

THE WORLD'S A STAGE

# Drama at work

**An ambitious book that brings the theatre to the workplace by clubbing it with sensitivity training and organisation development**

Titled after the oft-quoted line made popular by Shakespeare, *All the World's a Stage* raises expectations that reading it doesn't quite fulfil. But having said that, given that the author T.T. Srinath has done a lot of work in both training and theatre, it is easy to understand why perhaps there was a temptation to "say it all" in one book. For the author, it would have been a dilemma about what to leave out and what to elaborate upon.

One way to usually address this kind of dilemma is to address the question of who the book is intended for: is it for the novice or the expert? Is it meant to arouse curiosity or serve as a quick self-help book?

In the book, the author has taken on a



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challenging task — he seeks to club together theatre, sensitivity training and organisation development issues and to find connections that link the three.

For instance, the author speaks about the issue of the present in drama where an actor is only as good as his current performance

He then uses this example to urge readers to also live in the present — in the philosophical way of, say, Eckhart Tolle's *Power of Now*.

The author then seeks to link the concept of the "present" with the 'Zero Base' theory in management parlance. The concept of staying in the 'Here and Now' is a valuable training tool and used as such, so this was an interesting connect to make but one wishes the linkages had been laid down more clearly and the book had carried the reader along to make the connections without struggling.

Other connections are easier to make. For instance, the fact that participating in theatre creates an environment bereft of strife or rancour, where all actors are equal irrespective of how many lines each may have. Organisations too could usefully create such a milieu of

mutual respect and appreciation.

The highlight of the book is the author's sharing of stories both from his consulting experience and from his personal life. He speaks of his own struggles on the stage as a theatre personality and the challenges and difficulties faced by people in organisations. He uses these stories to offer the reader a glimpse into the world of drama and to show them the impact that the stories — and the ways in which they unfolded — can have on organisations. The writer is a member of ISABS (Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Sciences), and he would have enmeshed the experiences of the theatre with that of training in an effective way in his own workshops.

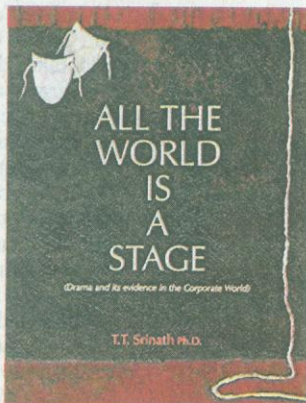
There are some terms like "epoché" (suspension of judgment, scepticism) and "suspension of belief" (as opposed to 'disbelief') that the author uses without too much definition. Or, for instance, when he equates trust with faith. For readers who may hold definitions and understandings of their own, it would have been useful for the author to extend his own understanding and thus take the discussion further.

Overall, the book opens up new vistas. As they say, what's life without a little drama? And theatre makes for a great training tool for organisational well-being.

The big let-down in the book is the proofing and production values. From incorrect syntax to spellings, it is clear that editor and proof-reader have not been on the job. Page layouts leave much to be desired with graphics coming mid-sentence, sometimes mid-word. In some sentences, there is no spacing between words.

Given the amount of hard work a writer puts into a book, the editor and publisher owe it to authors and readers to make the book look good and read well.

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