contradistinction. The paper therefore interacts with the *Theses'* one by one and offers to explicate a sense of criticality as a point of departure. As the name in itself suggests, Benjamin's primary deliberation revolves around a critique against a linear progression of history. For him the concern of History Materialism with a capital 'H' and capital 'M' doesn't merge into one holistic entity, instead questions the ways of historical processes that unfolds even in the making of historiography. The very first thesis opens with the much quoted

familiar image of the automaton for thinking through historical materialism. While scholars have analysed this image in varied ways, the paper interrogates the notion of ‘winning’ and the relation between historical materialism and theology that is at its heart.

There was once, we know, an automaton constructed in such a way that it could respond to every move by a chess player with a countermove that would ensure the winning of the game. A puppet wearing Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent on all sides. Actually, a hunchbacked dwarf – a master at chess – sat inside and guided the puppet’s hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophic counterpart to this apparatus. The puppet, called “historical materialism,” is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is small and ugly and has to keep out of sight.

(Benjamin 2003: 389)

Though, Thesis I remains as one of the most debateable proposition and continues to be interpreted in different ways till date, the metaphorical analogy which it draws nevertheless points at an invariable conjugality between “historical materialism” and theology, with a waiver of ‘if’. In some sense the puppet has a choice of either continuously winning against any viable opponent, where the inevitability of winning comes from the logic of an automatic function of accomplishment. In spite of the reliance and service of theology, what this automaton does manage to show is that of some kind of mutual dependence of each other in order for the automaton to work. Benjamin holds that this allegory of theological dwarf has to be kept in secret because that is crude or at least non-presentable at the face value. So, it is to be used but not shown. An immediate question that comes to the fore is what does theology offer in terms of its service to “historical materialism”? If theology is at the heart of this automaton and its primary modality is to serve the other, the automaton as an inevitable winner does not care who is at whose service. Since it is pre-destined to overcome any given opponent, even a role reversal (historical materialism in the service of theology) cannot be ruled out.

In extension, Thesis II is one of the central imperative propositions where Benjamin accentuates his take on redemption, past-present-future and the concept of history while at the same time debunking the progression of historicism. His indulgence about the continuity in history as an illusion offers an enswathing idea of political messianism.

There is happiness – such as could arouse envy in us – only in the air we have breathed, among people we could have talked to, women who could have given themselves to us. In other words, the idea of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the idea of redemption. The same applies to the idea of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with it a secret index by which it is referred to redemption. Doesn’t a breath of the air that invaded earlier days caress us as well? In the voices we hear, isn’t

there echo of now silent ones? Don't the women we court have sisters they no longer recognize? If so, then there is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Then our coming was expected on earth. Then like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim.

(Benjamin 2003: 389-390)

Centring on the discourse of redemption and *weak* messianic power, the paper argues that the futuristic culmination in redemption cannot hinge on a distant realization, instead derives the potential from *inexhaustible possibilities* that opens up a dimension of *now time*. Extrapolating from the redemptive line of thought, political theatre in this context can be demarcated from a *dolum* (Latin – trick-play) or as a stance in posturing. In the former logic, it can be only seen as an enactment of social issue that is acted out in the public domain. And the in the latter one, theatre at the basic premise is not considered as a space credible enough to create serious intervention in political sphere. Therefore, the task here is to logically see the radical possibility in a *nosto-redemptive* rupture in the present. Here *nosto-redemptive* stands for nostalgia and redemption both at the same time. What I mean by *nosto-redemptive* is that a conflation of these two should not be seen as one completing the other or as a unified goal. *Nosto-redemptive* equation is to equip the spirit of the struggle without fixating itself into its own schema of either's fulfilment. In effect, a *nosto-redemptive* equation can then become a mediatory technique in method that does not fall prey to the schematic way of messianic power because the *now time* is filled with continuous radical impulse, happening at every moment – contracting to such an extent that an indispensable division creates simultaneous events.

Redemption for Benjamin is messianic, where things need to be amended in relation with past generation. In *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, Michael Lowy writes, “according to extracts from *Mikrokosmos*^{viii} cited by Benjamin in *The Arcades Project*, there is no progress if the souls that have suffered are not entitled to happiness and fulfilment/completion” (Lowy 2005: 30). But to forgo a conclusion, that a non-closure of past generation has its natural outcome in the form of further fulfilment would not only be pre-emptive but also follow a danger of giving away, like an approach of lackadaisical lottery making. So, rather than shelving the redemption as a complete whole, what must be kept in mind is a critical assessment of any proclaimed fulfilment or even non-fulfilment that considers the teleological progression of history as *the* only parameter. Then, redemption will no longer be messianic, instead will subjugate any other chance, only to conform and contain the constituents of salvation; though never possessing over the susceptibility of elements struggling against any kind of conformation.

Thus the revolutionary potential cannot be only brooding, but needs to be performed in the *now time*, which doesn't necessarily be known or acknowledged as redemptive.

Benjamin's Thesis VIII which deals with the forthcoming face of Fascism during that period in Germany as a "natural progression of history" tells a lot more than a mere coincidence with that of a brewing right wing communal force during 1980's. Thesis VIII reads,

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that accord with this insight. Then we will clearly see that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against fascism. One reason fascism has a chance is that, in the name of progress, its opponents treat it as a historical norm. The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are "still" possible in the twentieth century is not philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge – unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable.

(Benjamin 1940: 392)

What becomes exigent through this thesis is to extract a straight forward inference regarding the *now time*. One, in which the call is for a "real state of emergency" and the other, chews over some kind of naturalization in the wake of Fascism; as if taking it as a phenomenon which was bound to happen. And interestingly the acceptance is already preceded by that myopic vision of history where knowledge's credence serves the norm, "still" happening in *now time*. Hence *now time* has both the probabilities – "real state of emergency" and *exception/rule* in the form of Fascism. It's not definitive about what could get *realized* but is a pure contingency where *inexhaustible possibilities* are immanent in this *now time*. From the perspective of a possibility of "real state of emergency" in *now time*, *transgression* then has a coessential relation with these *inexhaustible possibilities*.

Connecting the fore mentioned contradistinction of *transgressive aesthetics* and *now time*, it is rather prudent here to look at the performance of *Afīm Ke Phūl* in the backdrop of Emergency. As the performance starts from the premise of drug addicts, Peelu and Daadu have inadvertently stated their declaration of not being in their senses. Since these two entities have already committed an "illegal activity" by consuming *afīm*, their conversations are immaterial. Even if a meticulous reasoning and thought provoking statement is uttered, it is to be regarded *senseless* because the pretext of their act has been already stated. Dadu and Peelu's proviso with respect to a situation like Emergency as two drug addicts do not hinge on their "illegal" consumption of opium. Inimical to their decision as such, still why will they not remain immune from a situation like Emergency? Is it only that they are those whose conditions cannot be more deplorable than their present state? They

will still be ill-treated at the whims of the State because the rule of Emergency needs them as exception. Dadu and Peelu's *now time* happens in the act of *transgression* when they push-off the MLA from podium. Their action must not be seen in a classical act of fit of rage, where violence is decried on the pretext of being simply seen as a normative reaction. Instead it's the *transgression* in *now time* that an outburst in such a tangible form can gust out their always/already submissive subject into a transformation in reality.

Therein, the performance of *Afīm ke Phūl* not only tries to channelize a new sensibility of social consciousness but also attempts at realization of political 'potentiality' in *now time*. The primary concern of the paper has been to take off from the conventional understanding of theatre historiography and formulate a line of thought beyond the idea of redemption, politically. For Benjamin the philosophy of history's theory of progress is always homogenous that becomes complete, in propriety of self-referential fulfillment. His major concern is to break this deceptive progression of history which is based on cause and effect. The moment this is broken the presumed thread line is put at standstill – "dialectics at a standstill". Thesis V states,

The true image of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which lashes up at the moment of its recognizability and is never seen again. 'The truth will not run away from us': this statement by Gotfried Keller indicates exactly that point in historicism's image of history where the image is pierced by historical materialism. For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image.

(Benjamin 2003: 390-391)

From the above quoted thesis, what Benjamin is trying to harp on is activation of historical materialism which activates the past not from its linear baggage of completeness, but the 'potentiality' it carries in an engagement with *this moment* of the present. When Benjamin says "the true image of the past", it must be noted that he is not asserting a satiated version of past truth, instead "articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it 'the way it really was'..." (Benjamin, 2003; 391)

In this vein, the risk undertaken by Peelu and Daadu indicate towards a *transgressive* act which nonetheless being realizable in a space that of theatre carries a 'palimpsest potentiality' for transforming the event of theatre. One may argue that it could be possible only in such a space where the space in itself is performed. Contrary to this, the paper argues that a space is affirmed as a model conducive for such an act of *transgression*. Even though happening within the realm of representation, the *transgressive* act takes place *with* the 'present-ness' of performance through its *now time*. Thus an aesthetic representing transformative *transgression* invites new *transgression* to be performed because the fall out after an event never ceases to open up those conditions which

themselves have been propelled by posing situations affront to one another. So when an action is committed by Daadu and Peelu, it portends toward a supplementary set of risks, while at the same time entrusting a crucial moment of ‘realization’ in the space of performance. The transgression creates a mode in mediality so as to ascertain the one of the many ways this *now time* can be presented.

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- i IPTA abbreviation for Indian People’s Theatre Association was formed in 1936 at Lucknow, India. It became the cultural-political front of the Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA) linked to Communist Party of India (CPI). In order to address a wide public and the population of India, IPTA formed local theatre groups throughout India, each charged with producing theatre in local forms to educate the people about the nationalist movement (Sehgal 1998, 34). IPTA conceived a ‘theatre’ where the voices of the marginalized, the poor, and the downtrodden people of society could become the bedrock for a ‘peoples’ theatre’. According to Rekha Jain, the term “Central Squad” was also addressed as Central Troop, as she remembers that it was “under the guidance of renowned dancer Shantivardhan, Communist Party of India constituted the Central Squad in the mid of 1944” (IPTA Booklet 2005). Since the formation of ‘Central Squad’ of IPTA, the idea of a people’s aesthetics in ‘political theatre’ overtime has found many expressions in the domain of political performances. The legacy of IPTA has seen contributions from personalities from every creative field. The list includes Hindustani/Urdu novelist and thinker like Premchand, actor Zohra Sehgal, Balraj Sahani, Prithviraj Kapoor, director Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, artist Chittoprosad, theatre practitioner and Marxist Utpal Dutt, the legendary Tripti Mitra and Shombhu Mitra, music composer Salil Chowdhury, cultural critique Sajjad Zaheer, Ritwik Ghatak, Sitar Maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar, poet Vamik Jaunpuri to name a few.
 - ii *Afīm ke Phūl* is a short play written by Radheshyam. The playwright arranges the dialogue lucid free flowing in a It was performed several times, even before the Emergency but became an iconic play during the years of Emergency.
 - iii Personal Interview with Mukhtar Ahmad on 12 November, 2012 at 22 Kaiser Baag, Lucknow Office of Communist Party of India (CPI).
 - iv *The Pen in Revolt – Souvenir: Underground Literature Published during the Emergency* (1978), was taken out as collection of essays, that was organized by Press Institute of India. The reference here is to the New Delhi Exhibition. The contributors included George Fernandes, Ananda Sankar Ray, M.C. Chagla, Niranjana Haldar, Gour Kishore Ghosh, Nanaji Deshmukh, C.H. Prahlad Rao, an interview of Arun Chandra Guha and an essay with the pen name of Observer. Altogether around two thousand items were on display in AIFACS hall, New Delhi, between 16-19 April, 1978.
 - v Personal Interview with Kaushal Kishore on 4 July, 2012 at NCZCC Office, Allahabad. The specific incident took place during one of the performance of *Afīm Ke Phūl* just after the declaration of Emergency. Kaushal Kishore in the above interview recalls about the nature of response from the side of State machinery. Therein, an understanding of censorship under Emergency can be further questioned. To understand the complexity of censorship what is at stake here is to investigate this negotiating nature of the State with respect to theatre and also follow the line of thread with respect to the confrontational acts of such performances.
 - vi The paper draws in the conception of *transgression* from Michel Foucault *Language, Counter-Memory and Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (1977). In “Preface to Transgression”, Foucault explains transgression in the context of liberated sexuality that has been pushed to its limit of the consciousness, at the limit of the law. He envisages that “sexuality is a fissure – not one which surrounds us as the basis of our isolation or individuality, but one which marks the limit within us and designates us a limit” (Foucault 1977: 30). Then in a sense, transgression is imminent with limits which it tries to cross-over via the act of it; crossing one limit and to be exposed to a new experience of limitless within a micro-interval – in the *present*. For the author, “transgression carries the limit right to the limit of its being; transgression forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes (perhaps, to be more exact, to recognize itself for the first time)” (1977: 35). Assisting to this, the logic of *transgressive aesthetics* will neither seek not to justify its act in its conformity over an already crossed limit nor will it claim a victory over limits of two opposing positions. Instead *transgressive aesthetics* acts in the *present* to open up possibilities so as to engage through *now time* for further transgressions.
 - vii The particular title has been printed & published as *Theses ‘On the Concept of History’* in the works of Hannah Arendt, Michael Lowy, Alfredo Lucero-Montano to name a few; In the book *Illuminations*, translated by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich the title appears as *Theses On the Philosophy of History*.

viii *Mikrokosmos* was written by Hermann Lotze, a German philosopher whose work dealt with ethical and religious philosophy of history, which according to Michael Löwy attracted attention in the late 1930's. For further reference see, Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'* (2005: 32).

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