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## Theatre Anthropology: A Dialogue with Eugenio Barba\*

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### Abstract

This paper is a modest attempt of debating with some fundamental premises of Eugenio Barba that he placed in his much applauded publication around the globe, jointly written with Nicola Savarese. Published in 1991, the book had created a cult-like influence across the disciplines, mostly among the practitioners and experts of performing art. Though the Italian authors have urged their readers not to confuse this work and their activities as a branch of anthropology, the premises contained significant elements of serious academic concerns – culture, history, bodies, performances and a few more. Considering the huge readership this book achieved, with a number of translations in different languages, this article concerned with its conceptualization of a few fundamental issues and placed them in the complex plane of colonialism and transformative forces in cultural forms and expressions. This paper does not, by any means, engage with the ISTA activities, instead it explores possibilities of a dialogue with some propositions that otherwise could have read as static, ahistorical, apolitical and inclined with more dogmatic sense of what is called ‘aesthetics’.

### Keywords:

theatre,  
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\* This essay was originally published in Bengali, in 2000, in Nribijanana Patrika, issue 5, Dhaka. Initially, it meant engaging with the theatre and performance studies people in Bangladesh as Barba’s work just got familiar there. This essay was considered as a major entry in the field of performance by social scientists. In the following years, it was translated by my friends Bashabi Barua and Nasima Selim. Since then, the piece of translation was somewhat lost with a computer crash and then was forgotten in later years. I found it again in early 2021 during the lockdown of Covid-19. It felt an interesting connection with my own biography of academic practices, and its distinction from a number of social scientists of our time in Bangladesh. It reads relevant too in the contemporary time in regards to the conceptualization of performative bodies. I thank the anonymous reviewers who worked on behalf of ETKI journal and provided me with some valuable suggestions. This piece needed to be elaborated as well to meet the requirements for this journal.

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## Tiyatro Antropolojisi: Eugenio Barba ile Bir Diyalog\*

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### Özet

Bu makale, Eugenio Barba'nın Nicola Savarese ile birlikte kaleme aldığı ve dünya çapında büyük beğeni toplayan yayınında yer verdiği bazı temel önermeleri tartışmaya açmaya yönelik mütevazı bir girişimdir. 1991 yılında yayınlanan kitap, disiplinler arasında, özellikle de sahne sanatları uygulayıcıları ve uzmanları arasında kült benzeri bir etki yaratmıştır. Her ne kadar İtalyan yazarlar okuyucularını bu çalışmayı ve faaliyetlerini antropolojinin bir dalı olarak görmemeye yönlendirdilerse de, kitapta kültür, tarih, topluluklar, performanslar gibi ciddi akademik kaygıların önemli unsurları yer alıyordu. Bu kitabın farklı dillere yapılan çok sayıda çevirisiyle ulaştığı geniş okuyucu kitlesi göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu makale kitabın birkaç temel meseleyi kavramsallaştırmasıyla ilgilenmekte ve bunları sömürgecilik ile kültürel form ve ifadelerdeki dönüştürücü güçlerin karmaşık düzlemine yerleştirmektedir. Bu makale, hiçbir şekilde ISTA'nın faaliyetlerine katılmamakta, bunun yerine, aksi takdirde statik, tarih dışı, apolitik ve "estetik" denen şeyin daha dogmatik bir anlayışına meyilli olarak okunabilecek bazı önermelerle diyalog olasılıklarını araştırmaktadır.

### Anahtar Kelimeler:

tiyatro,  
antropoloji,  
beden teknikleri,  
sömürgecilik,  
söylem.

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\* Bu makale ilk olarak 2000 yılında Bengalce olarak Nribijanana Patrika'nın 5. sayısında Dhaka'da yayımlanmıştır. Başlangıçta, Barba'nın çalışmaları Bangladeş'te yeni yeni tanınmaya başladığı için, Bangladeş'teki tiyatro ve performans çalışmalarını ilgilendiren kişilerle ilişki kurmak anlamına geliyordu. Bu makale sosyal bilimciler tarafından performans alanına önemli bir giriş olarak kabul edildi. Sonraki yıllarda arkadaşlarım Bashabi Barua ve Nasima Selim tarafından çevrildi. O zamandan beri, çevirinin yapılmış kısmı bilgisayar çökmesi sonucu kayboldu ve daha sonraki yıllarda unutuldu. Çeviriyi 2021'in başlarında Covid-19 karantinası sırasında tekrar buldum. Kendi akademik biyografimdeki çalışmalarım ile bağlantısı ile Bangladeş'teki bir dizi sosyal bilimciden ayrıldığı noktaları ilginç bir şekilde hissettim. Günümüzde de performatif kavramsallaştırılmasıyla ilgili olarak da okunabilir. ETKİ dergisi adına çalışan ve bana bazı değerli önerilerde bulunan anonim hakemlere teşekkür ederim. Bu yazının derginin gerekliliklerini karşılayabilmesi için daha da detaylandırılması gerekiyordu.

## Prelude

If one wishes to discuss theatre anthropology, Eugenio Barba is a name that comes up instantly. Though Barba himself has always been careful enough to make the term clear in the preface of his well-known book with Nicola Savarese<sup>1</sup>; so that nobody confuses it as one of the branches of anthropology which deals with theatre. And he speaks very clearly about what he deems as theatre anthropology, and that it is also the basis of his activities within I.S.T.A (International School for Theatre Anthropology) in Denmark. In his attempt to explain the term Barba says, “theatre anthropology is the study of the behavior of the human being when it uses its physical and mental presence in an organized performance situation and according to principles which are different from those used in daily life. This extra-daily use of the body is what is called technique” (Barba 1991, p. 3). He emphatically says that his work is not related with cultural anthropology and it would not be possible to understand his work either, if one wishes to correlate it with cultural anthropology (Barba & Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer*). So to study Barba as a social/cultural anthropologist, especially if one is prepared to evaluate his works or to question the validity of his thoughts, careful consideration is required. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that we need to study Barba’s works as thoroughly as possible. And it must be done with a clear inquisitive realization of the concept of culture. The reason behind this certainly lies in Barba’s unique way of thinking. He has clearly made a distinction between his study and cultural anthropology but the fact that ‘cultural determinism’ remains the basis of his thinking, becomes evident when he explains the specific physical presence and body techniques as ‘culture-specific’ (Barba & Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer* 3). And the concepts of culture have been formulated the way conventional anthropology has always conceived other ideas. It must be emphasized that the significance of studying Barba is not confined to the ‘culture-conception’ only, it has its expanses.

It would be a grave mistake if from the beginning we do not understand the great role played by Barba and his associates of I.S.T.A in theatre practice. This role is much more significant for the western world. The actor’s (or performer’s) psychosomatic preparation and achievement of necessary skills, termed as ‘technique’ by I.S.T.A, is the focus of their activities and we must proceed keeping in mind their achievements in this arena. This article is not a discussion of Barba’s works. I am just trying to analyze the few pre-suppositions which served as guides throughout his journey. At the one hand, there has always been a series of provocations among Western performers or performance experts to blend things with what they found as ‘Eastern’ or ‘Oriental’. Not surprisingly India is a very potent addition to that list. On the other hand, we must notice the

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<sup>1</sup> Since its publication, the book has been considered one of the pioneering ones in the field of performing art. More so for the Westerners. My attempt of positing the work has come from the broader epistemological fields, and not to undermine the work.

overall apathy about, or indifference to, understanding the nuances of performative styles and philosophies of 'orient', if we, for the sake of theorization, can be sure of a homogenous orient at all. [Re]-reading Barba was, and still is, important.

### **Background: how Barba impacted Bangladeshi performance studies' scenario**

This is an irony that the book by Barba – and Savarese – caused relatively more academic anxiety than what the authors had suggested in line with body techniques, hence performances. When the book was first published in 1991, only one academic institution was providing undergraduate degree in theatre studies at Jahangirnagar University, the university I started working as a lecturer in the coming years. The department was then named 'drama and dramatics'. There was another theatre course at Chittagong University named 'Dramatics' where no degree was provided but acted as a minor in the broader liberal arts program. By 1995, this book received some attention in the academic community in performance studies, precisely in 'dramatics'. Besides a very few people in dramatics, two or three to be exact, I incidentally was among the first few readers of this book. After all, this book has been a global triumph lately and we could access a few additional books in our department of anthropology with an external financial grant. Till then, 'international' studies in theatre and/or performance were not serious concerns in Bangladesh except for the activities by ITI (International Theatre Institute, an active organization had then a working branch in Bangladesh). No matter how little it was, Barba was the sole figure beyond European playwrights and cult-like directors who made a footing into the psyche of theatre-studies people. The irony was in the fact about how Barba himself was an advocate for enhancing physical techniques and did not claim to become an academic.

It would be worth highlighting the trend of adopting European theater in Bangladesh in general, and in the Dhaka stage, and in the independent Bangladeshi theater stage in particular. It may be a disruption of the main focus of this essay, and it requires detailed investigation too. Instead, I discuss some general trends in European theatre performances. Historically, Bangladesh never was a great space for foreign plays, although the modern theatre is a direct outcome of colonialism, and of European forms. The number of European and American plays on stage is little. From the neighboring nations, only Indian plays could make the cut, yet mostly by the Indian groups and in inter-nation festivals. About Northern plays, three distinct trends can be found in the forming period of theatre practices in independent Bangladesh. One is staging direct translation of the English classics, largely dominated by the English playwright William Shakespeare. The second can be mentioned as a few comedy translations, largely dominated by the French playwright Molière. The third tendency, as I have figured out, is about transliterating some plays where adoptions are customized in various ways to reveal 'local' elements and connotations within the act

of play. This localization often risks of missing out a series of nuances the original plays had implied within and bringing in completely different cultural-political meanings into the scenario. While I do not have any defensible reason to condemn the acts transliteration, I am for the opinion that most literary products are to be reproduced as they are, more so the plays for their specific portrayal of societal relationship at a juncture and within the premises of social structure. But again, here is an area where Barba's 'similar principles, different performances' (Barba & Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer* 8) can be seriously challenged. Principles shift in an enormous way when 'localized' meanings are crafted into a 'foreign' play. There are some fascinating examples in Bangladesh where the plays were titled with exclusive local connotations, but with the body of work kept in the original setting. Further, there are some more examples where the titles were more in line with the original ones, but the body of the work transformed seriously.

### **Three levels of organizing a performer's activities**

From the viewpoint of transcultural analysis, Barba maintains that "the performer's work is the result of the fusion of three aspects which reflect three different levels of organization:

1. The performers' personalities, their sensibilities, artistic intelligence, their social personae: and the characteristics which make them unique and once-only;
2. The particularities of traditions and socio-historical contexts through which the once-only personality of the performer is manifest;
3. The use of physiology according to the extra-daily techniques. (Barba & Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer*)

In modern times, the personality of a theatre performer can be seen as an important phenomenon. It is possible due to the uniqueness of a character. In European classical dramas, the characters, in some cases, have been accentuated to that extent that it is now totally impossible to create emotion among the spectators without achieving such heights of character. It's the same for every play, from *Macbeth* to *Oedipus*, or from Eliot's *Murder in Cathedral* to Thomas Beckett's plays. This process of building up a personality is the core characteristic of modern narrative methods. The process of making a person should be observed through the antagonistic relationship between man and society. If we keep in mind that the concept of personality in western society has been formulated pre-supposing the antagonism between one and many, then we can understand that a personality results from the efforts to survive and his survival techniques against the pressure of society. Thus their 'social persona' must unquestionably be translated as 'their presence in society'. But the antagonistic relationship between man and society is completely a modern invention. And

modernity is never the distinction of a non-western society. With the proclamation of building up such a society but with the undeclared agenda of western invasion, this modernity is essentially a western phenomenon, a consciously devised project. If modernity is considered to be indispensable to all societies then ‘personality’ can be regarded as a constitutional factor in acting. Here we need to be conscious of the fact that: During the present times (the time span of this study) modernity with all its complexities have become their ‘own’<sup>3</sup> agenda for the non-western people (Asad 1993). Even in the theatre world, becoming ‘modern’ is akin to excellence, an expected goal. That is why a ‘critical study’ of Eugenio Barba may promptly give rise to a feeling of competition. It may seem that this piece of writing only tends to reject his and imply that to criticize ‘modernity’ is not to recognize achievements and is itself an attempt to deviate (others).

But while questioning modernity as an inevitable outcome for all societies and the process of modernization, we must also question modernity in theatre too. It should not be left out or be excluded in any way.

We were talking about the ‘personality’ and the possibility of the uniqueness of personality/personae as a constitutional factor in acting. It is here where the western orientation of Barba’s thinking is most evident. There are many examples in the non-western societies where the ‘core’ characteristic of performing arts is the complete immersion/dissolution/disintegration of self. The meaning of art there is the integration of the artist into the wider cosmic world—to the extreme, a total identification with God, and never an individualized separate entity. But we observe that the vital expanse of non-European art has become a limited and confined entity in Barba’s propositions. That is what this article has tried to expose. But it must be mentioned with caution that the pre-colonial practice of performing arts of a non-western society, e.g., of Bangladesh has not been recognized as ‘acting’ or in a broader sense as ‘theatre’ in European thought; and, Barba does not seem to be a thinker of such *gharana* (school of thought). It is evident because he has provided a large space to Indian Dance in his theatre practice.

### ***Lokadharmi* and *Natyadharmi*: The two-dimensional study of the non-occidental performing arts**

Sanjukta Panigrahi has been working with Barba on Theatre for a long time.<sup>3</sup> He was also one of the co-initiators of I.S.T.A. During his discussion with Panigrahi, Barba raised an issue. Panigrahi says that in an Indian society, there are two words to describe human behavior. One of them is *loka* – the ‘common’ or the everyday things; and the other is *natya* – the ‘dramatic’ or

<sup>2</sup>Inverted comma is from me. Asad discussed this to distinguish between agency and consciousness. One should be aware of his ideas on translation in this regard.

<sup>3</sup>Julia Varley has written extensively on Sanjukta Panigrahi’s life and work (Varley). Her involvement with ISTA is also discussed there. Varley herself is also a regular member of the organization.

performative. The first is used to imply everyday activities and the latter is to convey the traits of the art of dance (drama). In the discussion of Panigrahi, it appears that she upheld orthodox classification to differentiate normal/mundane behavior from the aesthetic/artistic expressions. Barba tried to understand Indian society with those terms and his heavy reliance on such terms limited his views of all the diverse performances, principally the non-western forms of art of/ or acting. But whether the traditional Indian classification of the fine arts is still the core characteristic of this society is a vital question. Whatever the answers may be, the many types of onslaughts that Indian art in general – and oriental art according to Barba – had to bear and the way it changed its shape thereafter, and the impact of such incidents are important and relevant issues. Since Barba's main objective is to find out the fundamental and general laws of both oriental and occidental performing arts, therefore, the question of drawing a distinctive line between the east and the west in present times is also very relevant.

Barba sees the 'oriental' as a unified whole, and the 'occidental' too in the same light. But that's not a big problem if we consider his objectives. If his main aim is to distinguish the eastern and western theatrical art on the basis of some characteristics, then it may not be necessary to discuss the manifold existing diversities within oriental art with primary importance. Besides, at this point Barba's close and conscious acquaintance with different types of theatre art must be considered. He also makes himself clear by saying that this sort of thinking on his part or program, does not aim, in any way, at making similar performances, rather this effort is made to understand the similar principles. In his own words, 'similar principles, different performances'. Here it is important to take note of the historical background of the relationship between the non-West and the west and Barba is not always not very conscious of that fact.

I have stated earlier that the artistic techniques of the non-western countries are being pushed to the corner under the hegemony of western culture. That process has been going on for a long period and has been the internal subject of the western political and economic project. Now it is very clear that without analyzing the colonial relationship, the non-western artistic techniques cannot be appreciated separately, even if one has whole-hearted regard for the non-western style<sup>4</sup>. The concept of culture often becomes synonymous with tradition, especially in classical anthropology. Again, tradition can be defined as such form and style which have not changed with the modernization or the narratives which are still in continuum. But the project of modernization

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<sup>4</sup>Barba emphasized enormously on 'oriental' style. The major problem with this emphasis is that it never reveals the ways these 'styles' have repeatedly been displaced and evacuated. Also, it remains unaddressed how performing arts across the globe, acting in particular, are becoming homogenous. I am not saying that the similar forms are being reproduced, instead I opine that the desires, attitudes, modalities of viewership, above all the 'actable' issues are gradually having global forms and that should be perceived as a colonial tendency. 'We do still have oriental culture' – is not a position I can label as a 'lie', but can fight against as apolitical. Culture is not something to keep 'alive' unless that is lived in lived reality among living people. If arts and culture are reduced into forms or styles, they become ahistorical.

has made sure of bringing about all sorts of inner structural changes. In the world of European thoughts, this is a crucial point: the displacement of non-western society and at the same time making efforts to keep the non-western culture alive. As a result, culture comes down to a construct of formal rituals. It is necessary to analyze culture on the basis of popular taste and Gramsci has made its importance quite clear. This popular taste should be seen as the strength of culture. Here it is necessary to state that popular taste must not be analyzed outside the sphere of social meaning and strength of all pre-colonial styles.

We can trace out this problematic with Barba when he draws a distinction line between the performing art of the east and that of the west. He distinguishes them by saying that oriental styles and art forms have definite and organized rules, there are specific, organized advices for the new performers. In his own words, ‘...rules of art which codify a closed performing style to which all the performers of a particular genre must conform.’ He observes the absence of such rules in western art but He also expresses his anxiety over the closed confines of the ‘*gharana*’ system. The enthusiasm for union between the eastern and the western methods is evident in Barba’s words but such concerns had been expressed long before, by the colonial rulers. There is no reason to think that this comment is exaggerated. Rather it is very much necessary to understand the tradition-based fine arts in a non-western society, especially in an Indian society. The idea to think of this tradition/heritage as a closed system arises/takes its origin from the modern idea of liberalism/liberty/freedom. Even in the context of the extension of Europe, when the European art forms are in the process of being isolated from people and ‘traditional/ classical’ – which also means ‘old’ and ‘not in vogue’ –, the issue of ‘closed confines’ is to some extent, meaningless, too. We should clearly understand that even pathologically, it is not possible to understand the Indian society by dividing it into the traditional and the dramatic, and it is not possible to realize how the importance of the dramatic has changed in the Indian society.

### **Daily techniques: determinant role of culture?**

Barba considers theatre and its art as principally the signified bearer of illustrative body techniques. During performances, people use their bodies quite differently than they do in daily activities. This observation has served as the basis of Barba’s working methodology. He separates ‘daily techniques’ from ‘extra-daily techniques’. He thinks that the performers make use of the later (Barba & Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer*). The specialty of ‘Oriental theatre’, in broader sense of the ‘performing arts’ is that these two techniques are quite different there but according to Barba, it is often not the case in ‘Occidental theatre’. Culture determines the different styles of body techniques and the many issues of body: “[...] different cultures determine different body techniques according to whether people walk with or without shoes, whether they carry things on



their heads or with their hands, whether they kiss with the lips or with the nose [...]” (Barba & Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer* 9). But it would not be proper to try to understand such a complex issue with just one of such examples above. The different uses of body that have been mentioned here are all purposeful.

On the contrary, people in modern societies make use of their bodies often without purpose, the meaning of which is again exchangeable within a specific time span and within certain groups, i.e, confusion does not arise over the meaning of such purposeless body movements (e.g, ‘shrugging’). In that respect, at least in modern times, it is necessary to understand the use of body in a discursive environment<sup>5</sup>.

Even if one wishes to see all these different use of body techniques as culturally determined, then the first question that comes to mind is which culture has such great ability to do so. At least our colonial experience makes us wonder and we know that there is no way it could be a part of the Eastern culture. To think it as ‘culturally determined’ the central problem lies in the fact that it then becomes impossible to understand the ever-changing characteristics of the body language and its changing forces. So it is the idea itself becomes ‘closed’, not the ‘*gharana*’ system of the East.

Here come the most important points. If continuing change is the destiny of the weak then what theatre-agenda would it have? And it is a big mistake to see this change as a change of shape or form or style. Its inner life is also changing. A global ‘modern’ soul is being born, even if this itself plays an active part in the process. And through this change its goal might be to build a defense. Barba has brought in a great deal of confusion in the theatre-agenda of the oppressed by placing body-techniques in the center of theatre-thoughts. That has been made possible only because of his limited view of the non-western art techniques, by confining it within the boundaries of its form and styles. From a non-historical point of view, the collection of a number of different styles may seem astounding if we consider their archival importance. This may even be precious for western performers. But if the construction of a modern entity/identity is an agenda/project<sup>6</sup>, then it may even be possible to put up a fight. This rivalry can be made possible if it is centered around

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<sup>5</sup> Stuart Hall’s analysis is utmost important here. Bodies should be seen as representable and represented. For modern selves, this is active exercise (Hall). My argument is that the homogenous aspect of human bodies’ performances is directly related of a few tendencies – starting from colonialism, they range up to the contemporary advertisements by the multinational manufacturers. And then far from being eternal, discursive fields are acutely historical (Foucault). So we are to explore a complex set of issues here.

<sup>6</sup> I would like to remind that the modern selves are conditional to a number of tangible/material things. Those are simultaneously the product of material relationship as well the reproducer. An example from Barba would be helpful. Body-techniques, according to him, are getting maximum result with minimum energy spent, definitely while it comes to communication. He again went on to say that two body-techniques in the West – ordinary and extra-ordinary – either do not differ much or are not taken seriously. While this is a fascinating observation for anyone interested in the broader field of acting, one may think of it more critically. The abundance of the Western societies in general, technologically and economically to mention the least, may have resulted in the bodily-attained techniques. My proposition is just to posit effortless human bodies as a social phenomenon.

the principal trait of modern personae —verbalization. If one wishes to make use of the discursive technique, then the necessary theatrical style would have to be much more verbal. Dialogue is the life force of such theatrical work. Since the expressions of mental activities of a modern personality are acutely verbal, it would also be possible to defy a mighty opponent through such verbalizations. It does not undermine the importance of the necessary physical preparations of the performers and it is definitely not my intention to say that it does. I just wish to mention that there is a problem if one calls theatre as solely the realization of body techniques.

### **No gender and no ‘everyday’?**

Barba himself was very clear about what his (their) book was about – first, it was a clearly mentioned dictionary, albeit with encyclopedic nature; secondly, it is a book meant for the performers to enhance their performance techniques; thirdly, this book in many ways was a promotional step for IATA. It is perhaps an unanticipated consequence that the book became a global success, but the authors cannot be blamed for its huge impact on a number of academic disciples including anthropology. The problem lies elsewhere. While the authors were cautious about not claiming it as an academic venture, they somewhat have put enough reasons to make this book appear in that manner. Taking examples from the title itself, there are two crucial terms that should claim its academic authority – ‘dictionary’ and ‘anthropology’. Barba, in the introductory chapter, maintains his understanding of cultural anthropology quite evidently, and in a deterministic fashion, as I discussed in the previous section. Adding to that, in the preface, a document that should otherwise be read as a pamphlet, he starts with ‘researchers’ classificatory skill – of distinguishing homonyms from homologies. He further seems to be interested in research throughout the book. His was a clear mission of distancing from cultural anthropology too (Barba & Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer* 7). In the hindsight, his emphasis did not matter much as he went on depending on the very orthodox premises of cultural anthropology, as I have discussed previously. More often than not, these premises are under serious scrutiny in the contemporary era, the time when Barba was executing this book project. In the end, regardless of his attempts, not only this book falls into the academic terrain, but also becomes an issue for further inquiry. I would like to conclude this essay by mentioning two crucial drawbacks of his project – not engaging with Goffman and by assuming gender roles in body techniques as insignificant.

Barba has invoked expectations among his readers about examining everyday activities in some meaningful ways by distinguishing concepts ‘*lokadharmi*’ and ‘*natyadharmi*’, and then in a separate section subtitled ‘Dramaturgy – actions at work’ (Barba 68). He briefly engages with Schechner, for obvious reasons, but never really gets into the understanding of Erving Goffman, who was very clinical about exploring vast, yet subtle, human activities in social settings. Here I do

not intend to imply that dramaturgical vision has largely been developed by Goffman, but it would be argued by some scholars for sure, I mean to suggest that for Barba, performance has always been an on-stage activity. That fact alone surely questions his usage of anthropology as a concept, more so as he does this in some defining manner. Understandably, for a renowned director and theatre-maker like him, performances are of distinctive nature and can be placed only where the necessary rituals are performed. Everyday activities, on the other hand, lack in organizing the performing rituals. Gender is another area that remains absent in Barba's project on theatre scholarship. There are certain global gendered outlets in body activities – both on-stage and in everyday lives. As I maintained in the early part of this essay, there is no obvious non-Western body left in the contemporary globe, especially if we are to examine performances, I would like to contend that gendered bodies are also a global phenomenon that needs to be carefully addressed, or consciously transgressed, by a performer in a given situation and at a specific – social or theatrical – location. Barba either assumed gender as a *de facto* binary, or did not find adequate reasons to discuss it, let alone any act of dismantling. My attempt is thus not an accusation against a performer for upholding performative distinction, but an attempt to re-reading his premises or the backdrops he himself provided us with.

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