

COMMUNITY THEATRE AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES IN NYANZA REGION, KENYA

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Abstract

Positing Community Theatre as a site and agency for development, an effective way to share information and encourage community dialogue, this paper interrogates practices and efficacies of Community Theatre in Nyanza, Kenya. While contending that it has the potential to build developmental consciousness among community members around social issues affecting them, the paper argues that Community Theatre provides a believable and interesting way to explore cultural, socio-economic, and developmental realities thereby changing the way people think, socialize and act. Based on selected Community Theatre performances in Nyanza, this article critically analyses the practice and efficacy of Community Theatre as a social construction that is produced, regulated and consumed within specific cultural frameworks. In order to capture individual voices on the impact of Community Theatre, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, real life case studies and participant observation were used. Using performance analysis schemata, data responses obtained were organized into thematic strands analyzed and interpreted in relation to our objectives and structured the body of information obtained into this paper. findings show that Community Theatre is a crucial space within which communities can increase knowledge and awareness of social issues, influence

beliefs and attitudes that affect behaviours and social norms, prompt action, increase utilization of and support for services, address and explore popular misconceptions, and strengthen community support for recommended practices. We, therefore, concluded that Community Theatre is a safe space where communities can explore difference, question the everyday, and say the unsayable. Ultimately, this study contributes to the understanding of Community Theatre and its practice over time and proffers new ways of studying Community Theatre in Kenya.

Critical Foundations of Community Theatre

Theatre was born societal. The embryo from which it has grown is the collectively motivated performance of massive societies. And its function also has no value in isolation to that society. That is why Augusto Boal (1979) heavily underlines the social function of theatre. The divorce between theatre and society begins with the traditional assumption that theatre, as any other branch of art, can be fundamentally tied to the imperatives of 'Art for Art's Sake'. This assumption deliberately reiterates the archaic identity of theatre and alienates its value from society.

However, as opposed to this predated conceptual framework that demands the practice of theatre for pure artistic purposes; several types of new perspectives have been developing. Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), Bertolt Brecht's *Epic Theatre* (1874), Grotowsky's *Poor Theatre* (1968) are some but few of the flourishing concepts of theatre. In spite of their minor technical differences, all these concepts tend to agree on reunification of theatre and society. In congruence to this, Baz Kershaw (1992) opines "... We must move beyond formalist analysis-which treats theatre as if it were independent of its social

and political environment-and consider performance as a cultural construct and as a means of cultural production”(5).Thus, the concept of Community Theatre itself is an integral part of the change that basically constitutes cultural movements (Kershaw, 1992). This is based on the observation that theatre, as an art, cannot be separated from the socio-cultural environment where it occurs.

Sonja Kuftenic (2001) notes that the roots of Community Theatre can be traced to the liberation struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, in which, Community Theatre was used to rally the people to participate in the struggle. In this sense, he refers Community Theatre as “community based” or “grassroots” theatre (2). Kuftenic further argues that community theatre shares generic similarities with Drama- and Theatre-in-Education and concludes that this type of theatre is usually not seen as popular or mainstream theatre and can take on various forms (2). However, it is imperative to point out that in Africa, Kenya being no exception, there is a seemingly an intrinsic relationship between Theatre for Development and Community Theatre. The two forms of theatre are often viewed as one and the same. However, in framing our interpretation of Community Theatre in this article, we considered Theatre for Development as a primary contributor to Community Theatre whereas Drama and Theatre in education were framed as secondary influence and contributors to support the key principles of the use of Community Theatre.

In this paper, Community Theatre is viewed as the drama of, by, and for a community that appropriates artistic practices for its own desires, which are not always in accordance with those of mainstream Applied Theatre practices. It is as a practice of using theatre as an agency for development and education in a given community predicated on highly participatory methodologies. This

conceptualization concurs with Jan Cohen-Cruz (1999) who avers that “community based-theatre, a popular mode allied with identity politics and targeting under-represented groups in quest for collective expression” (115). Thus, it enables the powerless social groups to confront the governing systems of values, symbols and beliefs in the community. It is important to note that Community Theatre is concerned with addressing an entire society’s way of life while Theatre for Development is always engaged in a specific developmental issue. Despite the fact that Community Theatre borrows a lot from Theatre for Development in terms of planning, its overall focus is the lifestyles and longitudinal social patterns of a people, often considered as Theatre for Social Change. Objectively, Community Theatre is not only about education, development or change but it also interrogates the socio-cultural and geopolitical living conditions of a people.

The central model of Community Theatre performances in Nyanza is the use of local life materials and traditional modes of communication. For instance, George, a leader of Bageka Community Theatre group, makes a clarion call ‘abantoba’ mintoigwa’ (our people listen) with the vocal shape and range, the audience, which is part of the performance, responds ‘eeeeentotegererete’ (yes, we are listening). This antiphonal structure continued until the leader is satisfied with the attentiveness of his audience then proceeds to render the intended message to them. This incident is one of the many traditional markers of message delivery. Note worthy is the fact that all public events in the rural Nyanza region oscillate in the diachronic continuum of traditional practices and contemporary modes of performance.

The above observation corresponds with Ola Johansson (2011) who argues that Community Theatre “is a highly mobile and challenging phenomenon which cuts through cultural layers of time and space as well as demographic and generational difference”(5). Far from elite theatre performances, majority of Community Theatre groups in the region make use of oration, drumming, dancing, drumming, storytelling, dramatic dialogue and post-performance discussions in the interactive sphere of performance and spectators (community members). During the performances, more often than not, there is a blurred distinction between the performers and the spectators as members of the community often respond spontaneously by joining the performers.

Further, Johansson points out that Community Theatre readily alters between registers of style, aesthetics and vernacular (5). This proposition rendered itself clear to us as we observed various theatre groups in the region perform to their respective communities. Vernacular languages (Dholuo, Ekegusii and Kuria) dominated the performances as performers took the spectators through various issues affecting their communities. For example, Mwangazaa Community theatre group operating in the larger Siaya County region took the audience through the spatial-temporary memory of wife inheritance through the enactment of the *teroburu* ritual. In this, the group projected a vision of communal continuity different from the traditional conceptualization as envisaged in the practice of wife inheritance hence urging the people to abandon the age-old cultural practice which has been rendered obsolete with modern ways of ensuring communal continuity and given the rampant HIV/AIDS pandemic. Similar diachronic performances were witnessed in theatre groups working among the Abagusii and Kuria. In these and many other cases analyzed herein, the alteration between traditional practices, long-established aesthetics,

and local languages meet the present-day issues which cut across taboos, beliefs and tacit cultures in the region. Thus, Community Theatre is indeed the most site-specific cultural practice and mode of intervention used in sensitizing communities in the region on issues affecting them. Noteworthy is the fact that its local adaptability depends on its malleability and exchangeable elements (Johansson, 2011).

Community Theatre is framed as a unit of the holistic cultural activities in a community. It creates its own context in the community as there could not be an already established audience. By doing this, it calls to intervene into the larger cultural scenario of the community (Kershaw 1992, 6-7). As Wiler and Feiner (2001) point out, the ultimate goal of this cultural intervention is “to increase opportunities for marginalized and oppressed groups to represent themselves and the world around them as a means of asserting their own identity and achieving “cultural, social, economic, and political equity” (122). Culture helps the process of Community Theatre begin with a new context and structure along with the ideological identification /transaction, direct participation, and real needs of the community. Above all, every activity that makes Community Theatre has to be embedded on the cultural context of the larger community.

Community Theatre gives first hand opportunities to community members to participate in the creation and performance of community dramas. The direct participation of community members in this dramaturgical process has a couple of advantages. It helps to meet in the performance one of the decisive elements of Community Theatre such as “creating a sense of ownership in the participants’ own cultural heritage” (Kellin 2001, 155). This sense of the community’s cultural heritage also bears signs and materials that could show, as Kershaw (1992) argues, the overall socio-

political and economic structure of the community (246). The participation of the community in the process of dramaturgy is thus very imperative in that it helps to capture the gist of the community's storytelling, songs and dances. These story-telling, songs and dances are capable of demonstrating ideologies of the community that are both dominant and oppositional.

Community Theatre is also concerned with drawing attention to and/or revealing the hidden stories of a community (Prentki & Preston 2009, 9). The community members are thus the 'drivers' of the creative input and create grassroots reflection and performance in a shared collective form of socio-cultural empowerment (van Erven 2001, 2-3). As described by van Erven, the collective story of the community becomes the impetus for change and as such any move towards development lies within the community. This can instil a sense of agency as communities can gain a greater understanding of their situation and can make informed decisions regarding their communities and themselves (Govan, Nicholson & Normington 2007, 82). Prentki and Selman (2001) assert that community theatre, like Theatre for development, holds the opportunity for development where communities speak for themselves through theatre and do not rely on external, centralized 'theatres' that speaks for townships, rural settlements and suburbs (120).

It is against this background that this article sets out to explore the potential of Community Theatre beyond mere cultural interventions in society to posit geopolitical and socio-economic development agenda in communities through generating a unique process by which communities not only dialogue but also dare to offer imagined solutions to issues affecting them.

Methodology/Research Design

This paper engaged a qualitative research approach. Strauss and Cobin (2007) view qualitative research as research that is not produced by means of statistical or other quantifying procedures but rather seeks to gain understanding of an object or phenomenon studied through exploration and acknowledgement that the object/phenomenon of study changes depending on the way in which the object is perceived and interrogated. Qualitative research can be used to research on lived experiences, emotions, performances and socio-cultural phenomena. Rather producing concrete answers to questions posed in this study, the conclusions drawn enabled the writers to argue that the practice of Community Theatre among communities in Nyanza has impacted on their lives. The practice and efficacy of Community Theatre as the frame of reference for this study influenced the study of the approach and use of community theatre in Nyanza.

In accordance with McMillan and Schumacher's (1993:373) thinking, this study viewed reality as multidimensional, as interactive and as a shared social experience that is interpreted by individuals. This supports the notion that knowledge and meaning are not created in isolation from contexts (Freire 2006:11-12). This study approached the practice and efficacy of Community Theatre among communities in Nyanza as an interactive and shared social experience in the community. In line with Strauss and Corbin's (2007) views on qualitative research procedures, this study followed procedures of information collection such as reviewing documented sources on Community Theatre, its practices, communicative aesthetics and reflections on how it impacts on communities. We also collected data from the field using data collection methods outlined below.

Primary Data Collection Methods

Different data collection methods were employed in this research. We decided to combine various data collection methods in this research because we noted, a “good research usually benefits from the use of a combination of methods. In other words, researchers should not only consider which is the most appropriate method for the study of their chosen topics or problem but also what combination of research methods will produce a better and deeper understanding of it.” Hansen *et al* (1998:1). The methods that we employed were:

a) In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were one of the key methods of data collection employed in this study. Kothari (2007) argues that rather than asking respondents to read a questionnaire and enter their own answers, with in-depth interviews, the researcher asks questions orally and records respondents’ answers. The questions were laid down in an interview guide. Particularly, we used a semi-structured interview guide which, as Hansen *et al* (1998:274) have made a case, worked as my “guide or manual to work from and follow.” In-depth interviews allow the interviewees to express themselves freely and provide qualified responses which make qualitative research more cogent. As Wimmer and Domminick (2003) observe, the writers had a chance to probe deeper into the issues, based on the respondent’s response. In-depth interviews further helped the authors to be able to make important observations as they carried out the interviews.

b) Focus Group Discussions

The study also used focus group discussions to collect data. Bessette (2004) observes that, “group discussions and debates are

widely used are so common that we seldom think of them as communication tools.” Focus group discussions were employed to collect data from selected community members. The aim here was to gather information about the perception. We used already prepared open-ended questions as discussion guides. In the discussions, the writers worked as moderators and helped to facilitate and guide the participants as they expressed their ideas. During the discussions, we separated the target audience in terms of gender and age. This certainly helped to give a chance to those who might have had fear to talk when the opposite sex was around which could have hindered open discussions.

While the discussions were going on, we observed and monitored whether what we saw them watch on stage was released and attained in the intended way. In other words, as Hansen *et el* (1998:258) have urged, we observed how the community members made “sense of (the drama they just watched) through conversation and interaction with each other.” This gave the researchers an advantage of getting first hand information from the communities about the reception of live drama. The focus group discussions helped the researchers to make necessary observations in the process of discussions. As we observed, we were able to get clear and unbiased results since we were able to know exactly whether the message had any impact. They further helped the researchers to initiate and build relationships with the participants.

Real Life Case Studies/Oral Testimonies

This study made use of real life or oral testimonies as a method of data collection. Oral testimonies were obtained from some of the community leaders as active participants during the Community Theatre sessions. More oral testimonies were given by elderly community members who were deemed focal persons in

the community. The testimonies were predicated on how their lives have changed due to the intervention of Community Theatre. The advantage of this method is that it gives us first hand testimonies.

Participant Observation

Hansen *et al* (1998:3) notes that, “participant observation can be one of the most exciting, challenging and potentially rewarding of all mass communication research methods.” With the help of the Community Theatre officials, we were able to observe community members as we actively participated in theatre activities such as dancing, acting, and singing to mention but a few. We also observed community members perform live on stage. More still, we observed community members discuss in discussion groups performances they have been watching. Observation therefore made us part and parcel of Community Theatre and helped us create rapport, win their trust and collect first-hand information from the participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved searching for patterns of data in form of recurrent behaviours and interpreting it moving from description of empirical data to interpretation of meanings. In-depth interviews, oral testimonies and group discussions were recorded and later transcribed. Data generated was sorted and arranged into different themes and later organized into categories (coding) in readiness for analysis. In our analysis of the findings we engaged thematic content analysis. Thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes (Bernard and Ryan, 2010). This paper gave primacy to the practice and efficacy of Community Theatre among

community members which was established through the targeted audiences' perceptions, attitudes and experiences of the performances that they watched both as individuals and collectively. Using systematic thematic content analysis, we organized responses into thematic strands and subsequently critically analyzed these strands in relation to our objectives and synthesized this body of information into a structured qualitative narrative herein.

Interpretation and Discussion of the Findings

The Community Theatre performances attracted huge crowds of people. Despite the grim topics and motives, performances were regularly enlivened by eager audience comments and roaring laughter during and/or at the end of each performance. The crowds were largely mixed in nature with men, women, children, young and the old alike participating in the performances and post-performance discussion.

Our findings show that Community Theatre performances in the region were largely organized in a process epitomizing site-specific features of the region not by means of a prescribed order but rather by a participatory popular dimension from both actors and spectators. Notably, when development determinants and/or risk factors were identified and mapped out by a local theatre performances on their turf, attempts were made to demystify such developmental issues in the performances based on a people's shared experiences thereby urging the people to take up agency towards development. Often issues such as innovative farming methods and diversification, poor infrastructure, and environmental conservation were articulated from both the performances and post-performance discussion in which self-reflective discussions ensued. The community theatre

performances, therefore, were able to provoke public responses with a perlocutionary efficacy that led to change of mindsets and people's perceptions towards development in their areas.

Evidently, the various community theatre performances' luminal interfaces between the social and the artistic values were enacted with a negligible representational distance. This is so because most of the issues explored were as though particular strips of daily behaviour were grafted onto a shared arena and set into a performance at a slightly elevated tempo and heightened mood. This was evident from the performers' manner of speaking, allusions, jokes, choice of props, intrigues raised and from the rest of the elements of performances were, to say the least, lifelike- a situation where and when the people play people, to paraphrase Mda (1993).

More importantly, most of the performances that we witnessed showed a latent understanding of issues affecting the people and relied on ingenious use of local language colour, which involved the appropriation of local proverbs, wise sayings, local figures of speech, and other witty colloquial expressions in relaying the intended messages to the audience. However, at the end of the day, familiar theatrical qualities became less significant compared to the open-ended post-performance discussions where issues related to development as predicated in the performances were discussed at length and without fear of victimization. In this way, community theatre performances prompted a shared sensibility for what lies behind abstract development concepts in the region to actual, easily understandable and real concepts that the people could easily identify with.

Findings from Gem and Yala areas of Siaya County showed that Community Theatre not only invents new ways of acting out issues affecting people in the area but also represents a

viable alternative to communal practices as well as daily discourses. This implies that the performativity Community Theatre or put differently, the commanding effects of artistic innovations and social regulations, not only enacted contentious issues in the County but also (re)negotiated their agency. For instance, the contestations that underlie wife inheritance were widely explored in theatre performances in Yala and Gem areas. Despite the modern day social advancements, wife inheritance is rife in Siaya County.

In one of the performances titled “The Little Secrets” by Mwangaza Community Theatre group in Gem, wife inheritance was a key focus. The play’s storyline highlighted the vicious cycle of wife inheritance and the dangers it posed to the social development of society. The play revolved around a widow who had just endured the mourning period but showed signs of distress. It later turned out that her brother-in law had appropriated almost all the material wealth left to her by her late husband in his quest to inherit her. Not willing to be inherited, the widow decided to seek legal redress on the matter. Though a bold step, the widow was shown being in a legal quandary because of the moral authority of the legal system regardless of the fact that she knew too well that the law was on her side.

This situation was further prompted by the fact that rumour went round that her brother-in law had oiled the judge’s hands before rendering the final judgment on the matter. The widow’s fears came to bear because what followed was a pig show in that the judge ruled in favour of her brother in law. In utter disbelief of the turn of events, some members of the audience clapped their hands, whistled and shook their heads. This taciturn at the end of the performance created an entry point into post-performance discussions. The critical questions that we sought to answer

through the debates were: what is the view of the audience in regard to the customary practice of wife inheritance, the legal system, and what needed to be done in order for the community to move forward. Despite the fact that the debates were heated, the participants were in agreement that corruption, repugnant norms and practices, disrespecting individual rights and freedoms and all forms of gender discrimination were key contributors to underdevelopment in the region. A common consensus was reached that of the area to move forward and to realize its development, there was need for the people to join hands and fight such vices from their midst.

At Manga Division of Nyamira County, a play titled “Me; Over My Dead Body” by Kerora Community Theatre was performed more than five times in the different villages culminating into a grand performance during the Division’s 2014 Madaraka day celebrations. The play was based on a long-running problem of inter-clan leadership tussles which have held back meaningful development in the division. Reconciliation efforts were underlined at the tail end of the play as the performance focused on what can be achieved with a united people.

Out of nowhere, immediately the play came to an end during the Madaraka celebrations, a joker stepped into the acting area and asked the people what they were going to do. The joker posed: “Was it a fair depiction? Do these things happen among us? And so, what are we going to do?” A deafening silence followed immediately as the Joker walked away from the podium. Some of the area leaders seated in the main dais exchanged glances while others held their head in between their hands and/or looked down. The Joker’s action and utterances can be read as one of the many ways of emphasizing the participatory dimension in Community Theatre practices (Mda 1993 and Johansson 2011). And in this

way, as Johansson (2011) emphasizes, the spectator assumes his double role as a theatrical witness and a social player in the communal events.

At Marani division of Kisii County, a performance titled “Lest we forget” by Min to Community Theatre provoked action among members of the community in the division. The play’s storyline illustrated the consequences and/or significance of local problems and issues, thereby engendering discussions and possible solutions to the problems identified. The play highlighted problems such as the near-absent accessible road networks, lack of health centres, alcoholism, and inappropriate farming in the area. Interesting to note of the performance is how it was able to situate the region’s development discourse within the communal time and space. The performance broke into song detailing their view of development in the area, thus:

..... Let’s get together, young, old, male, female...
we all know that discord is the problem to development.
Look the people of Bobasi, they have a good road now,
because of their unity; the people of Bonchari have a good
market now, because of their harmony; the people of
Boraru have clean water now, because of their
organisation...

The song above exemplifies how development activities get lyrically inscribed in community theatre performances as a clarion call for people to work together for a common goal. The song provocatively takes a roll-call of activities that have been attained as a result of unity, harmony and organisation, as key antidotes to development. The song ends with a call for the people to unite if development is to be attained in the area

Notable in post-performance discussions that ensued is the fact that the debates centred on underdeveloped in the area which was hinged on poor leadership. Large and unsustainable families and trigger factors such as poverty, poor education, rampant alcoholism, increased rates of crime, and pressure on available arable land were also discussed. The community members were all in agreement that there is need to change their lifestyles and work together to develop their area.

The post-performance discussions made the people in the area see the need to revamp an earlier abandoned colonial dug-out well as a means of providing alternative clean drinking water instead of drinking from the polluted streams. The discussions also made them see the need to embark on a self-help counter-funded mini-water borehole project and later a health centre in the area. This realization is echoed by Habtu (2006) who adumbrates that Community Theatre is a rather participatory theatre in which the people themselves engage issues about their own lives for their immediate consumption and which promotes development by stimulating dialogue within them using their own familiar artistic expressions like songs, dances, proverbs, mimes, local norms and cultures etcetera.

In the case of Community Theatre performances at Kihancha, Ntimaru, and Kegonga areas, actors and spectators were up against a historical trajectory with scenarios not only of colonial disruptions of social structures but also a domestic history of gender inequalities, land ownership and female genital mutilation. The democratic relevancy of Community Theatre towards the development discourse had to do with advocacy in the social, health and economic spheres. It is imperative to note that ethical and political issues were no doubt intricately linked to the social

wellbeing, but in our opinion, issues relating to development outweighed dichotomies like right or wrong, or the political left or right.

In areas like Ntitaru and its rural neighbourhoods, Community Theatre performances that we witnessed focused with even greater agency on various life-long threatening calamities such as HIV/AIDs, poverty, and social alienation. In this area, issues to do with banking and sound financial management practices were embedded in the performances, albeit tacitly. It is worth-noting that this region is amongst the most underdeveloped with the highest poverty index in Nyanza (GOK, 2013). Theatre performances in this area have therefore devoted their energies on issues related to development and underdevelopment. Socio-cultural issues like schoolgirl pregnancies with trigger factors such as poverty, male-dominated schooling and ensuing premature and forced marriages were highlighted as hindrances towards equitable gender development.

Consequently, post-performance discussions in the area forestalled topical debates on high-rates of girl-school drop-outs by relating school girl pregnancies to the paradoxical stance of, on the one hand, reproaching youths of their unchecked drinking habits, bad morals and disrespect of traditions that used to prohibit promiscuous lifestyles, and, on the other hand, acknowledging the failure of the community and parents to guide and supervise the youth, let alone engage them with income generating activities or other meaningful activities to develop themselves. A much more serious critique arose when the misbehavior of the village leadership was divulged. The village sub-chief was heavily reprimanded after it became clear that both he and his own son have been responsible for several unwanted pregnancies in the village. The community's actions were in tandem with Chuku-

Okoronkwo (2012:686) who sees community theatre as a process of “discussing development as a group, and catalysing the discussion rather than presenting solution to the community”. Further, Chuku-Okoronkwo argues that the kind of process of change this theatre prescribes, therefore, is such change that emanates endogamously rather than exogenously; such that it builds from within rather than from outside.

Clearly, we witnessed this kind of change as spirited post-performances debates ensued. For instance, at Ntimaru Township, commanding and passionate pleas were voiced by elders participating in one of the post-performance discussion on the need for development. Using illocutionary force and belligerent metaphors, the elders decried the poor state of health facilities, the near impassable access roads, and lack of clean water in the area. The leadership of the area tried to explain its take on the same to no avail. Eventually, an agreement was reached where the leadership was asked to prioritize provision of health facilities and clean water as part of its immediate development goals in the township. The fact that the leadership of Ntimaru Township was forced to align its development policies in line with the community’s requirements underscores the power of community theatre. This concurs with Johansson (2011) who sees community theatre as a forum for redress actions which allows community members themselves to renegotiate the validity of policies and practices thereby directing development to their areas of need.

Conclusions

In the light of the foregoing, assessing the efficacy of Community Theatre as a means to foster development in this paper was predicated on two aspects:

- i. Whether the attended purpose of Community Theatre to engender critical debates on development was accomplished based on the case by case analysis as shown in our findings
- ii. Whether the Community Theatre performances in one way or another impacted on a people's mindset.

However, in our analyses of the findings, our assessment of the practice of Community Theatre in Nyanza was broadened to consider its area-specific and democratic potential as a means to foster development. Thus our findings have shown that Community Theatre is a suitable alternative mode of intervention in the development discourse of an area considering that it is adaptable to specific social situations rather than an invariable or fixed mode of expression. Furthermore, our analyses have distinguished Community Theatre as a form of performance that brings together various groups of people in society to dialogue on issues affecting them.

Our findings have shown that the specialty of Community Theatre is, of course, to operate by keeping a sharp focus on the local state of affairs. So much is so that political, cultural, social and economic are explored in community theatre as witnessed in various performances in the region. This auspicious quality can be seen as an antidote to the region's development since community theatre offers micro-political, economic and social solutions to local challenges. By enacting life-size situations in the public domain, by breaking the silence on issues such as alcoholism, inter-clan wrangles, wife inheritance, poor leadership and development projects which do not ventilate the wishes of the people, the practice of Community Theatre in the region plays a

pivotal role in sensitization and enlightenment of people in matters development, promotes individual as well as collective consciousness and offers sites upon which people air their views regarding development issues in their areas.

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