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Theatre activist A Mangai (centre) interacting with MS Swaminathan and his wife Mina • Martin Louis

## Addressing Gender Issues Through Theatre

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**O**n the eve of International Women's Day, the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) hosted theatre activist and academic A Mangai, who delivered a lecture on 'Theatre as a Tool for Raising Gender Consciousness'. In the late 1990's and early 2000's, Mangai, now a visiting professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, performed a series of plays titled 'Pacha Mannu' at places in the northern region of Tamil Nadu. The theme was female infanticide, rampant at that time. The play is now part of the academic curriculum in several colleges, including Bharathi Women's College in North Madras. Illustrating the three prerequisites of theatre, namely use of body, image projection and communication with the audience, the theatre activist remarked, "Theatre addresses the collective consciousness and targets a specific section of people who are often left without any voice in society." Professor Swaminathan, founder and chairman of MSSRF, and his wife Mina, chair of the Gender and Development section of MSSRF, also spoke on the potential of theatre as a transformatory tool.