

Editorial

Special Issue on Performance Studies

In this edition of Rupkatha we have the privilege of incorporating an introductory essay by Richard Schechner, in which he once again valorizes the anthropological foundations of performance studies and goes on to refer towards the infallible necessity of observing behaviour as a kind of transbiological agency and of tracing its effects in theatre and other kinds of representations. Schechner belongs to a tradition of performance scholars who believed in a kind of large, scientific ontology for the arts, a tendency which is evident when he quotes a New York University scholar. Perhaps the objective vision of a performance continuum is instructive for the future, as it creates an immediate stance, of both engaging as well as transcending the flow of experience in our lives which are organized and controlled by means of mimetically emerging actions. The performer acquires, in Schechner's scheme, as a liminal activist, so wonderfully described by anthropologist Victor Turner, and analysed in the scientism of Geertz' observations of culture as an influential medium in which the arts and performances get endowed with signification.

It may be however also worthwhile to consider the very specific nature of the origins of performances and the need to abandon rather than yield to more global discourses of theatre: indeed the Western academics of performance studies may lead to universality and conformity of perspective in the face of actual cultural and discursive practices. This aspect of de-institutional learning of genres has been taken up in a couple of essays in this edition thus making the debate on performance studies in academic institutions more challenging and interesting to say the least.

In this context it should be fitting to assume once again, that theatrical imitation, and the representations of other audio-visual or digital media shall survive and find their fulfilment only when there is organic cultural breeding –and that the assumptions of contemporary ethnography could lend no support in our true appreciation of the spirit of cultural beliefs and the arts in particular. Perhaps there is a need of re-structuring the academic components of cultural studies, one which might gain more energy and impetus of expression from inclusion of people who have no prior training in academic discourse but whose creative life stand out as exemplary precepts for communal harmony. In no case could it be truer than in that of performance arts, including the songs, dances, theatres, and poetry of the common non-writing people.

—Tirtha Prasad Mukhopadhyay

Editor-in-Chief