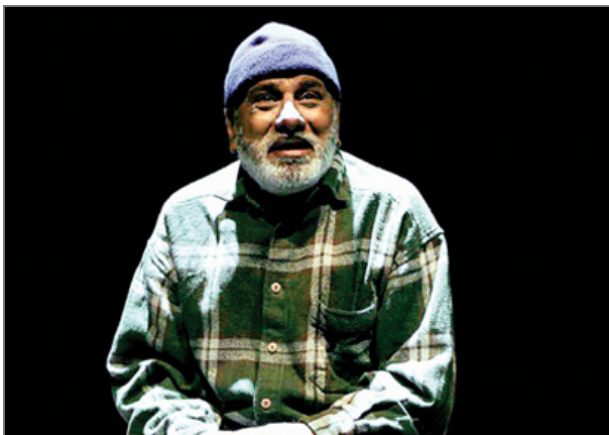


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## The stage is set for Jagdish Raja

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By [Jagdish Raja](#) | Place: Bangalore | Agency: DNA



Jagdish Raja

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### Challenges in running a space

We have — after 30 years of producing, directing, casting, acting and staging nearly 70 plays in almost all the venues around Bangalore and in others in Indian cities and even as far as London, England — suddenly been transformed from theatre practitioners to administrators and managers; looking at P&L statements, business plans and marketing!. The building took its time but, in the final analysis, this may have been destined: Jagriti at the end of its first year is functioning

reasonably well. This may not have been the case a few years earlier. Jagriti

has also won the Aces for Space Award 2011 as the best public space building for India!

### Indian theatre vis-à-vis the West, today

Indian theatre (and here I mean Indian theatre in English language) differs in major ways. One, we are amateur; very few make a living from theatre, they subsidise it with earnings from work in TV and film or through regular non-theatre jobs. Most provincial (off London's West End or off New York's Broadway) theatres abroad are owned by a professional theatre company or on a long lease from the Municipal Council. Two, theatre companies abroad will employ full-time directors, designers, stage managers, publicists and marketing people as permanent staff with a generous team of interns who have graduated from drama schools (only the performers will come in and out with a touring play). Some may even have a writer-in-residence. In India, the venue on rent, (seldom as producer), will provide administrative and basic stage service personnel who are not involved with the production. Three, theatre in most Western countries receives some support from the state. It is part of an evening's cultural entertainment — a cocktail, then the show, then dinner; or dinner before the show. Mumbai, is perhaps, the only city that offers a varied choice of theatre, to come close to this. Four, all these theatres will have a lucrative restaurant and bar attached. Jagriti does have The Fat Chef!

### What's working and what's not!

What is going right is successful-play-repeated. A play becomes a commercial success. It is available, repeated, and gains popularity because of that prime ingredient — word of mouth testimonials. This means that the audience is transferring creative, critical information about a play that attracts others to see it. On the other side, mushrooming (that are there one day and



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gone the next) theatre companies stage bad material, badly performed and even more badly stage crafted. They get an audience of admiring friends, colleagues and family whose bias is obvious by the thunderous applause that the cast receives.

**The rationale behind Jagriti's 'Season'**

The Season concept is popular abroad, where the theatre is very much part of the community. It is the audience who support the theatre. They donate, even bequeath and attend regularly. Of course, the theatre is open to all and as the reputation grows people from outside the community also come to see quality theatre. This concept is new to us and needs nurturing, which we are doing. We are fortunate that we are in a very cosmopolitan community already.

**Children's receptivity to theatre**

You treat children like some "other" persons. We, all of us, were children once. And didn't we all playact as children? Have you forgotten — Office, Office; House, House; Hospital and Doctor; Cops and Robbers?! Jagriti has always been committed to training the young and old. And children and youth are keen learners. We have well over 100 candidates for the Trinity College London, Drama & Speech examinations every year.

Theatre for children is very much part of the Jagriti programming. But should parents bring children to plays not suited to them? No! It is unfair on the child, embarrassing for the parents, and a nuisance to others, both on and in front of the stage.

**A trend I foresee**

Indian literature in English, both fiction and non-fiction is flourishing! We have staged plays by Girish Karnad, Gautam Raja, Ram Ganesh Kamatham and Mahesh Dattani. We staged seven plays by seven playwrights (five Indian and two Sri Lankan) following a workshop for writers and directors in association with the Royal Court Theatre (RCT) London and supported by the British Council. Anita Nair has written one play (Nine Faces of Being) adapted from her book Mistress. Anita has a play A Twist Of Lime as part of the Jagriti Season. Jagriti is dedicated to giving the Indian playwright a voice that is heard more clearly, more easily in appreciative communities around the world. All the things are in place to make it happen at Jagriti.

**Definition**

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