



Marappachi
Presents

Gravedigger

(Based on Sudalaimma)

5 August 2013
Monday, 6 pm
Convention Hall
TISS, Mumbai

Script: V Geetha

Dir: Mangai

Performed by Ponni

All are welcome

Author's Note: V. Geetha

Gravedigger features a female graveyard worker who is determined to grant a decent burial to an 'encountered' young man's body. He is a much loved political activist, engaged in organising agricultural workers, and taking on caste injustice. However with the police guarding his corpse, a habitual task turns into a risky act. Sudalaimma, the gravedigger decides to risk police disapproval and in the event comes to learn of how even the dead can prove seditious. So much so, she begins to wonder about what makes for legitimacy and what makes for treason. The play is a journey into her consciousness and reasoning: she is keenly aware of the folly and injustice that attend even death in our social context. On the other hand, she has a deep existential sense of human dignity and frailty. Inspired by Sophocles' Antigone and the exemplary courage of our poorest and most marginal citizens who yet believe in justice and in tremendous good faith work the law and its protocols, we would like to dedicate this play to the memory of the late Dr K. Balagopal.

Director's Note: A. Mangai

We pride ourselves on our lineage of honouring the dead - in propitiating their memory from time immemorial, reading their abiding presence in crows, in hero-stones... Yet today, as the state attempts to secure its sovereignty by threatening to 'disappear' its citizens, the ancient right to do one's duty by the dead is constantly violated. In a society where graveyards grow by the day, seeking respect for the dead becomes a crime. For Sudalaimma, the gravedigger, witness to many deaths, to tend to the dead is labour well-done and she sees this labour of love as her way of doing right by the dead. She confronts the authority of the state in matters of life and death, by continuing to speak of the value of life from the field of the dead.

Images of life and death jostle on stage, and even as food reeks of decay, death is kept at bay by everyday acts of living -a garden patch, a hearth and a clothes-line frame this world of the dead. A bundle of memories, a mat that is a refuge, and strains of music accompany the gravedigger in her journeys between the two opposed worlds of violent state power and the uneasy calm of the graveyard.

All are welcome

Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, TISS