

## TARA SHAKTI BANNER

Our banner is a group effort - some who contributed won't be able to march on the day so we are marching on their behalf as well. Most of us who made the banners, and/or are marching with it, met through Tara. Some of us are audience, some volunteer, some are regular collaborators and some are on the staff. Together we shape the character of Tara.

**Shakti** is feminine creative power. It literally means energy, ability, strength, might, effort, power, capability. She is responsible for both creation and is the agent of all change.

## TARA

Tara (*which means star and is also the Buddhist goddess of the arts*) is a theatre company set up in 1977 by Jatinder Verma to make theatre in Britain with an Asian slant. We do a wide range of work - classics, new plays, music, dance and comedy. We are based in Wandsworth and are now ensconced in our beautiful, new, award-winning building in Earlsfield.

We are celebrating 6 extraordinary Asian women from India and Pakistan who have shaped and changed the world over the last 100 years.

These are very very sketchy outlines of our 6 truly remarkable women.

### Princess Sophia Duleep Singh - suffragette 1876 - 1948



Anita Anand has written a terrific book about her. She was the daughter of the last maharajah of the Sikh Empire and Queen Victoria's god daughter. Deprived of his lands by the British, her father lost hope and descended into bitterness and failure leaving his children to grow up unattended. Sophia became a radical suffragette, doing all she could to be arrested, but, Anand writes, "*Not even when she threw herself at the prime minister's car would the police and courts punish her as they punished others of lower rank.*" The photo of her we're using shows her actually selling the suffragette magazine.

### Sarojini Naidu - freedom fighter, feminist and poet 1879 - 1949



While in Britain, at the turn of the century, as a student in London and Cambridge, Sarojini became involved in the suffragist movement. She went on to join Gandhi's non-cooperation movement (including several periods in jail) which ultimately led to Indian independence in 1947. She was the first woman to be a state governor - of UP. She wrote wonderful poetry.

### Amrita Sher Gil - pioneer, avant garde artist 1913 - 1941



Amrita's mother was Hungarian and her eccentric, photographer father was a Sikh aristocrat. Before she settled back in India her childhood was spent between Europe and India. Her work reflects both cultures and is richly coloured and beautiful.

**Jayaben Desai** - Grunwick strike leader 1933 - 2010

Growing up she was an active supporter of the Indian independence movement. She married and emigrated to British East Africa from where she was forced, by post-independence "Africanisation" policies, to re-migrate to London at the end of the 1960s. She went to work at the Grunwick film processing unit. The conditions were exploitative and when she decided she had had enough, she told her manager "*What you are running is not a factory, it is a zoo. But in a zoo there are many types of animals. Some are monkeys who dance on your fingertips. Others are lions who can bite your head off. We are those lions, Mr Manager.*" (I can't resist the quote!) She led a gruelling strike for decent pay and conditions which ultimately failed but it showed the world that newly arrived migrants have a voice and dignity and deserve respect. Medhavi who is coming to the March played her at Tara as part of our I'll say it again season. She can tell you more!



**Kalpana Chawla** - astronaut 1962 - 2003

Kalpana was born in Karnal now in Haryana, north India (also the birthplace of the first Prime Minister of Pakistan) and after gaining her first degree in engineering at Punjab State University she moved to the US to pursue her studies in aerospace engineering. She ended up at NASA where she eventually applied for the NASA Astronaut Corps. She had a wonderful phrase for traveling in the weightlessness of space - "*You are just your intelligence*". Very unfortunately she died on the ill-fated Space Shuttle Columbia which disintegrated on returning to earth in 2003.



**Malala Yousafzai** - activist for female education and human rights 1997 -

At the age of 15, Malala was shot and seriously wounded while on her way to school in the Swat Valley, Pakistan. Her attackers were the Taliban who choose to ban female education. Malala's injuries were life changing but the attack only strengthened her determination to fight for girls and women's right to education. She has subsequently become a global figurehead for human rights and female education worldwide. She has won countless awards including being the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.



TARA ARTS  
356 GARRATT LANE, EARLSFIELD, LONDON SW18 4ES  
10 mins from Waterloo by Overground

+44 (0) 20 8333 4457  
[www.tara-arts.com](http://www.tara-arts.com)