



## The First Ever Hindi Play on the Holocaust

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**As an intern of the Society for Social Regeneration & Equity (SSRE), Rajat Prajapati, a final year student of BTech+MBA dual degree programme, staged a play set in the backdrop of the Holocaust, written and directed by him, at his institution, Gautam Buddha University, on 15th January, 2015, under the auspices of the SSRE's Holocaust Education Project.**

Rajat Prajapati, who played a Nazi commander, says that he was inspired to write the play by the Executive Director of the Youth Outreach Programme of the SSRE, Dr Navras Jaat Aafreedi, a committed Holocaust educator. What makes this play so significant is the fact that it is perhaps the only play on the Holocaust in Hindi and extremely relevant to India given the absence of Holocaust education in the country despite the frequent occurrence of mass violence there. The paradox of the popularity of Hitler in India in spite of the absence of anti-Semitism there, except in certain sections of its Muslim minority, makes the play even more significant.

The play is the story of the horrors of the Holocaust as witnessed by one of the soldiers of the Indian legion of Hitler, which had been raised by the Indian nationalist leader Subash Chandra Bose by recruiting soldiers from the Prisoner-of-War camps in Germany which, at that time, were home to tens of thousands of Indian soldiers of the British Indian army captured by Rommel in North Africa. Bose intended to use this army to liberate India from the British rule.

In addition to this Indian element in the story, the Roma also figure in the play. The Roma are a people of Indian origin, resident in Europe for the last six hundred years. Seventy per cent of their population was eliminated during the Holocaust along with six million Jews (2/3rd of the European Jewish population and 1/3rd of the world Jewish population). The protagonist, the Indian PoW, Gurudas Singh, played by a graduate student, Aakash, finds refuge among them after his escape from prison, but is later mistaken for a Roma and sent to a concentration camp along with the Roma and Jews.

It is commendable that students succeeded in staging this play despite all odds. Driven by a strong desire to raise awareness of the Holocaust and counter the popularity Hitler has come to enjoy in India because of yearning for a strong leadership, the students themselves took care of all the expenses of costumes and props.

The play was accompanied by a poster exhibition on the Holocaust. The SSRE will be helping the students stage this play at institutions of higher education across India, for it believes that Holocaust education is required in India more than any other education because of the frequent occurrence of mass violence there. It would be easier for Indians to retain their objectivity while studying the Holocaust and draw lessons from it as to what leads to genocide and how it can be prevented, than any other episode of mass violence that took place in India, because Holocaust was a genocide that neither involved any section of Indian society nor any of the two major religious communities of India, viz., Hindus and Muslims. Considering the above mentioned factor and the fact that no other genocide can match the scale and magnitude of the Holocaust, it serves as an ideal case for the study of genocides and their prevention.

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