

UNIT-1

FIRST FIVE LITERARY TERMS PART I

Unit Structure:

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Elements of Drama
- 1.2 Greek Theatre
- 1.3 Indian Classical Theatre
- 1.4 Folk Theatre
- 1.5 Black Theatre
- 1.6 Let us Sum up
- 1.7 Important Questions
- 1.8 References

1.0. OBJECTIVES

In this unit, students will be familiarized with fundamental knowledge about the concept of theatre, elements of theatre and various kinds of theatre in the world. After studying this unit, they will be using the knowledge gained for critically evaluating the theatre and drama.

1.1 ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

Literature springs from our inborn love of telling a story, of arranging words in pleasing patterns, of expressing in words some special aspect of our human experience. There are a number of different branches such as drama, poetry, the novel, the short story; all these are works of the imagination arising from man's capacity for invention. The primary aim of literature is to give pleasure, to entertain those who voluntarily attend to it.

The word drama comes from the Greek meaning "to act, do or perform", and it is in the several subtle and diverse meanings of "to perform" that drama can be said to have begun. Drama is one of the major forms of literature. As a literary form, it is designed for the theatre because characters are assigned role and they act out their roles as the action is enacted on stage. It is difficult to separate drama from performance because during the stage performance of a play, drama brings life experiences realistically to audience. Drama is therefore presented in dialogue.

Drama is an imitation of life. Drama is different from other forms of literature because of its unique characteristics. It is read, but basically, it is composed to be performed, so the ultimate aim of dramatic composition is for it to be presented on stage before an audience. This implies that it is a medium of communication. It has a message to communicate to the audience. It uses actors to convey this message.

Drama has been defined differently. Let's understand some of them.

"A play is a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours and the changes of fortune to which it is subject for the delight and instruction of mankind". - John Dryden

"Drama is a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance". - Webster's English Dictionary

"Drama is a composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue". - A Glossary of Literary Terms by M. H. Abrams

The elements of drama include plot, character, dialogue, conflict, staging, and theme. The discussions of each of these elements individually allow us to highlight the characteristic features of drama in a convenient way.

Plot

Plot means the arrangement of the events in a story, including the sequence in which they are told, the relative emphasis they are given, and the causal connections between events. Plot is the series of events that take place in a play.

For the dramatic purpose plot means plan, scheme or pattern. It may be defined as a pattern of events- the way in which events are organized. It has to do with internal relation of events or the way incidents are combined or unified to produce an 'organic whole'. The events have to be formed into a plot. It is also narrative of events, the emphases on causality. Plots could be infinite or limitless, but their significance have no limits and that's why Aristotle said that plot is the soul of tragedy. According to Aristotle action in drama is complete in itself. It has a beginning, a middle and an end. At some points action begins, then complications enter, which gradually reaches a peak point, technically called the climax, followed by a crisis or the turning point what Aristotle

termed us asperipety, this leads to the failure of the central character; the catastrophe depends on discovery or anagnorisis.

Character

Character is the next important element of the drama. One can't imagine the drama without characters. Characters are persons like the men and women we see around us but sometimes unreal and supernatural types of characters are also present. Plot and characters are inseparable part because when we read plays for their plots to find out what happens- we also read them to discover the fates of their characters. We become interested in dramatic characters for varying, even contradictory, reasons.

Characters bring play to life.

Characters in drama can be classified as a major, minor, static and dynamic, flat and round. A major character is an important figure at the center of the play's action and meaning. Supporting the major character are one or more secondary or minor characters, whose function is partly to illuminate the major characters. Minor characters are often static or unchanging; they remain essentially the same throughout the play. Dynamic characters, on the other hand, exhibit some kind of change-of attitude, of purpose, of behavior. Flat characters reveal only a single dimension, and their behavior and speech are predictable; round characters are more individualized, reveal more than one aspect of their human nature, and are not predictable in behavior or speech.

Dynamic/ Round Character is a character that changes according to the course of events in the story. He may or may not be the protagonist or the hero. In most cases, he grows from innocence to maturity or from ignorance to knowledge, so he is consistently alert to his environment with its attendant problem and reacts accordingly.

Static / Flat / Stock Character is complex and does not change in any basic way in the course of the story. He is presented in outline and without much individualization. He is usually stable and is said to be static because he retains essentially the same outlook, attitudes, values and dispositions from the beginning of the story to the end of the story. He is the opposite of the round character but lacks complexity in terms of presentation.

Dialogue

In its widest sense, dialogue is simply conversation between people in literary work; in its most restricted sense, it refers specifically to the speech of characters in a drama. As a specific literary genre, a 'dialogue' is a composition in which characters

debate and issue or idea. The dictionary tells us that; “dialogue is a conversation between two or more persons real or imaginary”. According to the critics of drama reading drama means essentially reading dialogue.

Our discussion of character and conflict brings us to a critical aspect of dramatic characters-their speech, or dialogue. Dialogue involves two speakers and monologue to the speech of one. An important dramatic convention of dialogue is the use of a soliloquy to express a character’s state of mind.

A soliloquy represents a character’s thoughts so the audience can know what he or she is thinking at a given moment. Soliloquies should be distinguished from asides, which are comments made directly to the audience in the presence of other characters, but without those characters hearing what is said. Unlike a soliloquy, an aside is usually a brief remark.

Dialogue is a very significant element. Dialogue reveals the nature of character and also gives us information about his relations with the person spoken or of the person not present when the conversation takes place. J. L. Styan rightly describes ‘dialogue as dramatic speech’.

Conflict

The conflict can be the protagonist’s struggle against fate, nature, society, or another person. Conflict brings interest in the story. Conflict means some kind of struggle of competition. It is the conflict that makes the drama appealing. Conflicts are of two types i.e. internal conflict and external conflict. Internal conflict deals with man verses self it is also called as a psychological conflict. External conflict deals with man vs outside forces.

Staging / Stage Directions

Drama is distinct from other literature because it is performed in front of an audience by actors to tell a story, along with the use of a set, lighting, music, and costumes. Stage Directions are guidelines, suggestions, given by the dramatist in the script of the play. They are the guidelines for the producer and the author wishes to be. Stage directions in earlier drama were pure and simple. They gave the outline of the scenery of the play and broad directions to the actors. Stage directions establish a link between the reader and the dramatist. In the dramatic literature of the past the chorus took care of these functions. In modern drama through the medium of the stage directions the dramatist attempts to exercise his control on the production. Theater artists bring the playwright’s vision to life on the stage. The audience responds to the play and shares the experience.

Theme

We use the word theme to designate the main idea or point of a play stated as a generalization. Because formulating the theme of a play involves abstracting from it a generalizable idea, the notion of the theme inevitably moves away from the very details of character and action that give the play its life. This is not to suggest that it is not rewarding or useful to attempt to identify a central idea or set of ideas from plays, but only that we should be aware of the limitations of our doing so.

1.2 GREEK THEATRE

The word 'theatre' comes from the Greek *theatron*, literally "seeing place," or "place where something is seen." The word was first used in its current form in 1576 when James Burbage named his playhouse the Theatre. Since Burbage's playhouse was one of the first, if not the first, structure built specifically for the production of plays, the name theatre eventually came to mean first the buildings and then the entire genre. The companion term 'drama' comes from the Greek word *dran*, literally "to do." It is "something done." Frequently the terms are used interchangeably, although the theatre always refers to the structure where the performances are held as well as to the company of players who perform.

Theatre also refers to the designers, administrators, technicians, etc. who work together to produce plays as well as the body of ideas that animates the artists and brings the plays to life. Drama is a more limited term and tends to refer mainly to the plays that are produced. In other words, drama is the script itself; theatre is all the elements that combine to bring that play to life. Drama requires the reader to contribute more than any other form of literature does. Not only must the reader see and understand what is explicitly said and done, but he/she must also be aware of all that is merely implied or left unsaid.

We can trace the history of theater to as far as 700BC and the Ancient Greek civilization. We know that the Greeks enjoyed musicals, but sadly, we don't have the actual music or understand what compositions were most popular. However, we can still see how the Ancient Greeks' love of theater plays a part in the Broadway, and the West End shows we know and love today.

Theater first established in Greece in what was then the city-state of Athens, shortly before the classical period of Ancient Greece. The authorities held annual festivals to honor the God Dionysus to promote peace and community between

individuals and neighboring city-states following the Great Destruction of Athens in 480 BCE.

The first shows were often individual poets acting out their written works. These shows quickly started to attract large audiences, which subsequently led to the production of longer scripts and people specifically choosing to act out certain roles. It wasn't long before these shows started to have writers, directors, and a cast of actors.

Most plays in ancient Greece would also take the form of competitions for who could create the best performance. The earliest recorded competition winner was Thespis, who became known as "The Father of Tragedy." Thespis is also regarded as one of the founding fathers of drama, which is why we sometimes refer to modern actors as *thespians*.

Another important aspect of these festivals was performances of the work of Homer, who lived sometime between the 12th and 8th centuries BC. Around the start of the classical period of Ancient Greece, scholars at the time were beginning to curate Homer's works. Their readings at these shows would be the first stage of bringing Homer into the public consciousness, and he remains revered today. It wasn't just drama and the theater that took off as Ancient Greece entered its classical period. The entire civilization went through a "Golden Age," where the people were passionate about advancing and creating art, architecture, literature, monuments, philosophy, and drama. Greece was the foundation of modern culture.

Many of the plot devices and other writing tools used by Ancient Greek playwrights still apply and can be seen in modern works. Although we may not know the specifics of what happened during each performance, the dramas of Ancient Greece have stood the test of time. Three genres came to characterize Ancient Greek Theater: Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire.

Early plays were typically tragedies; hence the cultural use of the term "Greek Tragedy" that is still widely used today. Tragedies were popular because they were the most in-demand stories at the time. Audiences wanted to see a story that ended with a tragedy or that had a tragic moral. Some of Aristotle's writings indicate dithyrambs inspired many theatrical tragedy productions. Dithyrambs were choral hymns sung in honor of Dionysus at each year's festival. Tragedies were also often played alongside annual rituals undertaken by the Ancient Greeks to honor Dionysus. Citizens would wear masks

and sacrifice animals, usually goats while singing dithyrambs or performing a tragic poem or play. This link led to the adoption of Dionysus as the god of the theater, in addition to the other things for which the Ancient Greeks worshipped him.

Comedies represented ancient Greek's daily lives and the absurdities that could happen to them. In contrast, tragedies often were set in the past and were more likely to include appearances from the gods. Aristophanes is credited with writing most of Ancient Greece's first comedy plays. In Aristotle's writings around the emergence of the genre, he explains comedy consists of characters who are there solely for the audience to laugh at. They make a mistake, and the audience does not feel pain from seeing it, representing the opposite of tragedy. At the time, comedy was a means of offering an alternative to tragic stories and performances. Ancient Greek theater allows us to gain insights into how Ancient Greek society was and comedy offered a window into the legal system, education, religious practices, and political systems of Ancient Greece. Analysis of Ancient Greek pottery designs suggests that actors have been wearing costumes and doing silly actions on stage for thousands of years.

Satire emerged from tragedy and quickly became popular. Ancient Greek satire was a mix of comedy and drama, sometimes referred to as a tragi-comedy. Ancient Greek satire would rely heavily on sexual themes and topics such as drunkenness and is meant to get a lot of laughs from the audience. Writers designed the characters' actions to shame people into change by seeing the actors mocked for things they do themselves. These were the main difference between satire and comedy in ancient Greece. Comedy was to be light-hearted, while satire used laughter paired with shame to provide social commentary and to make people or society change. There were many restrictions in place to keep the quality of the plays high. For example, only three actors ever got speaking parts to ensure that everyone accurately memorized their lines. This set up also meant the audience could easily distinguish between the actors. It also helped to keep the competitive festivals balanced. However, the costs would have been too high for the state to handle on its own. They enlisted wealthy citizens to fund production costs, and they were afforded enormous amounts of respect as a consequence, wealthy citizens oversaw expenses of Costumes, Musicians, Rehearsals, and Choir Singers. They became known as "choregos" (like the modern day choreographer) and oversaw the costumes, musicians, rehearsals, and choir singers. At the same time, the state paid for professional actors to attend and take part.

Ancient Greece was home to some of the best architects of the time. They were continually learning and developing their buildings. The theaters of Ancient Greece are a marvel to behold. Their remains are among the most popular tourist attractions in the country to this day. It's also easy to see where these theaters had a significant impact on the design of today's theatres especially in terms of architecture.

Parts of the Theater

- **Orchestra:** (literally, "dancing space") A circular and level space where the chorus would dance, sing, and interact with the actors who were on the stage near the skene.
- **Theatron:** (literally, "viewing-place") this is where the spectators sat. The theatron was usually part of hillside overlooking the orchestra.
- **Skene:** (literally, "tent") the skene was directly in back of the stage, and was usually decorated as a palace, temple, or other building, depending on the needs of the play. It had at least one set of doors, and actors could make entrances and exits through them.
- **Parodos:** (literally, "passageways") The paths by which the chorus and some actors made their entrances and exits. The audience also used them to enter and exit the theater before and after the performance.

The first plays were performed in the Theatre of Dionysus, built in the shadow of the Acropolis in Athens at the beginning of the 5th century, these theatres proved to be so popular they soon spread all over Greece. In Greek Mythology Dionysus was the son of Zeus. He is the only god born of one god and one mortal parent. He was the god of wine, fertility and revelry. He was raised by satyrs, killed, dismembered, and resurrected (was actually reborn). Other gods had temples; the cult of Dionysus met in the wood. It was believed that he could liberate and inspire man. It was also as also believed that he could endow man with divine creativity. Dionysus, thus, came to be considered a patron of the arts. In the sixth century BC, the Athenian ruler, Pisistratus, established the 'City Dionysia', a festival of entertainment held in honor of the god Dionysus. This festival featured competitions in music, singing, dance and poetry. The most remarkable of all the winners was said to be a wandering bard named Thespis.

Four Qualities of Greek Drama:

1. Performed for special occasions (festivals). Athens had four festivals worshipping Dionysus.
2. Competitive--prizes were awarded. Actors and playwrights competed (Oedipus won 2nd place)

3. Choral – There was singing; the chorus was made up of men (from 3 to 50). The chorus sang, moved, and danced. They moved the story along.
4. The stories were based on myth or history

Essential pieces of Greek Drama:

1. The play
2. The actors
3. The chorus

Types of Greek Drama:

1. Comedy
2. Tragedy
3. Satire Plays

Comedy and tragedy were the most popular types of plays in ancient Greece. Hence, the modern popularity of the comedy and tragedy masks to symbolize theater. Comedy was not admitted to Dionysus festival till 487-486 B.C the first comedies were mainly satirical and mocked men in power for their vanity and foolishness. The first master of comedy was the playwright Aristophanes.

Structure of the Comedy:

- Prologue: leading character conceives a "happy idea"
- Parados: entrance of the chorus
- Agon: dramatized debate between proponent and opponent of the "happy idea"
- Parabasis: chorus addresses audience on poet's views on topic
- Episodes: "Happy idea" is put to practical application

Some characteristics of Greek Tragedy:

- Violence and death offstage
- Frequent use of messengers to relate information
- Stories based on myth or history, but varied interpretations of events
- Focus is on psychological and ethical attributes of characters, rather than physical and sociological.
- Tragedy dealt with love, loss, pride, the abuse of power and the fraught relationships between men and gods.
- The three great playwrights of tragedy were Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.
- The word **tragedy** came to be derived from the Greek tragos (goat) and ode (poem). Tragedy literally means goat song or goat poem.

The Structure of Greek Tragedy:

1. Prologue, which described the situation and set the scene
2. Parados, an ode sung by the chorus as it as it made its entrance
3. Five dramatic scene c scenes, each followed by a Komos, an exchange of laments by the chorus and the protagonist
4. Exodus, the climax and conclusion
5. Tragedies were often presented in trilogies. Interspersed between the three plays in these in the trilogy were satyr plays, in which satyrs (men dressed as half-goats) made fun of the characters in the surrounding tragedies.

Tragic flaw: a flaw or mistake that brings about the downfall of the hero of a tragedy. The Greek term *harmartia*, typically translated as "tragic flaw" actually is closer in meaning to a "mistake" or an "error," "failing," rather than an innate flaw. The character's flaw must result from something that is also a central part of their virtue, which goes somewhat awry, usually due to a lack of knowledge.

Satyr Plays: These were short plays performed between the acts of tragedies. They made fun of the plight of the tragedy's characters. The satyrs were mythical half human, half-goat servants of Dionysus. Satyr and the Satyr plays spawned the modern word satire. All of the actors and playwrights were men. Women were not allowed to participate. The actors played multiple roles, so a mask was used as used to show the change in character or mood. Gestures and body movements were controlled and stately. If playing female role need for female appearance, wore the prosternida before the chest and the progastrida before the belly.

The Chorus:

Functions of the chorus:

- an agent: gives advice
- asks, takes part
- establishes ethical framework, sets up standard by which action will be judged
- ideal spectator - reacts as playwright hopes audience would sets mood and heightens dramatic effects
- adds movement, spectacle, song, and dance
- rhythmical function - pauses / paces the action so that the audience can reflect.

The significance of Masks in Greek Theatre

Without the masks, the audience could not hear the actors as well, and those at the top of the theater could not make out the actors' facial expressions. This meant much of the impact of the play would be lost. These circumstances saw masks quickly

establish themselves as an art form and a necessity within the theater.

Thalia: The Muse of Comedy

The two masks also were a nod to the muses of Greek mythology. Thalia, the Muse of Comedy, was depicted as a cheerful mask. She was young, full of energy, and always smiling. Many statues representing Thalia also include trumpets or other types of horns. Such imagery alludes to how these instruments were used to make an actor's voice carry in an ancient Greek comedy.

Melpomene: The Muse of Tragedy

On the other hand, Melpomene was the Muse of Tragedy. Her mask is sad, and she is often depicted with a weapon in her hand. Sometimes, she even holds the mask itself. Melpomene in art is also seen to be wearing the cothurnus, also known as buskins, which were boots only to be worn by actors performing in tragedies. She also wears a wreath made from a grapevine on her head, which derives from Dionysus.

1.3 INDIAN CLASSICAL THEATRE

Indian theater goes back to the 4th century B.C. All night dance-dramas, known *yaksgana*, are popular and held throughout India, particularly to mark major festivals. They combine song and dance and are based on the Hindu epics and mythology and typically feature a story with good winning out over evil.

According to Indian terminology, the different types of theatrical traditions fall broadly into two basic categories, *margi* or classical (*Natyashastra*-related) and *desi* or folk/regional styles. Classical theater survives in only a few cities, but folk theater thrives in almost every region. Professional theater is confined primarily to the cities.

Early Indian Literature and Theatre

Theatre and dance, which are inseparable art forms in Indian culture, are present even in the earliest works of Indian literature. The Vedic literature or the four Vedas, which form the basis of early Brahmanism and later Hinduism, mentions dance and open-air theatrical performance. Otherwise, the Vedas mainly include invocations and hymns to the gods, ritual formulas, and short stories.

The Vedic tradition evolved orally through the centuries and received its written form much later in the post-Vedic period. Towards the end of the Vedic period, various gods, which were originally rather simple personifications of aspects of nature, began

to acquire complicated mythologies, which personalized them. These mythologies were further elaborated in the early centuries A.D. by the Purana literature, while at the same time these mythical stories became the main theme for much of the Indian theatrical arts.

Indian literary heritage includes several *shastras* or manuals (also code, theory, treatise) covering a vast range of subjects from cooking, elephant and horse breeding, and lovemaking, as well as several art forms, such as poetics, music, theatre, and dance. The earliest treatise for theatre and dance is the *Natyashastra* or the Drama Manual (a treatise on drama).

Other *shastra* manuals also give information about theatrical practices, each according to their own specific viewpoint. The *Kamashastra* (*Kamasutra*), the treatise on love, informs us about the kind of role that theatrical performances had in the life of the upper class educated male citizen. The *Arthashastra*, the treatise on politics and administration, on the other hand, gives detailed information about the role of different kinds of performers in the ideal, yet highly hierarchical, society described in this manual written in the 4th century B.C.

Bhakti, Medieval Ecstatic Love

Dr. Jukka O. Miettinen of the Theatre Academy of Helsinki wrote:

During medieval times a new literary genre became a popular, it was the ecstatic bhakti poetry. Bhakti was, and still is, an extremely popular form of Hinduism in which the complicated rituals, yoga systems etc. are replaced by loving devotion towards a god which is seen as the personal lover of the devotee, a bhakti poet, and the dancer enacting a bhakti poem.

Among numerous poets it was the 12th century Jayadeva who was the definite trendsetter for the whole bhakti movement. His Song of the Dark Lord or *Gita Govinda* (also *Geeta Govinda*) has enjoyed phenomenal popularity and influenced all genres of bhakti art all over the subcontinent. The most popular gods of the bhakti worship are Shiva and Krishna, the flute-playing dark, dancing youth who, in fact, is an avatar or incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Jayadeva wrote his poetic work, *Gita Govinda*, structured in 12 poems or cantos, in Sanskrit. It describes the passionate and stormy love life of Krishna and his main beloved, Radha. It is known that Jayadeva wrote it to be danced as a kind of offering to Lord Krishna.

Bhakti poems are most often simply sung while a solo dancer enacts the poem and assumes both the roles of the devotee and the beloved god. These *abhinaya*, or mimetic sections, often alternate with pure *nrtta* dances, as will be discussed later in

connection with the famous *lasya*- style dance genres, such as Bharatanatyam, *Mohiniattam*, and Odissi. Bhakti poetry, however, also inspired actual drama literature, for example, in the case of the *Krishnanatam* of Kerala. It also served as a vital source for popular forms of pilgrimage theatre, such as *Krishnalila* and *Ramlila*.

Ramlila, the Traditional Performance of the Ramayana

Ramlila refers to a ritual tradition of religious tableaux or short plays performed in northern India in September and October during the birthday festival of Prince Rama, the hero of the Ramayana epic and an avatar of God Vishnu. The highlights of Rama's life can be enacted as robust village theatre or as sketchy scenes performed by boy actors assisted by adult men. The most lavish *Ramlila* takes place in Varanasi and its outskirts, where the scenes are divided to cover one month and they are enacted in various locations appropriate to the content of the particular scene.

The *Ramlila* tradition is inseparable from the famous Hindi version of the *Ramayana*, the *Ramacharitmanas*, by the poet Tulsidas (1523–1623). He was a devotee of Rama; he was a philosopher and a composer, and has been regarded as an incarnation of Valmiki, the author of the Sanskrit Ramayana. Tulsidas' vernacular Ramayana was strongly opposed by learned Brahmins. However, it gained enormous popularity, particularly in North India. Deeply inspired by Valmiki's Ramayana, he created his own version, which, in some details, slightly differs from the original one. Even during Tulsidas' time, the reciting of Ramayana was regarded as an act of devotion. After Tulsidas' death in 1623, his followers enacted the *Ramacharitmanas* during the Rama festival. The tradition spread to other parts of the region, and gradually the originally five-day performance grew into a lavish pageant lasting up to one month.

In 2005, the Ramayana and Ramlila, the traditional performance of the Ramayana was designated by UNESCO as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. According to UNESCO: "Ramlila, literally "Rama's play", is a performance of the Ramayana epic, in a series of scenes that include song, narration, recital and dialogue. It is performed across northern India during the festival of *Dussehra*, held each year according to the ritual calendar in autumn. The most representative Ramlilas are those of Ayodhya, Ramnagar and Benares, Vrindavan, Almora, Sattna and Madhubani.

For the performance, the boys' hands and feet are layered with sandalwood paste and their faces are covered with heavy make-up. Floral motifs decorated with glittering sequins are painted on their chins. They wear gilded crowns and an abundance of flower garlands around their necks. In fact, they are just like live

versions of the religious imagery that is characteristic of the region. Many characters, such as Hanuman and Ravana, are played by adult men wearing masks. In street performances the masks are often made of papier maché, while in more grandiose spectacles the huge masks, for example Hanuman's mask, are made of metal.

The nucleus of the whole pageant is the recitation of Tulsidas' Ramayana. Ramlila bears all the marks of bhakti-related devotional rituals. The style of the performances can be that of melodramatic folk theatre influenced by Indian movies. They can involve dance sequences in various Indian classical and semi-classical styles or even in the glittering style of Bollywood musicals. Although they still serve as reminders of Rama's virtues and victory, they are more entertaining in character than the devotional *Ramlilas*.

Sanskrit Dramas

'Theatre' in Sanskrit is known as *natya*, although this term also covers 'dance' for the simple reason that the two arts were combined in classical India. Another term, *nataka* (or *natakam*), refers to 'drama' that is based on epic themes, although now it is used widely in most Indian languages to mean 'theatre' in the western sense. Ancient Tamil literature refers to 'drama' using the Sanskrit term *nataka*, and several plays are mentioned in subsequent literature, though none survive. The Tamil term *kuttu* is used for more localised, regional and today's folk theatre traditions.

Indian classical theatre, and all Sanskrit literature and many art forms, is guided by an aesthetic theory. The two key terms are *bhava*, the mood or emotion of the dancer, and *rasa*, the distillation of that mood that is evoked in a (discerning) audience. The eight different *rasas* (love, pity, anger, disgust, heroism, awe, terror and comedy) were also later used to describe music and poetry.

Early fragments of a drama by Asvaghosa date from the 1st c. CE, although it seems likely that dramatic performance must have occurred earlier. Two early Sanskrit texts, the *Mahabhasya* ('Great Commentary [on grammar]') and the *Nāṭyaśāstra* ('Treatise on Theatre'), from about the same period, provide evidence of a developed drama form. The earliest extant complete plays are those by Bhasa, Kalidasa and Sudraka (all 5th c. CE).

Some scholars have detected Greek influence in early Indian drama, arguing that plays enacted at the courts of Indo-Greek kings (c. 250 BCE-50 CE) inspired Indian poets to develop their own form. Indeed, the curtain that divided the stage is called *yavanika* (from the Sanskrit word for 'Greek'). The famous 'The Little Clay Cart' also bears a superficial resemblance to the late Greek comedy of the school of Menander.

Manuscripts of plays by both Kalidasa and Sudraka have been copied and transmitted throughout Indian literary history, but Bhasa's 13 plays had been lost for centuries and were known only from mention in other works. In 1912, however, palm-leaf manuscripts were found in an old Brahmin house in south India. None mentioned an author, but linguistic research eventually credited them to *Bhasa*.

The Sanskrit dramas cover a wide range of subjects and types of play. They include full-length poetic love stories, political plays and palace intrigues, as well as shorter farces and one-act love monologues. The foremost drama genre centred on the character of a noble hero. These "heroic dramas", often with plots derived from tradition, are called *natakas*. Another important type of drama is a kind of social play dealing with various kinds of human relationships. These plays, mostly invented by their authors, are called *prakranas*.

The language of Sanskrit dramas is characterized by the blending of classical Sanskrit with local *Prakrit* languages. The royal heroes and Brahman priests, ascetics and high officials use Sanskrit, while women, children and all low-caste characters speak *Prakrit*. Thus the plays, already at the level of language, reflect the social and gender hierarchies of their time. This intermingling of languages may also have been intended to make the plays understandable for those spectators who did not understand Sanskrit. Another characteristic of the dramas is the blending of prose and verse. The verses are mainly in Sanskrit. The alternation of languages as well as prose and verse widens the scale of linguistic expression from "high" to "low", from noble to vulgar, and anything in between.

Plays were performed by troupes of professionals, of both men and women, but amateur dramatics were not unknown (texts refer to performances at court by officials, kings and ladies of the harem). No physical theatre building survives, and it is assumed that plays were performed in palaces or in the homes of rich merchants. A curtain, through which actors emerged, divided the front from the back stage; no curtain divided the actors from the audience. Scenery was non-existent and props were few. Conventional costumes were worn by stock figures, who also used the language of gesture to convey meaning.

Plays began with an invocation to the gods, followed by a long prologue, in which the stage manager or chief actor often discussed with his wife or chief actress the occasion and nature of the event. Most of the play's dialogue was in prose, interspersed with verse, declaimed rather than sung.

Classical Indian drama, like most of Indian literature, did not hold with tragedy. Heroes and heroines might suffer defeat and loss, but a happy ending was not far away. There was, however, sufficient melodrama to satisfy the emotional needs of the audience. Innocent men are led toward execution, chaste wives are driven from their homes and children are separated from their loving parents.

Bhasa, Kalidasa and Shudraka

Very little is known about Bhasa, the earliest (and arguably the greatest) of the classical playwrights. He is dated between 200 BCE and 200 CE, and all that is certain is that he pre-dated Kalidasa and that 13 plays are attributed to him. Many of those plays retell episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and some are tragedies, which was unusual in classical Indian theatre. For example, the *Pratima Nataka* tells the story of Kaikeyi from the Ramayana, usually considered the evil step-mother responsible for the sufferings of Rama and his father. Bhasa, however, shows how she herself suffered from her guilt.

The best-known playwright of the classical period is Kalidasa (5th c. CE), whose fame rests also on his poetry. Three of his plays have survived: 'Malavika and Agnimitra' (a palace intrigue), 'Urvashi Won by Valor' (the Vedic story of Urvashi) and 'The Recognition of Shakuntala'. This last has always been considered his finest work and is still performed today, around the world.

Shakuntala is a love story, between a king and Shakuntala, the foster-daughter of a hermit. After their meeting and falling in love, much of the play describes their love-sickness, as they are unable to meet or marry. When they do meet again, the king gives her a ring to remember him by and to plight their troth. They marry but are cursed by an irascible Brahmin: Shakuntala will lose the ring, and the king will not remember her. In a tragic scene, Shakuntala, pregnant and veiled, is led before the king, who is unable to recall her. In folktale fashion, the lost ring is found by a fisherman inside a fish. The king recovers his memory and all ends happily.

The only other surviving play of significance in this period is *Mrcchakatika* ('The Little Clay Cart') written by Sudraka, a contemporary of Kalidasa. This story is one of the most realistic and the plot one of the most complicated in the large corpus of classical Sanskrit literature. The central narrative concerns a love affair between a poor Brahmin (whose son can only have a little clay cart instead of grander toys) and a virtuous courtesan, but quickly moves into political intrigue, stolen jewels, a vivid court scene and the overthrow of a wicked king. With this moving story, 'The Little Clay Cart' is the most easily appreciated of classical dramas.

1.4 FOLK ELEMENT & INDIAN THEATRE

In rural areas, particularly in villages, when we heard a beat of a musical instrument, an expression enters into the mind which does not exist in the daily lives of people. This is the expression of lives and beliefs of people, their joys, sorrows, their struggle against the forces of nature, then struggle for survival, which form an integral part of life. But an urban educated man calls this as "folk" or "traditional" as the way of their living is quite different from that of rural people.

The traditional and folk theatre of India has not been discussed from the historical point of view so far. After *Natyashastra* of Bharata, a number of works on Drama and Theatre were written in Sanskrit by Abhinava Gupta, Dhananjaya, Sagararani, Sharada Tanaya, Nandikeshwara, but none of them gave the examples of folk type of plays performed in the villages.

We can see folk poetry in the Prakrit work of Hala but the folk and traditional dramatic forms have not been described in any of the books written on drama. But very recently, Dr Raghavan, a Sanskrit scholar, has referred to some of the folk forms in his paper, 'Sanskrit Drama and Performance'. Indian traditional theatre, like its counterpart in any other country, is a very rich and important element of the traditional culture. It is a comprehensive sense of the term it incorporates elements from poetry, music, dance, mime, graphic and plastic arts, religious and civil pageantry, and various decorative arts and crafts. It reflects the people's beliefs and social ways.

For these, it can be said that India is very rich in culture and we have quite a number of folk art forms all over the country, from length and breadth of the country, which are being performed and are entertaining people and the delivery of dramatic speech. Repetition, superimposition, simultaneous speaking and alternation of the speech between the character and the chorus are sonic of the devices of speech delivery. The alternation between the singing of the chorus and presentation of brief dance sequences by the actors is so worked out that the dramatic piece becomes a conjunction of recitation, miming and dancing.

In the scheme of dramatic structure, the use of the chorus is very important. There is a chorus in most of the forms of the traditional theatre, both in the secular forms like 'khval' and 'Terukoothu' and the religious forms like 'Rasleela' and 'Ramleela'. The chorus in Indian theatre has a different character from the Greek though it performs many similar functions. It is a group of singers attached to the play in a secondary capacity and less involved in the action of the play than the Greek chorus. It sings the

narrative text and repeats or accompanies the actors in singing dramatic dialogues. It also sings the entry songs describing the costume, the qualities and dramatic functions of the characters.

In villages, the actors will have some fans (favourites). If a favourite actor is participating in a particular drama, the fans attend those programmes by taking all chances. The actors of traditional theatre are generally very popular in their field. That is why almost all the actors will have fans. Hence, audiences witness the performances from the beginning till end interestingly. Intimacy between the actors and the audience is a factor which vitally determines the nature of the Indian traditional theatre making it a most participative theatre. Intimacy is achieved through many devices and conventions.

In one word, the traditional theatre actors are trained in all the fields related to them. Those who join the traditional theatre have to learn all the branches of that field. After having been trained in all the branches, then only the new actors will be given the chance of acting on the stage. Indian traditional theatre is an actor-based theatre and the actor is primarily a performer well versed in all the arts of the theatre — acting, mime, dance, recitation, music and acrobatics. The actor stands on a bare stage disengaged from any kind of decor, creating the scenic illusion with his own dynamic presence. He keeps all the time intensely busy demonstrating skill in various arts, switching over from one art to another with greatest ease and facility. In "Yakshagana" and "Terukoothu." The performance is set to a heightened pitch and the actors all the time move about in intensely dramatic gait to the accompaniment of drum music, even their sitting and standing poses are highly theatrical and eloquent. Intermittently, they burst into song and join the chorus and when the chorus sings their dialogues they dance in a circle with great gusto.

In these modern days, people began forgetting the traditional folk forms except a few forms in certain areas of India such as Tamasha in Maharashtra, Jatra in Bengal, Ramleela and a few other forms are still in vogue, but the other forms have been vanishing from the scene for want of patronage, infrastructural facilities and the poor conditions of the artists.

For the revival of the regional folk art forms, non-governmental organizations try to study the forms and perform them on par with dramas, from the Government side, the forms can be made part of the syllabus in schools so that there can be a possibility of knowing the form by young children and they can spark their interest towards these traditional folk-art forms in future.

Let's briefly see the various theatrical forms of different states of India.

Bhand Pather (Jashin) - Kashmir

- It is a unique combination of dance, music and acting.
- Satire, wit and parody are preferred for inducing laughter.
- Music is provided with surnai, nagaara and dhol.
- Since the actors are mainly from the farming community, the impact of their way of living, ideals and sensitivity is noticable.

Swang - Haryana

- It is mainly music-based.
- Gradually, prose too, played its role in the dialogues.
- Softness of emotions, accomplishment of rasa along with the development of character can be seen
- Two important styles are from Rohtak and Haathras.
- In the style belonging to Rohtak, the language used is Haryanvi (Bangru)

Nautanki - Uttar Pradesh

- Most popular centres - Kanpur, Lucknow and Haathras.
- The meters used in the verses are: Doha, Chaubola, Chhappai, Behar-e-tabeel.
- Nowadays, women have also started taking part

Raasleela

- It is based exclusively on Lord Krishna legends.
- It is believed that Nand Das wrote the initial plays based on the life of Krishna.
- Dialogues in prose are combined beautifully with songs and scenes from Krishna's pranks.

Bhavai - Gujarat

- Main centers - Kutch and Kathiawar.
- Instruments used are: bhungal, tabla, flute, pakhaawaj, rabaab, sarangi, manjeera, etc.
- There is a rare synthesis of devotional and romantic sentiments.

Jatra - Bengal

- Fairs in honour of gods, or religious rituals and ceremonies have within their framework musical plays are known as Jatra.
- Krishna Jatra became popular due to Chaitanya Prabhu's influence.
- Earlier form of Jatra has been musical & dialogues were added at later stage.

- The actors themselves describe the change of scene, the place of action, etc.

Bhaona (Ankia Naat) - Assam.

- Cultural glimpses of Assam, Bengal Orissa, Mathura and Brindavan can be seen in it.
- The Sutradhaar, or narrator begins the story, first in Sanskrit and then in either Brajoli or Assamese.

Maach - Madhya Pradesh

- Maach is used for the stage itself as also for the play.
- Songs are given prominence in between the dialogues.
- The term for dialogue in this form is bol and rhyme in narration is termed vanag.
- The tunes of this theatre form are known as rangat

Tamaasha - Maharashtra

- Evolved from the folk forms such as Gondhal, Jagran and Kirtan.
- Female actress is the chief exponent of dance movements in the play. She is known as Murki.
- Classical music, footwork at lightning-speed, and vivid gestures make it possible to portray all the emotions through dance.

Dashavatar - Konkan and Goa

- Personify the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu-the god of preservation and creativity. The ten incarnations are Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar), Narsimha (lion-man), Vaman (dwarf), Parashuram, Rama, Krishna (or Balram), Buddha and Kalki.
- Apart from stylized make-up, the Dashavatar performers wear masks of wood and papier mache.

Krishnattam - Kerala

- It came into existence in the middle of 17th century A.D. under the patronage of King Manavada of Calicut.
- Krishnattam is a cycle of eight plays performed for eight consecutive days.
- The plays are Avataram, Kaliyamandana, Rasa krida, kamasavadha, Swayamvaram, Bana Yudham, Vivida Vadham, and Swargarohana.
- Episodes are based on the theme of Lord Krishna - his birth, childhood pranks and various deeds depicting victory of good over evil.

Mudiyettu - Kerala

- It is celebrated in the month of Vrischikam (November-December). performed only in the Kali temples of Kerala, as an oblation to the Goddess.
- It depicts the triumph of goddess Bhadrakali over the asura Darika.
- There are seven characters in Mudiyettu-Shiva, Narada, Darika, Danavendra, Bhadrakali, Kooli and Koimbidar (Nandikeshvara) are all heavily made-up.

Theyyam - Kerala

- 'Theyyam' derived from the Sanskrit word 'Daivam' meaning God hence it is called God's dance.
- Performed by various castes to appease and worship spirits.
- Distinguishing features - colourful costume and awe-inspiring headgears (mudi) nearly 5 to 6 feet high made of arecanut splices, bamboos, leaf sheaths of arecanut and wooden planks and dyed into different strong colours using turmeric, wax.

Koodiyaattam - Kerala

- It is based on Sanskrit theatre traditions.
- Characters of this theatre form are Chakyaar or actor, Naambiyaar, the instrumentalists and Naangyaar, those taking on women's roles.
- The Sutradhar or narrator and the Vidushak or jesters are the protagonists.
- Vidushak alone delivers the dialogues.
- Emphasis on hand gestures and eye movements makes this dance and theatre form unique.

Yakshagaana - Karnataka

- It is based on mythological stories and Puranas.
- The most popular episodes are from the Mahabharata i.e. Draupadi swayamvar, Subhadra vivah, Abhimanyu vadh, Karna-Arjun yuddh and from Ramayana i.e. Raajyaabhishek, Lav-kushYuddh, Baali-Sugreevayuddha and Panchavati.

Therukoothu - Tamil Nadu

- It literally means "street play".
- It is mostly performed at the time of annual temple festivals of Mariamman (Rain goddess) to achieve rich harvest.
- There is a cycle of eight plays based on the life of Draupadi.
- Kattiakaran, the Sutradhara gives the gist of the play to the audience
- Komali entertains the audience with his buffoonery.

Karyala- Himachal Pradesh

- It deals with serious question of life & death briefly and with simplicity of expression & diction, all enveloped in humour.
- Indeed, audience is given essence of our cultural heritage of viewing the world as a stage and as an unsubstantial pageant which is to be negotiated and lived by rising above it.
- There is often stylistic diversity, which strengthens their identity from Swang, Nautanki, Bhagat, etc.

Today, folk theatre is considered an art form that keeps the basic elements of a drama intact, while taking on the stories and flavours of the region its stems from. This very aspect makes folk theater a vibrant and vital aspect of India's intangible cultural heritage.

1.5 BLACK THEATRE

The minstrel shows of the early 19th century are believed by some to be the roots of Black theatre, but they initially were written by whites, acted by whites in blackface, and performed for white audiences. After the American Civil War, Black actors began to perform in minstrel shows (then called "Ethiopian minstrelsy"), and by the turn of the 20th century they were producing Black musicals, many of which were written, produced, and acted entirely by African Americans. The first known play by a Black American was James Brown's *King Shotaway* (1823). William Wells Brown's *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom* (1858), was the first Black play published, but the first real success of an African American dramatist was Angelina W. Grimké's *Rachel* (1916).

Black theatre flourished during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and '30s. Experimental groups and Black theatre companies emerged in Chicago, New York City, and Washington, D.C. Among these was the Ethiopian Art Theatre, which established Paul Robeson as America's foremost Black actor. Garland Anderson's play *Appearances* (1925) was the first play of African American authorship to be produced on Broadway, but Black theatre did not create a Broadway hit until Langston Hughes's *Mulatto* (1935) won wide acclaim. In that same year the Federal Theatre Project was founded, providing a training ground for African Americans. In the late 1930s, Black community theatres began to appear, revealing talents such as those of Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. By 1940 Black theatre was firmly grounded in the American Negro Theater and the Negro Playwrights' Company.

After World War II Black theatre grew more progressive, more radical, and sometimes more militant, reflecting the ideals of Black revolution and seeking to establish a mythology and

symbolism apart from white culture. Councils were organized to abolish the use of racial stereotypes in theatre and to integrate African American playwrights into the mainstream of American dramaturgy. Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) and other successful Black plays of the 1950s portrayed the difficulty of African Americans maintaining an identity in a society that degraded them.

The 1960s saw the emergence of a new Black theatre, angrier and more defiant than its predecessors, with Amiri Baraka (originally LeRoi Jones) as its strongest proponent. Baraka's plays, including the award-winning *Dutchman* (1964), depicted whites' exploitation of African Americans. He established the Black Arts Repertory Theatre in Harlem in 1965 and inspired playwright Ed Bullins and others seeking to create a strong 'Black Aesthetic' in American theatre. During the 1980s and '90s August Wilson, Suzan-Lori Parks, and George Wolfe were among the most important creators of Black theatre.

- The origins of black theater in America can be traced back to the slave trade and the continuation of African performance traditions.
- Some of these traditions included the oral telling of folktales, improvisation, songs and dances like the get down and ring shout.
- In the early years of the slave trade, Africans were only able to put on private performances at plantations and the homes of their owners.
- The first black characters to appear on stage, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were white people wearing 'blackface' make up.
- They would appear at intervals in white productions as comic relief, usually playing dim-witted servants.
- The use of blackface characters grew in popularity in the 1820s and so-called teams of 'Ethiopian delineators' would put on performances consisting of comic skits, variety acts, dance and 'Negro Songs.'
- The African characters were portrayed as racist caricatures: lazy, buffoonish, superstitious and stupid.
- The performances were usually burlesque and aimed at a low-brow audience but they soon infiltrated the opera house, first as entr'actes and eventually taking over completely to become America's first national art form.

In New York, a free black man from the West Indies, William Henry Brown, attempted to get a genuine black theater company off the ground. His **African Grove Theater** performed Shakespeare plays and launched the career of Ira Aldridge but was quickly shut down by the authorities on trumped up charges of boisterous behavior. The theater burned down five years after it first opened its doors. During the African Grove's brief existence, Brown is believed to have published the first ever play by a black playwright, *'The Drama of King Shotaway'* but no copies of this play are known to exist.

Following the civil war, genuine blacks became regularly involved in Ethiopian Minstrelsy although they would generally follow the same conventions as the whites, including applying blackface. These included Bahamian-American Bert Williams and African-American George Walker who formed the Williams and Walker Co.

- In 1903, Bert Williams and George Walker starred together in 'In Dahomey', another Cook and Dunbar production and the first all-black musical comedy to play in a major Broadway theater.
- In 1907, Ernest Hogan became the first African American to both produce and star in a Broadway production when he presented *'The Oyster Man'*, a show often credited with popularizing the musical genre of ragtime.
- In 1916, Angelina W. Grimke's *'Rachel'* became the first play authored by a black person and featuring a black cast to be presented to a mixed audience. The play, which painted a bleak picture of racial discrimination, was a success but black theater still had a long way to go.

From 1916 to 1940: The Flourishing of Black Theater

This period saw African Americans create numerous experimental groups and theater companies in major cities like Chicago, Washington D.C. And, of course, New York. The Harlem Renaissance also saw Broadway present the first play to feature an all-black cast: Ridgely Torrence's *'Three Plays for a Negro Theatre'* (1917). The plays were performed at both the New York's Garden City and Garrick theaters.

According to author and civil rights activist James Weldon Johnson, this was the single most important event in the entire history of black theatre. In 1921, Eubie Blake and Noble Lee Sissle presented *'Shuffle Along'* to a Broadway audience. The musical was hugely popular and showed more than 500 times. It introduced Paul Robeson, an influential artist

and civil rights activist, to the world. Nevertheless, it was another six years before Garland Anderson's *'Appearances'* (1925) became the first play of black authorship to make the Broadway stage. African American poet Langston Hughes' *'Mulatto: A Tragedy of the Deep South'* (1935), produced and directed by Martin Jones, was the first play of black authorship to receive widespread success.

Over the next two decades, African Americans continued to set up various professional and community theaters and launch the careers of exciting new actors such as Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. The Federal Theatre Project, launched in 1935 with the aim of supporting racial integration, facilitated the opening of the American Negro Theater (ANT) by the actors Abram Hill and Frederik O'Neal. The ANT produced 19 plays in 9 years. The FTP's Negro Unit also supported left-leaning political playwright Theodore Ward as he created his first full-length production, *'Big White Fog'* (1938), in Chicago. Concerned by the increasingly controversial themes of its productions, Congress shut down the FTP, prompting Ward to move his play Off-Broadway to Harlem's Lincoln Theatre as the first play under his new project: The Negro Playwrights' Company. A year later, America entered World War II and African Americans were drawing uncomfortable parallels between the Nazism America was fighting abroad and the racism that they experienced at home. The black theater of the post-World War period grew to increasingly challenge this contradiction.

Post World War II: A Change in Style

Following the war, African Americans were beginning to move towards a more progressive and radical – even militant – stance towards the majority white culture. This was reflected in 1940s and 1950s black theater with plays such as Lorraine Hansbury's *'A Raisin in the Sun'* commenting on the difficulties of preserving identity in a racist culture. At the same time, there was a brief boom in Broadway musicals featuring all black casts. This had started back in 1940 when Vernon Duke put on *'Cabin in the Sky'*, a parable of life for African Americans in the South. Then, in 1943, Oscar Hammerstein presented a successful version of the opera *'Carmen'* (*'Carmen Jones'*), also set in the American South.

In 1946, the revue *'Call Me Mister'* focused on returning American troops and featured a song bemoaning the racism that prevented a successful serviceman from being employed in his own country. That same year, Harold Arlen and Jonny Mercer presented *'St Louis Woman'*, a musical based on the novel *'God Sends Sunday'* which was written by African

American author Arna Bontemps. The production was beset with problems from the outset though, receiving criticism from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) for offering roles which 'detracted from the dignity of our race.'

Taking on the Mainstream Culture in the 1960s and 1970s

An increasingly angry black rights movement found its natural home in the growing Off-Broadway movement where experimental and controversial plays could be more easily shown. Two of the biggest names in black theater from the 1960s and 1970s were Everett LeRoi Jones and Ed Bullins who both became fierce proponents of the Black Arts Movement following the assassination of civil rights activist Malcolm X in 1965. Prior to this, Jones had won an Off-Broadway (Obie) award for his hard-hitting play *'Dutchman and the Slave'* (1964) which is set on a New York subway and centers on a dialogue between a white woman Lulu and black man Clay.

Following Malcolm X's assassination, Jones moved to Harlem, changed his name to Amiri Baraka and set up the Black Arts Repertory Theater as the home for a new Black Arts Movement (BAM), the so-called 'aesthetic and spiritual sister' to the Black Power political movement. Baraka and his fellow BAM playwrights believed that equality could only come about through creating a strong and powerful black aesthetic that stood in opposition to the dominant white culture.

Inspired by *'Dutchman'*, Ed Bullins joined the BAM cause and became one of the most prolific playwrights of the 1960s and 1970s. His plays, which often incorporated street lyricism and focused on racial and political tensions, include *'In the Wine Time'* (1968), *'Goin a Buffalo'* (1968), *'The Gentleman Caller'* (1969) and *'The Taking of Miss Janie'* (1975).

Much of the output of the BAM (including *'The Taking of Miss Janie'*) exploited the imagery of sexual aggression against women which complicated the relationship black women had with the feminist movement. This issue was dramatized in Adrienne Kennedy's 1964 play, *'Funny house of a Negro.'*

The 1970s saw black musicals return to Broadway with Melvin Van Peebles' *'Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death'* (1971) and Charlie Smalls' *'The Wiz'* (1975) among the most popular. *'The Wiz'*, based on Frank Baum's *'Wizard of Oz'* ran for four years and won seven Tony awards, including that year's best musical.

Black Theatre from the 80s to the 90s

During the late 1960s, BAM activist August Wilson co-founded the Black Horizons Theatre in Pittsburgh. Wilson's most successful Broadway plays were *'Fences'* (1987), which was set in the 1950s and focused on a conflict between father and son, and *'The Piano Lesson'* (1990), set in the 1930s and featuring a family's mixed feelings over an heirloom. Both plays were awarded Pulitzers. The August Wilson Theatre became the first Broadway theater to bear an African-American's name when the Virginia Theatre was renamed after him in 2005, two weeks after his death.

Another highly acclaimed African-American playwright to make his mark on Broadway towards the end of the 20th Century was George Wolfe. His first Broadway play, *'Jelly's Last Jam'* (1992) was performed at the Virginia Theatre. Wolfe is mainly associated with his Tony award-winning plays *'Angels in America: Millennium Approaches'* (1993) and *'Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk'* (1996).

The State of Black Theatre in the 21st Century

The turn of the century finally saw an African-American woman win a Pulitzer with Suzan Lori-Parks' play *'Top Dog/Underdog'* (2001). More recently, black actors have been playing leading roles which have been traditionally portrayed by whites. These include Noma Dumezweni as Hermione Granger in *'Harry Potter and the Cursed Child'* (2015); Christiani Pitts as Ann Darrow in *'King Kong'* (2018); Jelani Alladin as Kristoff in *'Frozen'* (2018) and Brittney Johnson as the first black woman to play Glinda the Good Witch in *'Wicked'* (2019), another adaptation of *'Wizard of Oz.'*

However, critics of black representation on Broadway have pointed out that only three plays in the 2018/19 season directly spoke to the black experience. Finally, we summarize some of the key plays which have shaped black theater in America from the early 19th Century to the current day.

Points to Remember:

- The Drama of King Shotaway – William Henry Brown (1823). Thought to be the first ever play produced by a black playwright. No copies exist.
- The Escape/A Leap for Freedom – William Wells Brown (1858). The first play produced by a black playwright that is still in existence.
- Clorindy / The Origin of the Cakewalk – Paul Laurence Dunbar/Will Marion Cook (1898). The first Broadway musical to feature an all-black cast.

- In Dahomey – Paul Laurence Dunbar/Will Marion Cook/Jesse Shipp (1903).The first all-black musical comedy to play in a major Broadway theater
- The Oyster Man – Ernest Hogan (1907).Hogan was the first African American to both produce and star in a Broadway production.
- Rachel – Angeline W. Grimke (1916).The first play authored by a black person and featuring a black cast to be presented to a mixed audience.
- Three Plays for a Negro Theatre – Ridgely Torrence (1917).The first Broadway play to feature an all-black cast
- Shuffle Along – Eubie Blake/Noble Lee Sissle (1921).Hugely popular Broadway musical featuring Paul Robeson and shown more than 500 times.
- Appearances – Garland Anderson (1925).The first Broadway play of black authorship
- Mulatto: A Tragedy of the Deep South – Martin Jones (1935).Written by Langston Hughes, Mulatto was the first play of black authorship to receive widespread success.
- Big White Fog – Theodore Ward (1938).A play about the fictional Mason family and depicting the emerging conflict between African American integrationist and nationalist sympathies.
- A Raisin in the Sun – Lorraine Hansbury (1959).A Broadway play commenting on the difficulties of preserving African American identity in a racist culture.
- Street Scene – Kurt Weill / Langston Hughes (1947).First major interracial Broadway collaboration
- Dutchman and the Slave – LeRoi Jones (1964).Hard-hitting off-Broadway play centering on a dialogue between a white woman Lulu and black man Clay. Jones received an Obie and later changed his name to Amiri Baraka.
- The Wiz – Charlie Smalls (1975).A Broadway musical based on the Wizard of Oz, The Wiz won seven Tony awards including Best Musical.
- Ma Rainey's Black Bottom – August Wilson (1984).First of Wilson's 10-play Pittsburgh Cycle which charted the lives of various characters from the 1920s to the 1990s.
- Top Dog/Underdog – Suzan Lori-Parks (2001).First African-American female playwright to win a Pulitzer Prize.

Black Theatre Characteristics

Black Theatre should be:

- a) **About Black people** – The plays must have plots, which reveal African American life.
- b) **By Black people** – The plays must be written by a Black playwright.
- c) **For Black people** – The plays must be written for Black people.
- d) **Near Black people** – The theatre must be located or near a Black neighborhood.

(The above theatre characteristics come from the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois.)

Black Theatre should be:

- a) **Functional** – It should have a purpose and teach a lesson.
- b) **Collective** – It should be group oriented. Group concerns have priority over individual concerns.
- c) **Committed** – These plays advance the struggle for empowerment and freedom for Black people.

(The above theatre characteristics come from the writings of Ron Karenga, the father of Kwanza.)

The audience consideration.

The play:

- a) Encourages the audience to participate with the performance through call and response. In Black theatre when the actors hear the audience, it affects their performance (good or bad).
- b) It elicits thought and action on the part of the audience. When you leave the theatre, it should cause you to think about yourself, the play, and possibly change your life.
- c) The play should be entertaining.
- d) The play should indulge in African-American dialect and linguistic features.

To conclude Black Theatre then as an expression of Black Consciousness was concerned with the beauty of a culture that had been ravished by white society. Black theatre was to regain this beauty, a beauty that was to bring out the absolute being in Black People, a people with pride in their communities and in their selves.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit has defined and discussed five prescribed literary terms such as elements of drama, Greek Theatre, Indian Classical Theatre, Folk Theatre and Black Theatre. The fundamental glimpses of these dramatic terms help to understand the ancient classical theatre, Indian classical and modern plays including the folk tradition of theatre in India. Besides, the notion of Black Theatre is the new chapter in not only the American literature but also in the world literature.

1.7 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The questions in this unit shall be asked in the short notes therefore you need to understand each literary term clearly.

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UNIT-2

LAST SIX LITERARY TERMS PART II

Unit Structure:

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Realism and Naturalism
- 2.2 Poetic Drama
- 2.3 Angry Theatre
- 2.4 Street Play/Theatre
- 2.5 Third Theatre
- 2.6 One Act Play
- 2.7 Let's Sum Up
- 2.8 Important Questions
- 2.9 References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you will be able to understand the following dramatic terms—realism and naturalism, poetic drama, angry theatre, street theatre and one act play. The glimpses of these will prepare you to understand and interpret drama as a genre of literature.

2.1 REALISTIC AND NATURALISTIC THEATRE

The two schools of thought and subsequent movements in the theatre were distinct and separate, though blurred with historical time lines and similarities in style. As a result, the move towards a more authentic form of drama on the stage in the mid-late 19th century is often considered one period. If realism and naturalism in the theatre were two movements, which one came first? Well, that depends on who you read. One thing is for sure though; the over-the-top melodramas full of spectacle in early to mid-19th century were to be no more. In terms of style, the words realism and naturalism are frustratingly used interchangeably to mean the same, yet they are not. They are similar, yes, but have many differences.

Realism

Realism came about partly as a response to these new social / artistic conditions. The "movement" began in France and by 1860 had some general precepts:

1. Truth resides in material objects we perceived to all five senses; truth is verified through science
2. The scientific method—observation—would solve everything
3. Human problems were the highest were home of science. Art—according to the realist view—had as its purpose to better mankind.

Realism is the artistic attempt to recreate life as it is in the context of an artistic medium. Realism began as an artistic movement in the 18th Century in Europe and America and a late 19th Century movement for drama and the stage.

Drama was to involve the direct observation of human behaviour; therefore, there was the need to use contemporary settings and time periods, and it was to deal with a temporary life and problems has subjects. Also, the common man and common situations were subjects for drama, not just the upper classes, kings, and queens. The characteristic features of realism can be presented as:

- Psychological reality, people trapped in social situations, hope in hopeless situations.
- Characters are believable, everyday types
- Costumes are authentic
- The realist movement in the theatre and subsequent performance style have greatly influenced 20th century theatre and cinema and its effects are still being felt today
- Triggered by Stanislavski's system of realistic acting at the turn of the 20th century, America grabbed hold of its own brand of this performance style (American realism) and acting (method acting) in the 1930s, 40s and 50s (The Group Theatre, The Actors Studio)
- Stage settings (locations) and props are often indoors and believable
- The 'box set' is normally used for realistic dramas on stage, consisting of three walls and an invisible 'fourth wall' facing the audience
- Settings for realistic plays are often bland (deliberately ordinary)
- Dialogue is not heightened for effect, but that of everyday speech (vernacular)

- The drama is typically psychologically driven, where the plot is secondary and primary focus is placed on the interior lives of characters, their motives, the reactions of others etc.
- Realistic plays often see the protagonist (main character) rise up against the odds to assert him/herself against an injustice of some kind (e.g. Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*)
- Realistic dramas quickly gained popularity because the everyday person in the audience could identify with the situations and characters on stage
- Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (*A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabler*) is considered the father of modern realism in the theatre

Naturalism

While Ibsen was perfecting realism, France was demanding a new drama based on Darwinism: all forms of life developed gradually from common ancestry; and evolution of species is explained by survival of the fittest.

Naturalism became a conscious movement in France in the 1870's; Emile Zola (1849-1902) was an admirer of Comte and an advocate of the scientific method. Literature, he felt, must become scientific or perish; it should illustrate the inevitable laws of heredity and environment or record case studies. To experiment with the same detachment as a scientist, the writer could become like a doctor (seeking the cause of disease to cure it, bringing the disease in the open to be examined), aiming to cure social ills.

Zola's first major statement came in a novel, *Thérèse Raquin*, which was dramatized in 1873; his preface states his views. He also wrote a few treatises about naturalism in the theatre and in the novel: he wanted art to detect "a scrap of an existence."

Even though *Thérèse Raquin* failed to adhere to most of the principles of naturalism, except in the setting (it was mostly a melodrama about murder and retribution), his followers were even more zealous. The most famous phrase we hear about naturalism is that it should be "a slice of life." We often tend to forget what a later French writer stated should be included with that phrase: "... put on the stage with art."

The trend during the 19th century to present reality in as convincing and natural a way as possible, so that the external details of scene setting and of character portrayal were emphasized. Much importance was given to costumes, props and make-up - getting it to look just right. But by seeking to portray the world 'naturally', however, mainstream naturalism often got tied up in the details, and lost track of the content. Structure and storyline were very important, with a focus on character allowing the

audience to become emotionally involved rather than detached. The Naturalism can be described as:

- In terms of style, naturalism is an extreme or heightened form of realism
- As a theatrical movement and performance style, naturalism was short-lived
- Stage time equals real time – e.g. three hours in the theatre equals three hours for the characters in the world of the play
- Costumes, sets and props are historically accurate and very detailed, attempting to offer a photographic reproduction of reality ('slice of life')
- As with realism, settings for naturalistic dramas are often bland and ordinary
- Naturalistic dramas normally follow rules set out by the Greek philosopher Aristotle, known as 'the three unities' (of time, place and action)
- The action of the play takes place in a single location over the time frame of a single day - jumps in time and/or place between acts or scenes is not allowed
- Playwrights were influenced by naturalist manifestos written by French novelist and playwright Emile Zola in the preface to *Therese Raquin* (1867 novel, 1873 play) and Swedish playwright August Strindberg in the preface to *Miss Julie* (1888)
- Naturalism explores the concept of scientific determinism (spawning from Charles Darwin's theory of evolution) – characters in the play are shaped by their circumstances and controlled by external forces such as hereditary or their social and economic environment
- Often characters in naturalistic plays are considered victims of their own circumstance and this is why they behave in certain ways (they are seen as helpless products of their environment)
- Characters are often working class/lower class (as opposed to the mostly middle-class characters of realistic dramas)
- Naturalistic plays regularly explore sordid subject matter previously considered taboo on the stage in any serious manner (e.g. suicide, poverty, prostitution)

Writers of Realism (and Naturalism)

In France, too Playwrights helped popularized the idea of realism but both clung to two inherent traditional morality and values:

Alexandre Dumas Fils (the *fils* stands for "son," and designates the "illegitimate son of Alexandre Dumas") – (1824-1895). His novel, *Camille*, was dramatized in 1849. About a "kept woman," the play was written in prose, and dealt with contemporary life. Eventually, he wrote "thesis plays," about contemporary social problems.

Emile Augier (1820-1889) also wrote plays about contemporary conditions.

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) from Norway is considered to be the father of modern realistic drama. His plays attacked society's values and dealt with unconventional subjects within the form of the well-made play (causally related).

Ibsen perfected the well-made play formula; and by using a familiar formula made his plays, with a very shocking subject matter, acceptable. He discarded soliloquies, asides, etc. Exposition in the plays was motivated, there were causally related scenes, inner psychological motivation was emphasized, the environment had an influence on characters' personalities, and all the things, characters did and all of things the characters used revealed their socio-economic milieu. He became a model for later realistic writers.

Among the subjects addressed by Ibsen in his plays are: *euthanasia, the role of women, war and business, and syphilis*.

Some of Ibsen's plays are:

- *Ghosts*—1881—dealt with the concept of the sins of the father transferring to the son, resulting in syphilis.
- *Pillars of Society* – 1877 – dealt with war and business.
- *Hedda Gabler* – 1890 – a powerful woman takes her life at the end of the play to get away from her boredom with society.
- *A Doll's House* – 1879 – Nora leaves her husband Torvald and her children at the end of the play; often considered "the slam heard around the world," Nora's action must have been very shocking to the Victorian audience.

Later in life, Ibsen turned to more symbolic and abstract dramas; but his "realism" affected others, and helped lead to realistic theatre, which has become, despite variations and rejections against it, the predominant form of theatre even today.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) – in England

Uncommon for his witty humor, Shaw made fun of societies' notion using for the purpose of educating and changing. His plays

tended to show the accepted attitude, then demolished that attitude while showing his own solutions.

- *Arms and the Man* (1894) – about love and war and honor.
- *Mrs. Warren's Profession* – prostitution.
- *Major Barbara* (1905) – a munitions manufacturer gives more to the world (jobs, etc.) while the Salvation Army only prolongs of the status quo.
- *Pygmalion* (1913) – shows the transforming of a flower girl into a society woman, and exposes the phoniness of society. The musical *My Fair Lady* was based on this play.

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) – in Russia

Chekhov is known more for poetic expiration and symbolism, compelling psychological reality, people trapped in social situations, hope in hopeless situations. He claimed that he wrote comedies; others think they are sad and tragic. Characters in Chekhov's plays seem to have a fate that is a direct result of what they are. His plays have an illusion of plot-less-ness.

Again, his realism has affected other playwrights, as did his symbolic meanings in the texts of his plays and in the titles of his plays.

Realism like Naturalism had a significant effect on modern theatrical development, from its origins in the mid-nineteenth century until the present day. It affected the way that productions were staged, acted and presented although it was not the only movement that affected the way that audiences thought.

In the later work of writers such as Strindberg and Ibsen the effects of expressionism began to appear and by the start of the twentieth century, new technologies such as cinema and later television provided ways of perceiving and representing the world in a totally new way.

2.2 POETIC DRAMA

The poetic drama is a great achievement of the modern age. It is a mixture of high seriousness and colloquial element. It is the combination of the tradition and the experiment and of the ancient and the new. It is symbolic and difficult. Its verse form is blank verse or free verse. In short, its vehicle is verse, its mechanism is imagery, its substance is myth and its binding force is musical pattern.

English poetic drama in the present century arose as a reaction to the naturalistic prose drama of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy. By the second decade of the century, this prose drama

had reached a dead end. On the whole, this prose drama, in a decadent stage after the best work of Shaw, had failed to grasp the depth, tension and complexity of contemporary life. It was a mere entertainment and did not maintain any high levels. It concerned itself entirely with social and economic problems to the entire exclusion of deeper and more fundamental issues. It aimed at photographic realism, avoided the romantic and the poetic, and had grown too intellectual and sophisticated. It appealed to the mind rather than to the heart. The result was that a number of writers, who had made their first reputation as poets, and not as dramatists, tried to revive the tradition of verse play for the "Little Theatre", i.e. theatre for specialized audiences.

Herod, the first poetic-play of Stephen Phillips, appeared in 1901, and this marks the beginning of the revival of poetic drama in the 20th century. Irish dramatists, like W.B. Yeats, J.M. Synge, Sean O'Casey, also played a significant part in the moment for the revival of verse play. Other great names in the revival movement are John Masefield, Christopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Christopher Fry. However, it is T.S. Eliot who, both through his theory and practice of poetic drama, has achieved considerable success in establishing tradition of poetic plays in the 20th century.

The 18th and the 19th century contributed little to the development of poetic drama due to the unfavourable conditions. There were signs of rebirth of this drama by 1920. But it could not gain much ground. The reason was that most of the dramatists of this period were interested in realistic drama. A change was noticed with the passage of time. The disciples of Ibsen began to be overshadowed. At the Abbey Theatre Yeats tried to revive poetic drama. But he could not succeed. It was T.S. Eliot who firmly established it. He prepared the concrete ground for it by saying that the craving for poetic drama is permanent in human nature. He added that poetry was the complete medium for drama.

Before T.S. Eliot some dramatists tried to create a taste for poetic drama. This attempt helped Eliot in making his valuable experiments in poetic drama. Among these dramatists Stephen Phillis, John Masefield, Gordon Bottomley, Flecker and John Drinkwater are important. They all experimented in Poetic Drama and prepared ground for Eliot. Their plays vitalised the course of poetic drama.

W.B. Yeats:

W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and J.M. Synge established the Abbey theatre in Dublin to encourage the poet - playwrights. At this theatre Yeats endeavoured to revive poetic drama. He wrote about twenty-six plays in verse but Yeats was more of a poet than

dramatist. His plays are rich in poetical intensity. Eliot has praised his contribution to poetic drama. Yeats' important plays are on Baile's Strand, The Resurrection and Deirdre.

T.S. Eliot:

Eliot propounded the theory of the poetic drama. It was he who established its tradition in 20th century. *The Murder in the Cathedral* is his first full-length poetic play. *The Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party*, *The Confidential Clerk* and the *Elder Statesman* are his other important poetic plays. Through these plays he evolved a befitting poetic mode of expression for the poetic drama. He discarded the use of traditional blank verse. He carefully avoided any echo of Shakespeare. He explored the dramatic possibility of verse and extended the scope of poetic drama.

Auden and Isherwood:

Auden wrote two plays alone and three plays in collaboration with Isherwood. Auden's *The Dance of Death* is an important poetic drama. Isherwood's *Ascent of F6* and *Across the Frontiers* are important plays. His plays deal with symbolic situation and cartoon characters.

Stephen Spender:

He wrote *Trial of a Judge*. But it can't be considered to be a poetic play of permanent value. John Masefield, Drinkwater, Macneice, Duncan, and Ridler are the other dramatists that have enriched the field of the poetic drama.

Christopher Fry:

His *'The Lady Is Not for Burning'* is an important experiment in verse and technique. In *'Venus Observed'* Fry uses simple poetic language.

Eliot took to writing plays comparatively late in his career; he came to theatre as a mature critic and poet. He had a full understanding of the nature of poetic drama, the difference between verse drama and prose drama, the causes of the failure of 19th century verse dramatists, the problem, technical and otherwise, which face a writer of verse plays in the modern age. Through his critical writings, he tried to demolish many of the misconceptions about verse drama, emphasised its superiority over prose drama, and in this way created a favourable atmosphere, "a current of fresh ideas", as Matthew Arnold would put it, for the flourishing of poetic drama. Through his own practice, he showed that verse drama is possible in the modern age.

Thematic Problem

T. S. Eliot emphasized that there are certain conditions which must be fulfilled before success can be achieved in this field.

First, it must be realised that the difference between prose drama and verse drama is not merely one of medium. The themes of the two are, and must be different. Poetic drama has been thought fit only for such themes as cannot be appropriately dealt with by the naturalistic prose drama. T.S. Eliot writes, “.....no play should be written in verse for which prose is dramatically adequate”. The dramatic adequacy then demands a poignant theme, involving symbolic characters with imaginative atmosphere; this means a fall back on the elemental, emotional realities of life in contradistinction to the socio-economic issues which constitute the realm of the naturalistic prose drama.

Through his practice, Eliot solved the thematic problem. His verse-plays are not concerned with socio-economic problems; they are concerned not with the outer, but with the inner emotional and psychic realities. Thus the core of his first play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, is the psychic struggle of the hero with the temptations offered to him, and that of *The Family Reunion* the psychological guilt-complex of Harry, the hero of the play; *The Cocktail Party* is a study in the awareness of personal inadequacies of married life in the modern context. In these plays, he has also demonstrated the relevance of religion to all human activity. They are all Christian plays, the purpose of the dramatist being, “to train people to be able to think in Christian categories.” In this way, “Eliot has been contributing to the creation of the kind of wholeness of outlook without which poetic drama cannot be accepted as the normal mode of drama.” (D.E. Jones)

Eliot distinguishes between false and true rhetoric and says that the employment of false rhetorical utterances is incompatible with the concept of poetry as a medium. The presence of false rhetoric not only brings to consciousness the remoteness of the rhetorical dialogue from the spoken language, but also exploits the sentiments of the auditors, and in this way destroys the dramatic detachment of the audience. The contention that poetry should become a medium, and not a decoration, implies that it should serve the following purposes: first through poetic images as the objective correlatives of the states of mind, poetry should help in the revelation of the personality—pattern of the characters; secondly, through poetic symbolism it should work out the implications of the theme; thirdly, the scenic setting of the play should be revealed through poetic manipulations of references. The fourth and the last condition for the successful revival of poetic drama, according to Eliot, is the re-orientation of the attitude of the audience.

The Elizabethan audience accepted with, “willing suspension of disbelief, the convention of making the high personages speak in verse and the low in prose. No such frame of mind exists today,

with the result that the attention of audience is distracted from the play to poetry, the moment any character starts speaking in verse.

The true home of the poetic drama is Ireland, which saw a brilliant revival of the dramatic literature. The establishment of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin in 1904, through the generosity of Miss Horniman attracted the famous Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory who became its Directors.

The idea of a national drama, the Irish drama was born in the minds of these famous writers and they wrote plays for this stage. Later on it attracted more playwrights but these three remain the most outstanding figures in the scene.

They looked upon the drama as a thing of the emotions and reacting against the current realism, sought their themes among the legends, folk-lore and peasantry of Ireland. In their drama we have poetry in the truest sense.

W. B. Yeats wrote some twenty plays for this theatre, leaving aside his lyric poetry for the time being, in order to put the Irish drama on a firm footing. Among these poetic dramas, mention may be made of *The Shadowy Waters* (1900), *The Golden Hemet* (1910), *Deirdre* etc.

Lady Gregory had a talent for comedy but her contribution was not much. *Spreading the News* is probably her best play. Her one-act play, *The Rising of the Moon* with its intermingling of high patriotic seriousness and *Quixotic* comedy will always live as literature and drama.

Thus, Poetic Drama is one in which poetry and drama are fused. Since the dialogue between the characters is in verse, the play becomes a combination of music, imagery, and ritual. These factors create high intensity and dramatic effect, making poetic drama an important feature to study.

2.3. ANGRY THEATRE

Anger as a force in 1950s literature had its origins in a group known as the Movement. Deeply English in outlook, the Movement was a gathering of poets including Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Elizabeth Jennings, Thom Gunn, John Wain, D J Enright and Robert Conquest. The Movement can be seen as an aggressive, skeptical, patriotic backlash against the cosmopolitan elites of the 1930s and 1940s. The poets in the group rejected modernism, avant-garde experimentation, romanticism and the metaphorical fireworks of poets such as Dylan Thomas. Their verse was ironical, down to earth, non-sentimental and rooted in a nostalgic idea of

English identity. European sympathies were regarded as unmistakable signs of intellectual pretentiousness and moral turpitude. The Movement had members who were Oxbridge-educated (Oxford and Cambridge), white, predominantly male (Jennings was the only woman in the group, and she was a late arrival), middle-class, Europhobic and for the most part heterosexual. Even so, they caught the mood of their time, and Larkin and Amis in particular are undeniably major figures in English literature.

The Movement produced two anthologies, Enright's *Poets of the 1950s* (1955) and Conquest's *New Lines* (1956), but while Amis achieved some success as part of the group with his poetry it was his debut novel, *Lucky Jim* (1954), which secured his reputation. With the novel's central character, Jim Dixon, Amis gave English literature an unlikely new hero, one who was very much in tune with the modern age.

His *Angry Young Men* came about as a howl of rage against the class system, the literary elite and the Establishment has been questioned. What cannot be doubted, however, is that the Angry Young Men shook things up and got themselves noticed. *Lucky Jim* was a best seller, *Look Back in Anger* roused strong emotions and the writers who followed Amis and Osborne made the literary establishment sit up and take notice. The Angry Young Men may have been loud, crude and even obnoxious, but they gave literature a fresh impetus and they helped theatre regain its relevance to modern life.

As a group of mostly working and middle-class British playwrights and novelists who became prominent in the 1950s. with leading members including John Osborne and Kingsley Amis. The phrase was originally coined by the Royal Court Theatre's press officer to promote John Osborne's 1956 play *Look Back in Anger*. Their impatience and resentment were especially aroused by what they perceived as the hypocrisy and mediocrity of the upper and middle classes. They shared an outspoken irreverence for the British class system, its traditional network of pedigreed families, and the elitist Oxford and Cambridge universities. They showed an equally uninhibited disdain for the drabness of the postwar welfare state, and their writings frequently expressed raw anger and frustration as the postwar reforms failed to meet exalted aspirations for genuine change.

The Angry Young Men were:

- Many British novelists and playwrights, who emerged in the 1950s, expressed scorn and disaffection with the established sociopolitical order of their country.

- Their impatience and resentment were especially aroused by what they perceived as the hypocrisy and mediocrity of the upper and middle classes.
- The Angry Young Men were a new breed of intellectuals who were mostly of working class or of lower middle-class origin.
- Some had been educated at the postwar red-brick universities at the state's expense, though a few were from Oxford.
- They shared an outspoken irreverence for the British class system, its traditional network of pedigreed families, and the elitist Oxford and Cambridge universities.
- They showed an equally uninhibited disdain for the drabness of the postwar welfare state, and their writings frequently expressed raw anger and frustration as the postwar reforms failed to meet exalted aspirations for genuine change.
- Another frequent subject in this age is the depiction of the position of the youth in society. The writers often portrayed the central hero being disillusioned with the life and dissatisfied with their job and a society where he is unfit and deprived of normal rights.
- Angry Young Men literature strongly revolted against all the accepted norms and ideals. Typically, the hero is a rootless, lower-middle or working-class male psyche with a university degree. He expresses his dissatisfaction towards social ills with excessive anger and sardonic humor. He often indulges into adultery and inebriation to escape from complexities of life. In life, he is the very epitome of a frustrated post-World War II generation.

Let's briefly look at the prominent works of this genre.

Kingsley Amis and *Lucky Jim*

Lucky Jim tells the story of Jim Dixon, a lecturer at one of Britain's new redbrick universities. Dixon, especially to modern eyes, is an affable Everyman; the chap in the street; the down-to-earth fairly decent bloke with a taste for beer and jazz and with an eye for pretty girls. What he is not is an intellectual; it is Dixon's ordinariness and his lack of heroic qualities that make him such a radical departure for English literature. He has the unheroic aim in life of keeping his job while doing as little work as possible. He is also – and here Amis shows his roots in the Movement – suspicious of anything foreign, and has a horror of eccentricity. Dixon at one point even considers tying his colleague, Professor Welch, to a chair and 'beating him about the head and shoulders with a bottle until he disclosed why, without being French himself, he'd given his sons French names'.

Lucky Jim was a controversial novel. For the literary establishment – writers such as Evelyn Waugh and Somerset Maugham – it encapsulated the new lower-middle-class challenge to the status quo presented by both free secondary education and the emerging welfare state. In an article for the *Sunday Times* Maugham launched a tirade against not only Jim Dixon, but also the suburban world of the white-collar proletariat he believed Dixon represented : “They do not go to university to acquire culture, but to get a job, and when they have got one, scamp it. They have no manners and are woefully unable to deal with any social predicament. Their idea of a celebration is to go to a public house and drink six beers. They are mean, malicious and envious ... Charity, kindness, generosity are qualities which they hold in contempt. They are scum.”

By implication, Maugham was also criticising Kingsley Amis. For critics of the novel, Dixon, with his distrust of Continental, coffee-drinking intellectuals and his interests in beer, popular music and sex, mirrored his creator and signalled the rise of the intelligent outsider – the clever, work-shy chancer, keen to enjoy himself and with no respect for the upper classes.

Look Back in Anger by John Osborne

Osborne's play was the first to explore the theme of the "Angry Young Man." This term describes a generation of post-World War II artists and working-class men who generally ascribed to leftist, sometimes anarchist, politics and social views. According to cultural critics, these young men were not a part of any organized movement but were, instead, individuals angry at a post-Victorian Britain that refused to acknowledge their social and class alienation.

Jimmy Porter is often considered to be literature's seminal example of the angry young man. Jimmy is angry at the social and political structures that he believes has kept him from achieving his dreams and aspirations. He directs this anger towards his friends and, most notably, his wife Alison.

Where *Lucky Jim* had shaken up the novel, *Look Back in Anger* shook up the theatre. At the time most new plays were aimed at a self-consciously conservative audience.

Terence Rattigan, author of popular dramas such as *The Browning Version* (1948) and *The Deep Blue Sea* (1952), summarized this audience in the imaginary figure of 'Aunt Edna'-a typical elderly theatre goer who knew what she liked, and who wanted to be entertained rather than shaken by something gritty, realistic and possibly foul-mouthed.

The Angry Young Men

Kingsley Amis, by combining the Movement's straightforward approach and loathing for snobbery with a portrayal of lower-middle class opportunistic charm in the character of Jim Dixon, suddenly found himself at the forefront of a new group of writers, namely the Angry Young Men. The term 'Angry Young Men' was coined by the Royal Court Theatre's press officer to promote *Look Back in Anger*, a 1956 play by the then-unknown playwright John Osborne. The label caught on and came to characterize young working-class and lower-middle-class writers disillusioned with conformity and the conservative values of the ruling classes.

The Angry Young Men, as the title implies, also did little for women. Their writing of female characters reveals a rife, inescapable misogyny: not only are women never the central protagonists, but they are also often treated in a horrifyingly aggressive way as passive objects of the male characters' tirades.

In *Look Back in Anger* Jimmy snarls at his wife: 'I want to stand up in your tears, and splash about in them, and sing. I want to be there when you grovel'.

Shelagh Delaney, who wrote *A Taste of Honey* (1958), was inevitably labelled in some quarters as an 'Angry Young Woman', but she was the exception to what was a male-centred group. A crucial distinction between Delaney and the group was made by the critic Lindsay Anderson, who characterized Delaney's lead character, Jo, as wholly different to 'the middle-class angry young man, the egocentric rebel': 'Josephine is not a rebel; she is a revolutionary'.

This literary Movement brought a fresh concept which was totally complied with the then socio-political context. Though lasted only for a short span of time, it exerted a profound impact in the field of British literature. Like the Beat movement in the United States, the impetus of the movement was exhausted in the early 1960s.

2.4. STREET PLAY/THEATRE

Street theatre is a form of theatrical performance and presentation in outdoor public spaces without a specific paying audience. These spaces can be anywhere, including shopping centers, car parks, recreational reserves, college or university campus and street corners. They are especially seen in outdoor spaces where there are large numbers of people. The actors, who perform street theatre range from buskers to organized theatre companies or groups that want to experiment with performance spaces, or to promote their mainstream work.

It was a source of providing information to people when there were no sources of providing information like television, radio etc. Nowadays, street play is used to convey a message to the crowd watching it. Street play is considered to be the rawest form of acting, because one does not have a microphone or loud speakers. Sometimes performers are commissioned, especially for street festivals, children's shows or parades, but more often street theatre performers are unpaid or gather some income through the dropping of a coin in a hat by the audience.

The logistics of doing street theatre make use of simple costumes and props, and often there is little or no amplification of sound, with actors depending on their natural vocal and physical ability. The performances need to be highly visible, loud and simple to follow in order to attract a crowd.

Street theatre should be distinguished from other more formal outdoor theatrical performances, such as performances in a park or garden, where there is a discrete space set aside (or roped off) and a ticketed audience. In some cases, street theatre performers have to get a license or specific permission through local or state governments in order to perform.

Street theatre is arguably the oldest form of theatre in existence: most mainstream entertainment mediums can be traced back to origins in street performing, including religious passion plays and many other forms. More recently performers who, a hundred years ago, would have made their living working in variety theatres, music halls and in vaudeville, now often perform professionally in the many well-known street performance areas throughout the world. Notable performers that began their careers as street theatre performers include Robin Williams, David Bowie, Jewel and Harry Anderson.

Street theatre allows people who might not have ever been to, or been able to afford to go to, traditional theatre. The audience is made up of anyone and everyone who wants to watch and for most performances is free entertainment. Performance artists with an interest in social activism may choose to stage their work on the street as a means of directly confronting or engaging the public.

A character-based street theatre which developed in the 1960s and 1970s was developed by groups like Lumiere and Son, John Bull Puncture Repair Kit, Exploded Eye and Natural Theatre Company. The performances were unannounced and featured characters who acted out a pre-arranged scenario, looking beautiful or surreal or simply just involving passers-by in conversation. They did not seek to trick in a *Candid Camera* way, but rather invited the

audience to pretend along with them. No amount of planning or rehearsal could dictate what would happen.

Another example would be Natural Theatre's Pink Suitcase scenario. A number of smartly dressed people carrying bright pink suitcases enter a set of streets or buildings. They search for and miss their companions. In their search they get on buses, hail cabs, end up in shop windows, etc. By the time they meet up at a pre-arranged spot with the help of passers-by, perceptions of the area have changed and shopping has ceased for at least a few moments. The humor is universal and this piece has been seen in nearly seventy countries. It is usually performed by four or five actors, but has been done with twenty-five.

Street plays or the street theatres however also evolved in the early 20th century as a tool to emancipate the working class and reinforce revolution against the established power. Its journey began in India during the time of anti-colonial struggle, essentially by the left-wing theatre activists. Performance artists with an interest in social activism may choose to stage their work on the street as a means of directly confronting or engaging the public. Other factors include reaching to the most people who cannot afford to buy a stage ticket for their entertainment. Street plays mostly focus to boost the ideology of a special section of people who have no connection to education or moral etiquettes.

Street Theatre and the Indian Scenario (Nukkad Natak)

There has been an explosion of street theatre activity in India in the eighties and nineties. One study estimates the existence of about 7,000 street theatre groups in different parts of the country with the largest number in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In India, street theatre or popularly termed as 'Nukkad Natak' actors are mainly teachers and students committed to bringing about social change. Their returns in terms of finances or fame are nil. The time that this form of theatre demands is considerable. All evenings and weekends are spent rehearsing or performing.

The preparation of these plays takes a long time too depending on the topics and motive behind the play. To attract the audience they started playing a 'dholak' or choral song. When the audience surrounds in a circular position, one person narrates while the actors do mime. As these plays are mostly low budgeted, the theme and the dressing has to be kept simple so almost no makeup looks are preferable unless it's a mime. In a mime play, the face is being painted white and eyes should be highlighted in the black circle. Not much scope of good acting is considered as the theme needs to be displayed in an exaggerated version. Uses of microphones and sound box depend on the size of the gathering.

The topics or the themes of an independent street play have always been on bringing the positive changes in the society. The maker or the scriptwriter takes different topics from general day to day instances or the burning topics that shook the world. For example, Nirbhaya incident of 2013 that immensely impacted India has been portrayed beautifully in a street play in Gurgaon demonstrating the safety of women in India day to day negative impact of drinking and smoking on human health in various ***nukkad natak***.

Janam (Jann Natya Manch)

The venerable pioneer of Indian street theatre is Jana Natya Manch – People's Theatre Front, or Janam – which was created nearly 40 years ago and popularised street theatre as activism. In India, we have a marathon of street play which was organised in 2017. Manthan Mahotsav, nearly performed by 125 teams in 40 states in India as well as few states in abroad like Brazil and Nepal picking up issues like women empowerment, ragging, eve teasing, religious fanaticism etc. in all prominent places around the city. Being the largest street play festival in India, started off its 10th edition on March 4. The brainchild of Verve, the street play society of Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies, University of Delhi, Manthan 2017 created history with street plays being performed in so many different locations across India, many of them simultaneously.

Street play will never age as this happens to be the oldest and the most convenient way of spreading the goodness to the extremely difficult areas. It has the power to persuade someone to change ideas. Whatever the reason for choosing the street, the street is a place with a different set of possibilities than the conventional theatre space.

In India a paradigm shift from proscenium theatre to the theatre of the streets was initiated by the anti-fascist movement of communist party of India under the canopy of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). The root of street theatre in India was strongly related with the anti-fascist political ideology of the leftists and the progressive political theatre in the '40's in Kolkata.

It evolved as a tool to emancipate the working class and reinforce revolution against the established power. Street plays based on issues and stories directly concerned with the people such as hunger, famine, poverty, communal violence, feudal and colonial exploitation created impact on the society deeply divided by class, caste and religion through these common grave concerning issues.

Even after Independence, Indian Street theatre evolved as a means to voice the concerns of the common man. This theatre form immediately struck a chord with the masses. Street theatre is a situation where the audience has not come prepared to watch a play, and people may not have much time on hand. These limitations determine the parameters of the plays. They are short. The exchange is close, direct and intimate and, to be more effective, usually loud and larger than life. In order to draw crowds from all walks of life, the plays are humorous. Songs based on popular catchy tunes are included to add to the appeal.

After the independence, street plays became popular during the '50s and the '60s. However, it burst into national prominence during the political turmoil of the late '70s and the early '80s.

With the Emergency declared by the central government, repression unleashed against Communists and the revolutionary Naxalbari uprising in Bengal, street theatre entered a new phase. Performers were attacked, often by the police.

Safdar Hashmi's Jana Natya Manch formed in 1973, led this movement of Indian street theatre. Hashmi defined street theatre as "a militant political theatre of protest whose function is to agitate the people and to mobilize them behind fighting organizations".

1989 marked a turning point for street theatre after Hashmi was killed during a show. In the early winter afternoon, Janam was performing their play Halla Bol ("Raise Your Voice") for a group of workers at Jhandapur, Sahibabad, on the outskirts of Delhi, as a part of its campaign to support the CPI (M) in the local election campaign. A candidate from the rival party backed by a gang of hundred goons armed with guns and sticks, ordered JANAM to stop the performance and in consequence Safdar Hashmi was murdered in the agitation. His birthday, 12th April is now observed in India as National Street Theatre Day.

Street Plays or "Nukkad Natak" were not just used as tools of political awareness but in their early days of popularity in the 80's, it was used for fighting social injustice as well.

In 1980, the famous Mathura rape case instigated a lot of shows on the need to make the rape laws more stringent. Another famous street play of those days- "Om Swaha" dealt with demands for dowry resulting in harassment and sometimes death. There were several productions which give a short summary of the life of a woman in India and examine a woman's needs and abilities.

By the early '90s street plays were used by several NGOs for spreading awareness in villages regarding issues such as HIV,

social equality, injustice against women, ecological consciousness etc. Such was the popularity of the “Nukkad Natak”, that it has been even used by companies for marketing their products in India. Big players like the UN, Goonj, CRY etc. prefer this form for propagating their message to their target audience for its characteristic of being an audience magnet and being closely connected to them.

There are thousands professional theatre groups in the country today which continue to use “nukkad natak” for social awareness. The strong culture of street play can be felt in the National capital of Delhi through the dramatics societies of the universities. Hundreds of competitions are organized throughout the year and almost every Delhi college has a “Nukkad” team each with a swelling will to amend the erroneous and build a better future.

The voice of a street play artist is the voice of a rebellion. Street play is the spark that ignites numerous fires in the hearts, minds and souls of us Indians, the fire of voice, fire of initiation and the fire of change.

2.5. THIRD THEATRE

The term ‘third theatre’ was coined by Eugenio Barba, founder of the Odin Teatret in Denmark, who, in 1976, was given the task of organizing a conference on theatrical research by UNESCO and the Institute International du Théâtre.

The “third theatre” is a mix of contemporary theatrical techniques and ancestral traditions. Through the will and desire necessary for these encounters to take place, the opening up of cultures is enabled. Numerous puppeteers have understood the theatrical gains to be made by regrouping expressive mediums and techniques from other performance arts, on the condition that this mixing is done in the aim of creating a specific dramatic effect, and to avoid an incomprehensible “mish-mash” of styles.

In the Indian context, Badal Sircar was one of the leading and most influential playwrights and directors in modern Indian theatre movement. He is the writer of more than 50 plays and also a recipient of Padma Shri, Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award. Inspired by Grotowski and Eugenio Barba, he started a new movement in the Indian theatre world, also known as ‘Third Theatre’.

Badal Sircar emerged as a theatre director and writer who tried to emancipate (free) himself and his work by crossing boundaries. He brought new ideas and methods to Indian theatre

from the West and constructed a new form called the 'Third Theatre'.

Sircar was also inspired by Polish theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski's 'The Poor Theatre', who considered an actor's body as the primary element in a theatre performance. Grotowski constructed a 'theatre laboratory' to experiment with the physical, spiritual and ritualistic elements of theatre. He tried to comprehend this acting style/system by turning to Indian Classical dance, Kathakali as well as yoga. For him, yoga remained inefficient, as it focused on interiority whereas actors required exteriority of emotions as well as gestures.

For him, gestures were to be expressive and dominant enough to overpower the lack which the form inhabits consciously. 'Poor Theatre' rejects the use of excess in theatre which includes lavish mis-en-scene, costumes, etc. The focus of the performance becomes actor's body, which performs with minimalistic props. The process becomes simplistic and was performed in any space, thereby, rejecting traditional theatre halls or spaces.

Coming of 'Third Theatre'

Sircar, professionally a town planner, never went through an official training in theatre. In the beginning of his theatre career, he could not remain stable and dwindled between theatre and town planning. Sircar, emerged as a great playwright in process of writing plays in which he could act. His first play was Solution X written in 1956 based on the Hollywood film, 'The Monkey Business'. The play was performed with people from his office named 'Rehearsal Group' and was started with no intention of performing on a formal stage.

Sircar, fascinated with comedies and science fiction fantasies wrote six plays which included Baro Pishima, Shonibar and Ram-Shyam-Jadu. But his play EvamIndrajeet, written in 1960s opened gates of fame and popularity. The play was published in the journal of 'Bahurupee' and was performed by theatre group Shouvanik in 1965, while he was in Nigeria. With the new success in theatre, Sircar's interest also grew and he got actively involved in theatre, starting his own group called 'Satabdi' with amateur performers willing to entertain middle class audience in the proscenium theatre. The rupture came, when Sircar started to grow over proscenium theatre and was invited by the Government of India to visit three European countries in 1969 where he encountered experimental theatre. This allowed Sircar to get introduced to Grotowski as well as Poor Theatre.

"For Sircar, poor theatre brought the theatre back to its ritualistic form, reduced to the unadorned body of performer." After

his encounter with such ideas, the group started minimalistic use of sets, lights, costumes and even background music, completely rejecting mechanical and technological tools such as radio. Similar to Grotowski, the body of the actor experimented with mime, dance, movement, time, and space rather than speech. This new form was highly appreciated by the 'mass' audience as well as critics.

With these experiments in mind, Sircar adapted them to his previously written works. 'Spartacus' became the first, which he wrote for proscenium theatre, based on Howard Fast's novel. The process was closely associated as a workshop which explored capabilities of artistes.

His famed play 'Spartacus' became the route through which Sircar moved towards his destination to reach a concrete 'Third Theatre'. To familiarise Indian theatre groups with his form, Sircar started to conduct theatre workshops in different regions of the country.

During the performance, the burst of energy by the slave characters became the high point for the local audiences, which they appreciated by spontaneous applause.

The revolt in the play was becoming the voice of the mass audience standing outside the fence. Performance was held in an open space under a wooden roof which invited local people and certain VIPs. For Sircar, selling tickets became turning audiences into consumers, thus it remained a practice to keep the tickets very cheap by reducing the cost of theatre, and also not relying on funds from government or other business houses. The reason for creating a 'Third Theatre' remains to enable interaction with audiences about role, responsibility and rights of citizens. Spartacus talks about the marginalised community and their exploitation. Such performance thus intrigues a desire to change, in the form of protest by giving a voice to the oppressed; not only by representation of the script by characters but also through form.

The 1960s was a definitive decade for the arts in many parts of the world, including India. Moving into a postcolonial era, Indian theatre was starting to be demarcated in national terms. Theatre has always been one of the most powerful media of sensitization and social communication in India. Communal violence and conflicts arising out of caste, religious, and gender identities have found a unique resonance and representation in post-Independence Indian theatre. Theatre reveals many salient aspects of urban violence by the staging or enactment of violence. While looking at the contributors of theatre the name of Badal Sircar is included without any exception. It is observed that Badal Sircar contributed to the modern Indian drama and played roles as

playwright, director, and actor to change the scenario contemporary theatre. No other theatre personality has had such a deep and pervasive influence on theatre practice and theory in post-independence India as Badal Sircar. As a writer of proscenium plays in the 1960s, all of which have been widely produced by leading directors in several Indian languages; as the pioneer of non-proscenium political theatre in the 1970s; as the mentor of countless directors and theatre activists who have carried his ideas to far corners of the country, his work is an integral part of contemporary Indian theatre history.

Third Theatre had turned into “free theatre” in three ways: First, there was free expression it promoted direct and therefore uninhibited communication; second, it was free from the paraphernalia of conventional theatre; and last, it was offered at no cost to the audience. A logical development leading to truly free theatre was the gram parikrama. A true theatre of the people therefore would have to go where the majority of the population lived. Satabdi went on its first parikrama in 1986 for three days and two nights. It has since been trying to undertake at least two such tours every year. The radical departure from established realist stage traditions that had many people referring to Sircar’s theatre as “experimental” and “alternative”.

Free theatre is also often loosely used synonymously with street theatre because both are flexible, portable, and inexpensive. And while he has no objections to the conflation per se, Sircar clarifies the distinction. He and other members of Satabdi define street theatre as a quickly created short performance, which has some topical value. So: “Street theatre in a way is Third Theatre. But all Third Theatre is not street theatre”. Sircar’s innovations in the use of public space have had a profound impact on Indian theatre. Even though experimentation for its own sake was never his intention, his example encouraged many others to explore different styles. But if this purposeful theatre was to survive, it required more than just meddlers interested in its form. What was needed to carry Third Theatre forward was a group of committed practitioners who were invested in its content.

After the scripts for change were written, a movement ensued. “The entire process of change involves a philosophy that the new language can only be established if it takes the shape of a movement”. To understand the contribution of Sircar and Satabdi in making process of the Third Theatre it is necessary to look up the annoying effort of Sircar and his group Satabdi. It is a long history of dedicated activity, most of it far from the glare of the national spotlight that has periodically shined on him. His exploration has never been motivated by a desire to experiment for the sake of experiment alone. He has never believed in maxims like ‘art for

art's sake' or 'theatre for the sake of theatre'. Truly a man of the theatre, Sircar has nurtured a group that is now in its 45th year. He has generated a movement that continues to attract new people even decades after Third Theatre has passed from the dominant theatrical and critical interest. His influence is inductive. He works with his group and they in turn inspire mimetic configurations. He conducts workshops with individuals who become stimulated to do their own theatre. As a result, elements of Third Theatre have traveled far and wide, crossing boundaries of language, class, culture, and nationhood.

Third Theatre has certain unique facets which can be elaborated as follows:

1. Unity of Rural and Urban: Theatre Third theatre is the fusion of two theatres rural and the urban theatre. In the exploration Sircar had seen the inherent features of folk theatre i. e. live performer and direct communication technique. And the emphasis on the performers body rather than the set-ups and mechanical devices from the proscenium theatre. Thus Sircar combined these features of the rural and the urban theatre and made the third theatre as the synthesis of these two theatres.

2. Emphasis on Audience Participation: In exploration of the theatre Sircar came to realize that the theatre is a human act. Experience is the key word in every art and theatre is also a kind of art, where people come to have experience. According to Badal Sircar theatre should be a collective exercise to awaken and enhance the social consciousness of participants, including the viewers. So, he preferred doing theatre in the open air where audience can participate. Sircar has said of his own theatre: There is no separate stage—the performance is on the floor; that is the Performers and the spectators are within the same environment. This is intimate theatre. The performers can see the spectator clearly, can approach him individually, can whisper in his ears, can even touch him if he wants.

3. Anti-Proscenium Nature: Third theatre is anti-proscenium in nature. In proscenium theatre elaborate stage set-ups, props, spotlight, costume, make-up etc. are used to create illusion of reality. But in the Third theatre emphasis is given on the performer's body rather than set, props and costumes. In proscenium theatre raised stage is used to keep distance from the spectator. But the Third theatre offers openness to the spectator.

4. Portability, Flexibility, and Inexpensive: Third theatre is portable, because it can be moved anywhere. As it does not require heavy set-up, spotlight, furniture, costumes etc. so it becomes portable. Third theatre is flexible because plays can be performed

anywhere, it does not require stage. A theatre which can go to where the people are without waiting for them to come to a specified place. Since it reduced the cost of theatre, and it can be offered at freely, so it is inexpensive. Sircar believed in human relationship, not in the buyer and seller relationship. He believed that theatre is a human act; it is art not the source of earning money.

5. Approach to Acting: In the Third Theatre emphasis is given on the acting rather than set-ups, costumes. Set-ups are made of collective human act. Emphasis is totally given on the human body. For the free flow of action games exercises are taken in the workshops. Training is given to the performers through improve. Instead of imitating certain stage voices and movements, the performers are taught to giving more from within, replacing the fake in theatre by a true expression of the self. Freeing them from the constraints of realistic depiction, Sircar encouraged the performers to use movements, rhythm, mime, formations, and contortions to express them physically. The body of the actor becomes the text.

6. Synthesis of East and West: Third theatre exhibits an openness and receptivity. Sircar was influenced both Indian folk theatre and western experimental theatre. Sircar adopted direct communication technique and live performance from the Indian folk theatre. Open performance and emphasis on the performer's body from the west theatre. Thus, he combined these features and made the Third theatre.

Sircar himself admits that he learned the most from observing and sometimes working with practitioners like Jerzy Grotowski, Joan MacIntosh, Judith Malina, Julian Beck, and Richard Schechner. But mere observing is other thing; he has not imitated them. Third or free theatre can never be like Grotowski's physical theatre because, Sircar says, those conditions of performance are simply not available in India. Sircar focused on doing theatre than writing plays, because he had profound knowledge Indian society where physical, psychological, cultural, mental, political, and spiritual dichotomies reclined. To bring about a change Sircar used theatre as a tool. He was conscious that the dichotomy in the cultural field cannot be removed without a fundamental change in the socio-economic situation, and he knew that it cannot be done through theatre. Though he knew that theatre by itself can never change the society, he firmly believes that theatre can be one of the many facets of a movement that is needed to bring about the desirable change, and that makes the idea of Third Theatre, a theatre of change meaningful to him.

7. Theatre as the servant of Nationalism: During the exploration Sircar realized the existence of two cultural trends running parallel

to each other giving rise to a fundamental dichotomy between urban and rural lives, with this understanding he had come to realize the existence of two distinct kinds of theatre in rural and urban areas of India. As he was basically a middle-class man of Calcutta, he was attached to the city of Calcutta. A city of alien culture based on English education repressing, distorting, buying, promoting for sale the real culture of the country. Sircar had an intimate feel of the urban conscience of this city and had a profound understanding of the middle-class life, and through almost all his major plays, he is found probing into the Calcutta middle-class mind. Sircar produced plays that hit the rural and urban dichotomy as he wished to create a link between the two theatres through his Third theatre, a theatre of synthesis.

8. Theatre as a Tool of Political Ideology: Sircar was active member of undivided Communist Party of India in 1940s, the decade of Independence. Thereafter he says he criticized the Party and was suspended. After a year of his suspension still he continued in organized politics. Though in the early 50s he left politics never to return, his political ideology has not changed. As he said party had let him down but the ideology of Marxism has kept him alive. As Sircar believed in Communism, he wished to work for the society. He wished to make the world change. The transition from depicting the alienation of the middle classes to writing about the lives of workers and peasants is arguably a Marxist progression. It is best outlined in his play Hattamalar Oparey (Beyond the Land of Hattamala, 1977). The story of two thieves— named Kena (Bought) and Becha (Sold), obviously representative of the evils of capitalism chance upon a land of no money that operates according to the Communist principle of each to the best of his ability and to each according to his need. After many escapades they decide shamefacedly to give up their evil ways and live in this new land, one as a mason and the other as a gardener. Hattamala ends with the chorus singing “We’ll share what we have together. Come, let’s share everything together.”

2.6 ONE-ACT PLAY

One-Act plays were written and staged throughout the 18th and 19th centuries as “The Curtain Raisers” or “The After Pieces”. They were chiefly farcical and served to amuse the audience before the commencement of the actual drama or were staged for their amusement just after it had come to an end. The famous one-act play “Monkey’s Paw” was first staged as a ‘Curtain Raiser’ and it proved to be more entertaining than the main drama. It may be said to mark the beginning of the modern one-act play.

The origin of the one-act play may be traced to the very beginning of drama. In ancient Greece, Cyclops, a play on the

forest God, by Euripides, is an early example. It was great Norwegian dramatist Ibsen, who, for the first time, introduced the minute stage-directions into the one-act play. Before him, one-act plays were written in poetry, but he made prose the medium of his one-act plays. In short, he made the drama, simple and real and brought it nearer to everyday life. He made the modern one-act play what it is and his example has been widely followed. George Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy are two of his greatest followers.

The one-act play requires no elaborate setting and costumes, and so comes in handy to be staged in amateur dramatic societies and clubs.

Famous one-act plays by major dramatists —

- Anton Chekhov: A Marriage Proposal (1890)
- August Strindberg: Pariah (1889), Motherly Love (1892), The First Warning (1892)
- Thornton Wilder: The Long Christmas Dinner (1931)
- Eugene Ionesco: The Bald Soprano (1950)
- Arthur Miller: A Memory of Two Mondays (1955)
- Samuel Beckett: Krapp's Last Tape (1958)
- Israel Horovitz: Line (1974)
- Edward Albee: The Goat, or Who is Sylvia? (2002)

Chief Characteristics of One Act Play

- One-act play is a play that has only one act, but may consist of one or more scenes.
- One-act plays are usually written in a concise manner.
- It deals with a single dominant situation, and aims at producing a single effect.
- It deals with only one theme developed through one situation to one climax in order to produce the maximum of effect.
- It treats the problems of everyday life as marriage, punishment for crimes, labor conditions, divorce, etc.
- The one-act play, like the longer drama, should have a beginning, a middle and an end. It may be divided into four stages: The Exposition, The Conflict, The Climax and The Denouement.
- The exposition is usually brief, serves as an introduction to the play.

- It is through the conflict that the action of the drama develops. It is the very backbone of the one-act play.
- Climax is the turning point of the drama. It is an important part of the one-act play and constitutes its moment of supreme interest.
- The Denouement is very brief and often overlaps with climax.
- Action begins right at the start of the play.
- There are no breaks in the action. It is continuous since it is a short play. There is no interval.
- Everything superfluous is to be strictly avoided as the play is short and the action takes place within a short period of time. It introduces elaborate stage directions to minimize the time taken by the action itself.
- The creation of mood or atmosphere is indispensable to its success.
- There are three dramatic unities which are observed in the one-act play. The unities are — the unity of time, unity of place and the unity of action.
- It aims at simplicity of plot; concentration of action and unity of impression. It does not rely on spectacular effects and common dramatic tricks of old.
- The characters in a one-act play are limited in number. Generally, there are not more than two or three principal characters.
- There is no full development of character. All the different aspects of a character are not presented. The attention is focused on only one or two salient aspects of character and they are brought out by placing the characters in different situations and circumstances.
- There is an influence of realism. The characters in the modern one-act play are ordinary men and women. It depicts characters that seem to be real and related to everyday life.
- It must present a question, for which the audience eagerly awaits the answer.
- Its language is simple and can be followed without any strain. All superfluity is to be avoided in the dialogue.
- The dialogue must be purposeful. The best dialogue is that which does several things at one time. Every word is to be carefully chosen and the sentences must be compact and condensed.

It is a play-that is, it is meant to be performed or enacted. It is a short play (of one act) as distinct from a long play (of three or five acts). What is an Act? An act is a distinct main section of a play. This implies that a one-act play deals with one single, dominant dramatic situation. Therefore, a one-act play is not a condensation of a long play (which consists of a series of situations, where each situation arises out of what had preceded it). On a similar logic, we can also say that a one-act play cannot be elongated into a 3-Act or a 5-Act play. A one-act play is short. A short play requires a short span of time to act it out.

2.7 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed six important dramatic terms. Realism and naturalism are the two schools of dramatic traditions which have some similarities and dissimilarities. Poetic drama is the twentieth century phenomenon that brought in a sort of revival of poetry in drama. Angry Theatre is a theatre movement that caught a howl of rage against oppressive social systems. Street Theatre or Street Play, the powerful medium of reaching to the unreached launched a new movement for the masses in the twentieth century. Third Theatre like Street Theatre is a flexible, portable and inexpensive. It also served as political ideology to be promoted among the have-nots. The unit ends with one act play, its meaning and its growth and development in a historical timeline.

2.8 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Here too, the student has to learn all the prescribed terms so that they should be able to write short notes on these dramatic terms.

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Unit -3

A STUDY OF BERTOLD BRECHT'S COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN PART I

Unit Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction to the Play
- 3.2 Bertolt Brecht: The Playwright
- 3.3 Summary in a Nutshell
- 3.4 Scene wise Summary of the Play
- 3.5 Let's Sum up
- 3.6 Important Questions

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to familiarise you with the play *Mother Courage and Her Children* by Bertolt Brecht. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Understand the background of the play
- Acquaint with the background of the dramatist and the dramatic techniques employed by him
- Understand the plot summary of the play

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

The play *Mother Courage and Her Children* was written by Bertolt Brecht during his exile in Sweden in the year 1939. The play was published and performed for the first time in the year 1941 and became successful and greatest anti-war play in the twentieth century. The play is set during the Thirty Years War and is located in Europe. The play is an illustration of Brechtian technique of Epic Theatre and Alienating Effect that became popular during the twentieth century drama in Europe. The play has had many successes on stage and influenced many playwrights of the time. The play was originally written in German language.

The protagonist of the play, Mother Courage plays the role of an ordinary woman who has to survive during the Thirty Years War with her children. Brecht describes the suffering of the common people during the war and how war actually looked as a business proposition and profitable venture. The action of the play takes

place in 12 years depicted as 12 scenes in the play. Through the technique of Alienation, Brecht is able to remarkably portray the character of Mother Courage as a woman who is more interested in making the most from the war. She is an opportunistic woman and not like any epic characters.

3.2 BERTOLT BRECHT: THE PLAYWRIGHT

Bertolt Brecht (1898- 1956) was born in Ausburg, Bavaria in a middle-class family. He suffered from heart disease throughout his life. He received firm classical education and instruction on the Bible from his mother who was prominent figure in many of his plays. He attended the University of Munich and moved to Germany after his graduation. He started working with the Deustches Theatre in 1924 and started writing and directing plays for the theatre. He wrote three short plays *Baal*, *Drums in the Night* and *In the Jungle* won him immediate success and he was bestowed with a prestigious award.

Brecht was a Marxist and anti-Fascist and wrote his ideas about these ideologies in newspapers. Due to his Marxist and anti-Fascist leanings, he had to flee Germany and lived in exile for the next fifteen years in Scandinavia and United States. His dramatic style was largely influenced by comic actors Karl Valentine and Charlie Chaplin and German playwright Karl Buchner. Brecht developed the idea of "Epic Theatre" that strongly resonated in his plays. The Epic Theatre emerged as a strong reaction to consequences of the Second World War and Brecht's engagement with the political climate of his time. The basic aim of Brecht's Epic Theatre was to educate the audience to view the action of the play critically from point of view of distancing or detached or alienated rather than getting emotionally involved in the play. The distancing or alienating effect was known as *Verfremdungseffekt*. He rejected the Aristotlean notion of drama with its rising action, exposition and climax. Instead, he wanted his plays to be known as dialectical comments on society.

Brecht devised an acting technique for his epic theatre that he called as *gestus* that involved physical gestures or attitudes. He wanted the actor to observe the character, demonstrate the actions of the character but the actor should not identify with the role. To emphasize the technique of epic theatre on stage, Brecht aimed at unfamiliar stage settings, interruption of action and dialogue, music, use of banners to indicate change of scenes and the stage divided by half curtains.

During the War Years Brecht wrote many plays that were successful such as *Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Good Woman of Schezwan*, *The Caucasian Chalk*

Circle, The Three Penny Opera and many others. In the year 1949, Brecht established his theatre group called The Berliner Ensemble and spent the next years of his life writing and directing plays for the Ensemble. Brecht died at the age of 58 of a heart-attack.

3.3 SUMMARY IN A NUTSHELL

Mother Courage was first produced in the year 1941 in Switzerland. Brecht's second wife Helene Wiegel played the title role in the Berlin production of the play in 1949. It has been considered as the greatest play of the 20th century and a great anti-war play of all times. Since its first production, it has seen numerous stage and film productions. The action of the play takes the course of 12 years (1624-1636) represented in 12 scenes. The play portrays the indomitable courage of the central character and spans her career without any empathy or sentiment. Unlike the traditional epic characters Mother Courage is quite ordinary and far removed from the epic situations faced by the heroes. At the end of the play, the character of Mother Courage does not inspire the readers but makes us think about the folly of her actions.

The play is set in Europe especially in Sweden, Poland and Germany during the Thirty Years War that was fought between 1618 to 1648. The play opens with the character of Mother Courage and her three children: Eilif, Kattrin and Swiss Cheese. Mother Courage is a canteen woman seen with her wagon trading her goods for money and profit. The readers are then introduced to the Recruiting Officer and the Sergeant who express their difficulty in recruiting soldiers for the war. They distract Mother Courage and her wagon to a corner with the promise of a transaction and the Recruiting Officer takes Eilif with him. One of Mother Courage's children is now gone.

After two years we find Mother Courage haggling with the General's Cook over a capon. On the other side of the stage, Eilif is praised by the General for heroically slaughtering some peasants and stealing their cattle. Eilif sings "The Song of the Girl and the Soldier," and his mother joins in. She then scolds him for risking his life in a thoughtless manner. The play moves ahead by three years where Swiss Cheese, Mother Courage's son has taken a job as the regiment's paymaster. Yvette Pottier, the camp prostitute sings "The Song of Fraternization" to warn Kattrin about the horrors of a relationship with a soldier. The Cook and the Chaplain arrive to greet Mother Courage with a message from Eilif, and there is suddenly a Catholic attack. The Chaplain discards his robes, and Swiss Cheese hides the regiment's paybox.

In the same evening Swiss Cheese is being followed when he attempts to return the paybox to his General but is captured.

Mother Courage mortgages her cart to Yvette and tries to bargain with the soldiers using the money--but she bargains for too long and Swiss Cheese is shot. Mother Courage denies his body when it is brought to her to be identified so it is thrown into a pit. In the next scene we find Mother Courage waiting to complain outside the Captain's tent. She sings the "Song of the Great Capitulation" to a young soldier who also has come to complain to the Captain. The song which contains the moral lesson "everyone gives in sooner or later" leads to the soldiers' storming out and Courage herself ends up deciding that she doesn't want to complain.

One day Mother Courage undertakes a stock check of her goods. she talks with the Chaplain for a long time discussing about the continuation or ending of the war. He convinces her that it will continue so she decides to invest in more stock for her cart. The Chaplain suggests that Mother Courage could marry him, but he is rejected. Katrin appears and returns to her mother, severely disfigured, having collected some merchandise. Mother Courage thus curses the war. In the following brief scene, Courage sings a song that praises the war as a good provider. Business is good for now.

Two peasants wake up Mother Courage, trying to sell her some bedding, shortly before the news breaks that peace has broken out. The Cook returns, unpaid by the regiment, and he instigates an argument between Mother Courage and the Chaplain. Yvette makes her second appearance, now a rich widow, much older and fatter, and reveals that the Cook was once her lover. Mother Courage leaves for the town, and Eilif is dragged along by soldiers. Again he has slaughtered some peasants and stolen their cattle, but it is now peacetime. He is executed for it, but his mother never finds out. She returns with the news that the war is back on again, and she now returns to business with the Cook in tow.

The seventeenth year of the war finds the world in a bleak condition, with nothing to trade and nothing to eat. The Cook inherits an inn in Utrecht and invites Mother Courage to run it with him, but he refuses to take Katrin. Mother Courage is forced to turn him down, so the two go their separate ways. Pulling the wagon by themselves, Mother Courage and Katrin hear an anonymous voice singing about the pleasure of having plenty. The Catholics are besieging the Protestant town of Halle, and Mother Courage is away in the town, trading. Sleeping outside a peasant family's house, Katrin is woken by their search party, who take one of the peasants with them as a guide. The peasant couple prays for the safety of those in the town, but Katrin, unseen, gets a drum from the cart and climbs onto the roof. She beats the drum to try to awake the townspeople so that the siege can be anticipated.

The soldiers return and shoot her, but before she dies, she is successful in awakening the town. The next morning, Mother Courage sings a lullaby over her daughter's corpse, pays the peasants to bury her, and harnesses herself, alone, to the cart. The cart rolls back into action, but it is easier to pull now, since there is so little left in it to sell.

3.4. SCENE WISE SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

3.4.1. SCENE ONE

Mother Courage opens in Dalarna, in spring of 1624. A Sergeant and Recruiting Officer are recruiting soldiers for the Swedish campaign in Poland. They stand shivering on a highway outside a town. The Officer complains of the difficulty in recruiting soldiers from the untrustworthy townspeople. The Sergeant declares that the people could use a good war. Without war, there is no organization.

A harmonica is heard, and a canteen wagon appears on stage. The infamous Mother Courage sits on it with her dumb daughter, Katrin, and her sons, Eilif and Swiss Cheese pull it along. Introducing herself to the officers, she sings her trademark song. A "sales pitch" of sorts, it markets the wares that will help the soldiers march to their deaths. She calls the soldiers to wake: "Let all of you who still survive/ Get out of bed and look alive!"

The Sergeant demands to see her license. Fishing out a number of papers, Courage mocks his request. He again bemoans the lack of discipline in the army and asks the group's names. Courage reveals her family's rather colorful lineage, each of her children being the offspring of a different, and perhaps forgotten, father of a different nationality. The two officers deride her, and Eilif threatens to punch them out. Courage silences him and offers the men her wares.

The Recruiting Officer reveals his intentions and attempts to seduce Eilif into the army. Courage demands that he leave her children alone, ultimately drawing her knife. The Sergeant protests, saying that since Courage lives off the war, the war should not ask something of her in return. The war has not done him any harm. Looking into the future, Courage disagrees. To her, the Sergeant is a corpse on furlough.

To confirm her prophecy, she has the Sergeant choose his fortune. Courage puts two strips of parchment in his helmet, drawing a black cross on one of them. She mixes them, and he draws. To his horror, the Sergeant has chosen his death.

Unbeknown to Courage, the Recruiting Officer has continued his pursuit of Eilif. When Eilif admits that he would like to sign up, Courage similarly foretells the fate of her children. Each draw the black cross as well. She laments their fate. Eilif will die for his excessive bravery, Swiss Cheese for his honesty, and Katrin for her kindness. Sorrowfully, she readies to leave.

The Recruiting Officer presses the Sergeant to stop them. The Sergeant examines one of Courage's belts, taking her behind the wagon. Simultaneously the Recruiting Officer takes Eilif off for a drink. A horrified Katrin leaps from the wagon and starts screaming. Courage emerges and stands still, realizing she has lost her child. Bitterly the family departs. Looking after them, the Sergeant delivers his own epigrammatic prophecy: "When a war gives you all you earn/ One day it may claim something in return!"

3.4.2 SCENE TWO

In 1625–1626, Mother Courage journeys through Poland with the Swedish army. The scene begins in the tent of the Swedish Commander and the adjacent kitchen outside the besieged town of Wallhof. Courage is arguing with the Cook over the sale of a capon, a castrated rooster. She cries that the soldiers are starving, chasing after field rats and drooling over boiled leather—no food is left. If the Cook does not buy the capon, the Commander will take his head. Nonplussed, the Cook begins to prepare an old cut of beef.

The Commander, a Chaplain, and Eilif enter the tent, the Commander lauding the young man for a recent raid on the local peasants. Angrily he calls for meat. Having overheard the conversation, Courage rejoices at finding her son again and forces the capon on the Cook for a pretty penny.

Eilif recounts the raid. Upon learning that the peasants had hidden their oxen, he began to deprive his men of their meat rations to make them desperate for food. When his company attacked, however, they found that the peasants outnumbered them. Four cornered Eilif. Laughing, he bid on the oxen to confuse them and then he retrieved his sword and chopped them to pieces. "Necessity knows no law, huh?" he chuckles.

The Commander asks the Chaplain what he thinks of the tale. Cynically, the Chaplain notes that Jesus told men to love their neighbor at a time when their bellies were full, but this is no longer the case. The Commander remarks that Eilif got his men meat, and any act done for the least of God's children is done for God. He celebrates Eilif's bravery, calling him Julius Caesar, and declares that he should be presented to the king. In the kitchen, Courage remarks that trouble must be afoot. If the Commander's campaign

were any good, he would not need brave soldiers. Indeed, great virtues always signal that something is amiss.

The Commander declares that Eilif's father must have been a great warrior. The boy concurs and sings a song of warning Courage taught him called "The Song of the Wise Woman and the Soldier." It tells of a soldier who joins the fight against the advice of a wise woman and dies, vanishing like smoke and leaving nothing but glorious deeds that cannot console the living. Courage picks up the song from the kitchen, beating on a pan with a spoon. Eilif enters and embraces her. She boxes him on the ear for failing to back down when the peasants attacked him.

3.4.3 SCENE THREE

Three years later, Mother Courage and Katrin fold washing on a cannon. At the same time, Courage bargains with an Ordinance Officer over a bag of bullets. Swiss Cheese, now in a paymaster's uniform, and Yvette Pottier, the camp prostitute, look on. Yvette's red boots stand nearby. Courage declares that she will not buy military property, reproaching the officer for selling ammunition when his soldiers have nothing to shoot with. The officer encourages her to sell them to another regiment and Courage buys the bullets. Giving Swiss Cheese his underwear, Courage enjoins her son to balance the regiment books. Even if the seasons do not come, the books must balance. He leaves with the Officer.

Courage remarks to Yvette that the war is drawing in more countries, thus her business prospects improve as well. Yvette is desperate because of rumors that she is ill and none of the men will touch her. She starts recounting a familiar story of her Dutch army beau, Peter dubbed Piper for the pipe he always carried in his mouth. The story should harden Katrin against love. Yvette sings it in "The Fraternization Song," telling of his arrival, their affair, and his departure. She has spent the past five in a futile search for her lover. She moves behind the wagon, and Courage warns her daughter against military affairs.

The Chaplain and Cook appear. Eilif has requested money; Courage gives some to the Chaplain, chiding her son for speculating in maternal love. The Cook says she is too hard: her son may die at any moment. The Chaplain rejoins that to fall in a war of religion is a blessing to his skeptical interlocutors.

The three move behind the cart, talking of politics. This campaign has cost the Swedish King a great deal. Neither the Poles nor Germans wanted their freedom from the Kaiser, forcing him to subjugate if not execute them. He got nothing but trouble for his outlays and so he had to levy an unpopular salt tax back home.

In any case, his justification by God kept his conscience clear. Without it, he could be accused of seeking profit alone. Courage and the Chaplain chastise their friend for his disloyalty and he eats the king's bread. The Cook disagrees; he does not eat his bread, but instead bakes it.

While the three converse, Katrin dons Yvette's boots and imitates her sashay. Suddenly cannons, shots, and drums explode: the Catholics have launched a surprise attack. The Ordnance Officer and a Soldier enter and attempt to move the cannon. The Cook departs for the Commander, leaving his pipe behind. The Chaplain remains, wringing a cloak from the reluctant Courage to disguise himself. Discovering Katrin, Courage rips off the boots and smears her face with dirt. When a clean face appears before a soldier, another whore comes into the world. To her horror, Swiss Cheese arrives and stupidly hides the regiment cash box in the wagon. They quickly take down the regiment flag.

Three days later, the remaining characters sit eating anxiously. Swiss Cheese worries that his sergeant is wondering about the cash box, and the Chaplain complains of having no one to preach to. Mother Courage has sworn herself a Catholic to keep the canteen safe. The Chaplain asks Swiss Cheese what he plans to do with the cash box. Spies are everywhere, the Chaplain even found a one-eyed fellow sniffing his excrement. Courage also commands her son to leave the cash box where it is. She leaves with the Chaplain, and Katrin clears the dishes.

Swiss Cheese resolves to return the cash box, daydreaming about his sergeant's reaction. Two men—an enemy Sergeant and the Man with the Bandage over his eye—confront Katrin. They ask if she has seen a man from the Second Protestant Regiment and she flees in terror. The men withdraw after seeing Swiss Cheese. Oblivious to the imminent danger, Swiss Cheese prepares to leave. Katrin does all she can to warn him but to no avail.

When Courage and the Chaplain return, Katrin desperately tells her mother what has happened. Suddenly the two men bring in a struggling Swiss Cheese. Mother and son pretend to not know each other. Nevertheless, Courage strongly suggests that Swiss Cheese give up the cash box. The men take him away, and Courage follows.

That evening, Katrin and the Chaplain appear rinsing glasses and polishing knives. The Chaplain sings "The Song of the Hours," a song that recounts the passion of Christ. An excited Courage enters, declaring that they must buy Swiss Cheese's freedom. Yvette has picked up a hoary old Colonel who might buy the canteen from her. Courage plans to pawn the wagon and

reclaim it after two weeks with the money from the cash box. Yvette seduces the Colonel into the purchase. He exits. Stopping her as she counts the merchandise, Courage sends Yvette to bribe One Eye with the 200 guilders. She thanks God men are corruptible, as corruption is their only hope.

Yvette returns and reports that One Eye has agreed. She also relates that Swiss Cheese confessed under thumbscrews that he threw the cash box into the river when he was near capture. Courage hesitates and decides that she will not be able to reclaim the wagon. She asks Yvette to return with a new offer of 120 guilders.

Courage sits to help polish the knives. She muses that they will get Swiss Cheese back, that the war will never end, and that she was once offered 500 guilders for her wagon. Kattrin flees, sobbing behind the wagon. Yvette returns, One Eye rejected her offer, and Swiss Cheese's execution is imminent. Desperately, Courage orders Yvette to tell him that she will pay 200. "I believe—that I've haggled to long" she murmurs.

Drums roll in the distance. Yvette appears and Swiss Cheese has eleven bullets in him. The army remains convinced that they are hiding the cash box. They are coming with the body. She asks if she should keep Kattrin away and Courage asks that she bring her. Two men enter with a stretcher with a sheet over the top. Raising the sheet, the Sergeant asks Courage if she can identify the body. Courage shakes her head. The Sergeant orders that the body be thrown into the carrion pit: "He has no one that knows him."

3.4.4 SCENE FOUR

Mother Courage appears outside an officer's tent, complaining to a Clerk that the army has destroyed her merchandise and charged her with an illicit fine. She plans to file a complaint with the captain. The Clerk responds that she should be grateful they let her stay in business.

A Young Soldier enters, threatening the captain's murder. Apparently the captain has stolen his reward for rescuing the Colonel's horse, squandering it on food, drink, and whores. He is hungry and wants to eat. The Commander ordered the army into the fields the year previous, not thinking they would remain in the area. The soldiers ruined the crops, and famine has been the result.

An Older Soldier tries to calm the younger one. Courage tells him to quiet down, saying that the screamers never last long. His rage will not last. He wonders how much time it will take in the

stocks before he realizes that he can bear with injustice. Suddenly the Clerk announces the captain's imminent arrival and orders the group to sit. They follow and Courage remarks that it is better to not rise again.

Courage then sings "The Song of the Great Capitulation." It tells of a proud man who joined the army and quickly came to submit to its discipline and ultimate capitulation. The soldier leaves and the Clerk informs Courage she can see the captain; she exits as well.

3.4.5. SCENE FIVE

Two years have passed and the wagon crosses Poland, Moravia, Bavaria, Italy, and Bavaria again. In 1631, it stands in a war-ravaged village after Tilly's victory at Magdeburg. Mother Courage and Kattrin serve two soldiers at the counter. One wears a stolen women's fur coat. Victory marches play throughout the scene.

Courage demands that the men pay and they protest that their "humane" commander was bribed and only allowed one hour for plundering. The Chaplain staggers in and there is another family of peasants in the farmhouse. He needs linen, and an excited Kattrin tries to get her mother to fetch some. Courage refuses, as she has sold all her bandages and will not sacrifice her officer's shirts.

The Chaplain brings in a wounded woman and peasant who stayed behind to protect their farm. All look to the unmoved Courage. Kattrin threatens her with a board. The Chaplain lifts her off the wagon, takes out the shirts, and begins tearing them in strips. From the house comes the cry of a child in pain. Kattrin rushes into the collapsing building.

Torn in two directions, Courage anxiously watches for Kattrin and warns the Chaplain to go easy on her linen. Kattrin emerges triumphantly with a baby. Courage commands that she return it to its mother. Kattrin rocks the baby and hums a lullaby. Courage demands that the victory marches stop; the victory has only cost her money. She sees a soldier trying to make off with a bottle of schnapps and snatches his fur coat as payment. The Chaplain murmurs that there is still someone in the farmhouse.

3.4.6. SCENE SIX

In 1632, the canteen sits before the Bavarian city of Ingolstadt during the funeral of Commander Tilly. Mother Courage and Kattrin take inventory while the Chaplain and a Clerk play draughts. They sit inside the canteen tent and outside it rains.

Counting her merchandise, Courage ruminates on Tilly's death. Courage confesses her pity for the Commander: men of his stripe undoubtedly leave special plans unaccomplished, something worthy of a monument. These plans are always spoiled by the "littleness" of the underlings who should carry them out. The Chaplain laughs at her subtly subversive speech. She asks him if he thinks the war will end; she needs to know if she should buy more supplies.

The Chaplain responds that heroes grow on trees and that, though the war might be imperfect, someone will always pull it out of the hole. A Soldier at the counter begins singing a cynical call to battle. Scandalized, the Clerk asks the Chaplain what he thinks of peace. The Chaplain responds that war has its islands of peace. Moreover, it satisfies all needs. You can take a crap, drink, screw, nap, and onward. War is like love—it always finds a way.

Courage resolves to buy new supplies. Katrin bangs a basket of glasses on the ground and runs out, distraught. Courage has promised her a husband come peacetime. Courage goes back and consoles her daughter. She then sends her to town with the Clerk to fetch some supplies and they exit.

The Chaplain commends Courage on her courage. She replies that the poor need it because they need it to wake in the morning, plough their field during wartime, raise their children, face each other, and suffer rulers who would cost them their lives. She sits, smokes her pipe, and asks the Chaplain to chop her some wood.

He comments on the pipe. Upon learning that it comes from the Cook, he jealously maligns its owner's character, angrily bringing the axe down on the chopping block. Courage warns him against breaking the block. The Chaplain laments that he has no talent for physical labor. He is a great preacher, rousing his listeners out of their senses and providing them with warmth. Courage responds that she needs her senses, and that firewood provides warmth best. Brandishing his ax, the Chaplain pursues his courtship: he wants to cement his bond with Courage. Courage refuses him laughingly.

3.4.7. SCENE SEVEN

Suddenly Katrin enters with wound across her eye and forehead, dragging the supplies behind her. She was attacked en route and permanently scarred. Courage attempts to console her, giving her Yvette's boots. Kattin leaves the boots and enters the wagon. Counting the scattered merchandise, Courage bitterly curses the war.

Courage appears at the height of prosperity, dragging the wagon and its new wares along a highway with the Chaplain and Katrin. She wears a necklace of silver coins. She declares that she will not let "you" spoil the war for her; war feeds its people. She sings "The Song of Mother Courage" anew.

3.4.8. SCENE EIGHT

It is 1632. An Old Woman and her son appear in front of the wagon on a summer morning, dragging a bag of bedding. They attempt to sell it to an unwilling Courage. Suddenly bells starting ringing, and voices from the rear announce Gustavus Adolphus's fall at the battle of Lützen. Peace has been declared. Courage curses: she has just purchased new supplies. Crawling out of the wagon, the Chaplain decides to don his pastor's coat.

Suddenly the Cook, bedraggled and penniless, arrives. Eilif is expected at any moment. Courage calls Katrin from the wagon, but she has come to fear the light in the wake of her disfigurement. Courage and Cook sit and chat, flirting as they recount their respective ruin. The Chaplain emerges wearing his coat, and the Cook chastises him from urging Courage to buy new supplies. They begin to argue. As the *Courage Model Book* indicates, they are engaged in a "fight for the feedbag." When Courage defends the Cook, the Chaplain calls her a "hyena of the battlefield," a war profiteer who has no respect for peace. Courage observes that the Chaplain has been living off her with little complaint and suggests they part company.

Upon the Cook's suggestion, Courage rushes off to town to sell as much as she can. The Cook removes his boots and the wrappings on his feet. Poignantly, the priest begs the Cook not to oust him. Suddenly an older, fatter, and heavily powdered Yvette enters with a servant in tow. The widow of a colonel, she has come to visit Courage. When she sees the Cook, she unmasks him as the Peter Piper that abandoned her years ago, warning Courage of his history. Courage calms her and takes her to town.

Both men are now convinced that they are lost. They reminisce about happier days under the service of the Commander. Eilif, now a richly dressed lieutenant, then enters in fetters followed by two soldiers. He has come to see his mother for the last time. He has been arrested for another of his acts of plundering, now criminal under the new peace, one that left the wife of a peasant dead. He has no message for his mother. The soldiers take him away and the Chaplain follows, instructing the Cook to defer telling Courage for now.

Uneasily, the Cook approaches the wagon, asking Katrin for food. A cannon thunders. Courage appears, breathless, with her

goods in arms. The war resumed three days ago. They must flee with the wagon; she wants the Cook to join her and takes hope that she will be seeing Eilif soon. With the Cook and Kattrín in the harness, Courage sings triumphantly: "Report today to your headquarters! If it's to last, this war needs you!"

3.4.9 SCENE NINE

By the autumn of 1634, the war has taken half of Germany's population. A hard winter has come early. Everyone is starving, the towns are razed, and only begging—rather than business—remains. Courage and the Cook appear in rags before a half-ruined parsonage in Fichtelgebirge. They ring to ask for food, but there is no answer. Courage suggests that they sing for their alms.

Abruptly the Cook tells her that he has received a letter from Utrecht: his mother has died of cholera and left him the family inn. Recounting the woes of the land, Courage confesses that she tires of wandering. "The world's dying out" the Cook responds, inviting her to join him at the inn. She must, however, decide whether she will join him immediately.

Courage calls Kattrín and tells her of the plan. The Cook asks to have a word with her alone. Once Kattrín has returned to the wagon, he tells her that they must leave Kattrín behind with the wagon. There is no room for her, and the customers do not like to look upon disfigured mutes. Courage does not know what to do; Kattrín overhears the conversation.

Calling to the parsonage, the Cook sings "The Song of the Great Souls of the Earth." It recounts the fates of Solomon, Julius Caesar, Socrates, and Saint Martin, all of whom meet their dark destinies on account of their respective virtues—that is, wisdom, bravery, honesty, and pity. Thus, a man is better off without such qualities. A voice calls them inside. Courage decides she cannot leave her daughter, and they enter the parsonage.

Kattrín climbs out with a bundle, laying a skirt of her mother's and a pair of the cook's trousers on the ground as a parting message. Courage emerges with a plate of soup and stops her daughter. They toss the Cook's belongings on the ground, harness themselves to the wagon, and depart. The Cook enters, still chewing, and sees his abandoned possessions.

3.4.10. SCENE TEN

During 1635, Courage and Kattrín follow the ever more tattered armies from central Germany. They come upon a prosperous farmhouse on the highway. A voice inside sings of the house's prosperity through the seasons. Courage and Kattrín stop to listen and then start out anew.

3.4.11. SCENE ELEVEN

One night in January 1636, the wagon stands near a farmhouse outside the Protestant town of Halle. Out of the woods come a Catholic Lieutenant and three soldiers in full armor. They have come from a guide to the town and the Lieutenant orders to kill anyone who makes a sound.

They knock and seize the Old Peasant Woman who answers. The soldiers bring out an Old Peasant and his son. Kattrin appears on the wagon and her mother has gone to town to buy supplies because the shopkeepers are fleeing and selling cheap. The soldiers demand a guide; the son refuses, even upon the threat of death. The soldiers then threaten to destroy their cattle. The son complies and exits with the soldiers.

The Old Peasant climbs on the roof and spies a Catholic regiment, which has killed the watchman and readies for a surprise attack on the town. Convinced there is nothing they can do, the Peasant Woman begins to pray, asking God to protect their family members in the town.

When she learns of the Peasant Woman's grandchildren in town, Kattrin quietly climbs on the roof. She withdraws a drum from under her apron and begins to beat it. The peasants command her to stop, threatening to stone her. The soldiers return, threatening to kill them all. Craftily, the First Soldier promises Kattrin that they will spare her mother if she stops and accompanies them to town. She ignores them, as the young man notes, and she does not beat for her mother alone. The Old Peasant begins maniacally chopping wood to conceal her drumming with an innocent peacetime noise. The soldiers consider setting the farm on fire.

Kattrin listens and laughs. Enraged, the Lieutenant orders his men to bring a musket. The Peasant Woman suggests that they smash the wagon. The Young Peasant deal it a few blows; Kattrin pauses in distress but continues. Suddenly he cheers her on and the soldier beats him with his pike. The second soldier returns and shoots the weeping Kattrin. Her final drum-beats mingle with the thunder of a cannon. She has saved the town.

3.4.12. SCENE TWELVE

Toward morning, Mother Courage sits by Kattrin's body in front of the wagon. The drums and pipes of the marching troops are heard. The peasants order the parasite away and Courage must follow her regiment. Courage responds that Kattrin has perhaps fallen asleep and sings her a lullaby. The peasants bring her to her senses. Courage fetches a sheet from the wagon to cover the body. She plans to go to Eilif. The peasants offer to bury her. Courage pays them and harnesses herself to the wagon. She is confident she can manage: "I must get back into business" she

resolves. As she calls to the passing regiment, the soldiers sing her signature song.

3.6. LET'S SUM UP

In this unit we have understood the background of the play. It was followed by the circumstances that led to shape Bertolt Brecht as a playwright and his major contribution to the world theatre. Last two sections provide outline summary and scene wise summary of all 12 scenes in the play.

3.7. IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. What kind of response can we gauge about Mother Courage from the summary provided?
2. How has Brecht successfully handled his dramatic technique through this play? Explain with suitable examples from the text.
3. What ideas can be formulated with the respect to the summary?

3.8. REFERENCES

- Bertolt Brecht, and Eric Bentley. *Mother Courage and Her Children : A Chronicle of the 30 Years' War*. New York, Samuel French, 1987.
- Bertolt Brecht, et al. *Bertolt Brecht Collected Plays / Translated by John Willett*. London, Eyre Methuen, 1980.



Unit -4

A STUDY OF BERTOLD BRECHT'S COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN PART II

Unit Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Character Analysis
- 4.2 Themes in the Play
 - 4.2.1 War
 - 4.2.2 Anti-war Play
 - 4.2.3 War as Business and Profit
 - 4.2.4 Motherhood
 - 4.2.5 Religion
- 4.3 Symbols in the Play
 - 4.3.1 Mother Courage's Wagon as a Symbol
 - 4.3.2 The Red Boots of Yvette
 - 4.3.3 Silence and Dumbness
 - 4.3.4 The Drum
- 4.4 Significance of Songs in the Play
- 4.5 Mother Courage as an example of Epic Theatre
- 4.6. Let's Sum up
- 4.7. Important Questions
- 4.8. References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will familiarise you with the analysis of the play and enable you to understand the play in detail. At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the various themes in the play
- Give the character sketches in the play
- Analyse the literary and theatrical devices for a deeper understanding of the play

4.1 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Mother Courage: The real name of Mother Courage is Anna Feirling in the play. She is a mother of three children Eilif, Swiss

Cheese and Katrin. She operates a small business as a canteen woman selling products, food and drinks to soldiers and military from a wagon. Mother Courage is a representative of the brutalities, hypocrisy, corruption, capitalist forces operating in war. The three children of Mother Courage have been born in three different countries of Europe and with three different fathers. Brecht has taken extreme care to portray Mother Courage as an antithetical image to the traditional roles of a mother. On the one hand, audience sympathise with Mother as the only provider of the family and also who struggles for survival. She looks at war as an ongoing opportunity to make money and keep her head above water. Having lost one son already to the war, she is not ready to sacrifice her second son Eilif to the war but is unable to prevent it by the Recruiting Officer.

She earned the nickname Mother Courage as she boldly ran through the bombardment to sell her loaves of bread before they perish. The title of the play itself creates the image of a formidable woman possessing several admirable qualities. Mother Courage the central character of the play produces a mingled impression upon the readers of the play. Brecht depicts mother with admirable qualities as well as certain weaknesses. The root cause of her suffering is in some of her faults, weaknesses and surroundings.

Mother Courage also represents the theme of motherhood in the play reflecting the anxiety and tension of a mother trying extremely hard to save her sons from the war. Mother Courage realizes the cruelty of war. She is aware of destructiveness and terrible misfortunes that have befallen in her personal life. The contradictions in Mother Courage are perceived throughout the play. Once she praises the war for feeding its people better than peace does. Immediately in the very next utterance, she shows her resentment and warns the soldiers of the premature death they would meet. She considers herself as ruined by peace. The lament of Mother Courage provokes the Chaplain to describe her as a "hyena of the battlefield".

As the play progresses, Mother Courage's character also undergoes changes that is portrayed by Brecht as anti-motherhood. However she pines for her children and gives up the comforts of leading a decent life with the Cook because of her mute daughter Katrin. Mother Courage also sings songs in the play that depict various events in the play. In the end Brecht informs that despite the deaths of her children, Mother Courage does not change her ways and continues with whatever she was doing.

Eilif: is the eldest son of Mother Courage. He represents the virtues of good soldiers as well as the worst that war brings out in humans. He seeks fame and recognition by killing peasants and stealing

their livestock to feed the starving regiment fighting the war. When Eilif performs such acts during peacetime he is mercilessly executed. Eilif's death raises pertinent questions about how heroic acts during war and peace time raise questions about the absurdities of war.

Swiss Cheese: the youngest son of Mother Courage but rather stupid. He gets appointed as a Paymaster for the Finnish regiment and takes his job quite seriously. When he is getting ready to return the cash box to the commanding officer, he is captured by the enemy forces. Mother Courage tries to bargain by haggling over the prices for the release of Swiss Cheese but to no avail. This exposes the value of money over humanity by Mother. Ultimately Swiss Cheese is executed for his trouble.

Katrin: is a victim of the brutalities, abuse and cruelties of the war. She is the mute daughter of Mother Courage. According to Mother, Katrin was gagged and abused that left her without a voice. Secondly, her face also suffered a gash by some soldiers that results in disfigurement of her face. Katrin is full of compassion and desires love from an eligible companion despite Mother's warning of Yvette being dumped after passionately loving a soldier. All she desires is to get married and have a family. She is the voice of resistance and resilience in the play. She does not turn around the war like her mother. She tries to alert the villagers about the enemy attack by drum beats and gets shot in the process for refusing to stop. Despite her sacrifice, the war continues and Mother Courage carries on with her business as usual.

The Cook: provides comic relief in this disturbing satire on war. He is a greedy man, prepares food for the Swedish general but leaves quickly when the food is insufficient. He is cynical and is on the lookout for opportunities he can get from the war. He is an aging lover who has seduced many women including Yvette, the camp prostitute. He plans to open an inn along with Mother Courage. He invites her to be a part of this comfortable life but without Katrin, Mother Courage's daughter. He also agrees with the Mother that war is nothing but a racket.

The Chaplain: is the religious leader of the army but extremely hypocritical and cowardly. He personifies Brechtian view of religion during war time that religion is no use during war. He switches allegiance freely and is not ashamed of such acts. During peacetime, the chaplain assumes he will be able to return to his church, despite having abandoned his faith and those who needed him during difficult times. He lacks real faith.

Yvette Pottier: Yvette is a prostitute who follows the army. She was once deeply in love with a soldier that did not materialise. She

gets married to a rich colonel and becomes wealthy but loses her looks. She wears red boots that are a fascination for Kattrin. When Kattrin playfully imitates Yvette wearing red boots, it results in a disaster for Kattrin.

4.2 THEMES IN THE PLAY

4.2.1. War

War is one of the important themes in the play. Bertolt Brecht presents the play in the background of Thirty Years War. He also discusses the futility and destruction caused by war. Through the theme of War, Brecht exposes the manner in which common people and civilians like Mother Courage and her children are affected by war. More over war has destroyed all the qualities, virtues and traits like humanness, sympathy and compassion. War has turned people and society into a disintegrated whole with emotions like fear, anxiety and disappointment lurking in the minds of people. War has consumed both sons of Mother Courage: Swiss Cheese and Eilif and also resulted in the tragic death of her mute daughter, Kattrin. Mother Courage has no other means of livelihood except to capitalise on war. Through the money that she earns by selling goods from her wagon, Mother Courage is able to provide for her family. Brecht in this play very poignantly depicts the brutalities of war in terms of destruction, ravage, loss of innocent lives and the futility of war.

4.2.2 *Mother Courage as an Anti- War play*

Brecht wrote the play while in exile in the year 1939. He was extremely moved and disturbed by the turn of events in Europe during the war. Mother Courage is an expression of anti- war play that seems topical in its time and has a universal appeal. Amidst the loss of lives in the war, Brecht writes about the struggle of survival of Mother Courage and her three children. The wagon becomes a source of her livelihood. Mother Courage's children become victims of war and death is inevitable for them. Right from the beginning of the play, the inverted interests of the military become apparent. Brecht's main aim was to expose the horrors of war and how it destroys the people through inhuman conditions and wished that the future world should not witness war of such magnitude.

4.2.3 War as Business and Profit

Brecht shows the character of Mother Courage as a "war profiteer"- who makes a living out of the profits of the war. The Thirty Years War has drained the finances of the people and they have no choice but to turn to war as a means of livelihood. Mother

Courage is no exception to this rule. She is forced to profit from the war. Not only Mother Courage but other characters like the General Tilly, Cook, Recruiting Officers also profit from the war. Even Yvette Portier, the prostitute is a victim of the business of war. The reader observes the business mind of Mother Courage when she bargains for the release of her son Eilif from the war. Unfortunately, her not relenting to the price quoted of two hundred guilders proves expensive as her son dies before she accepts the price. Mother Courage has a love/ hate relationship with war. She is more interested in profiteering rather than the wellbeing of her children.

4.2.4. Motherhood

Brecht presents a picture of motherhood that is antithetical to the play. All the three children of Mother Courage are born of different fathers. Mother Courage plays the role of a mother who is more interested in money. If war ends, Mother Courage would have no business. Even while trying to save her son Eilif, she is bargaining with the money to be paid rather than releasing him ultimately resulting in his death. In contrast to the profiteering, capitalist Mother Courage, Kattrin is picture of compassion and sacrifice. Though she is mute, she attempts to warn the people against the enemy by beating the drums from the rooftops. This results in getting herself shot.

4.2.5. Religion

Brecht shows that religion is often an obstacle during wartime. One of the main concerns in the play is about Christianity and the Bible. He shows the sarcastic character of Chaplain and how the Bible fails during wartime. The Chaplain appears first to be glorifying war and calls it as a "holy war". Later he appears scared and afraid of the guns roaring during war and tries to save himself from danger. Instead of offering spiritual comfort and solace to people, he is seen with Mother Courage pulling wagon and chopping wood. Brecht exposes the hypocritical view of Christian morality and religion.

4.3 SYMBOLS IN THE PLAY

4.3.1 Mother Courage's Wagon as a Symbol

The wagon symbolizes survival and the continuation of war. It was due to vested interests of individuals like Mother Courage and the Recruiting Officers, war continues bringing havoc upon people's lives and livelihood. The wagon symbolizes the business and profession of Mother Courage who uses it to trudge her wares and survive without the help of any man. The wagon also changes hands by way of her three children, the Cook, the Chaplain. It is the

only means of livelihood for the mother. The wagon gets broken and vandalized but continues doggedly at conducting the main purpose of selling and reinforcing the belief that war is business and capitalism. The Mother through the symbolism of wagon represents the doggedness and determination to continue her business amidst all the tragedies taken place in her life. The wagon also traverses borders and travels throughout Europe. At a deeper level, the wagon symbolises the inherent brutality of the war and how it is synonymous with the character of Mother Courage

4.3.2 The Red Boots of Yvette

The red boots worn by Yvette symbolise sexual attraction in the play. Yvette wears them to attract customers but discards them later out of frustration. When Katrin wears them and playfully imitates Yvette's walk, it painfully symbolizes her aging and lack of love. As the play progresses, the audience learns about Katrin's abuse by men that has scarred both physically and mentally. When mother gives the same boots to cheer Katrin, it suggests abuse at the hands of soldiers. Her rejection of the boots symbolizes rejection of love and fulfilment.

4.3.3. Silence and Dumbness

Katrin symbolizes this aspect in the play. Her silence reflects the silence and sacrifice of virtues during war time. At the same time her silence was probably due to silencing her voice during war by means of assault and abuse.

4.3.4 The Drum

The drum symbolizes protest and resistance to violence unleashed due to war. It acts as a vehicle of resistance for the peasants and to Katrin. The drum becomes a voice for the mute and unvoiced Katrin to express her anguish and frustration about the war. Through the drum beats, Katrin alerts the villagers about the enemy attacking them. She continues to play the drum louder and louder as the soldiers aim to shoot her. Katrin dies a tragic death playing the drum and getting shot by the soldiers.

4.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF SONGS IN THE PLAY

Brecht emphasized on music and songs in his plays and *Mother Courage* is no exception to music and songs. In fact, in this play, there are songs in almost all the scenes except in scenes 5 and 11. Brecht considered music and songs to be insertions in the play treated them in an unconventional and novel manner. The songs in the play perform the role of explaining the themes of the play, describe various events in the play and comment on the past

actions and future events in the play. Every important character sings a song in the play. Mother Courage herself sings five songs and a lullaby in the play, Eilif, Yvette, Chaplain and the Cook sing one song each and the soldiers sing two songs.

In Scene 1 Mother Courage sings a song informing about her trade as a canteen woman and invites soldiers to buy food and drinks from her wagon as they may soon be buried or gone underground in the course of the war. This song strikes the keynote of “war” in the play.

“Oh have yer squaddies halt and buy
New boots and claes an aw forbye!
Fleariddensojers who love their loot”

The song exposes the true nature of Mother Courage as an individual who profits from the war by selling her goods at a higher price and also the cynical realism adopted by Mother to her life.

Eilif sings a song in Scene 2 called “The Fish Wife and the Soldier” that describing a story about an ambitious soldier lad getting killed in the war meeting a premature death. The song proves to be ironic for Eilif as he predicts his own tragic destiny. In Scene 3 Yvette sings a song called “The Song of Fraternization”, an autobiographical song describing her camp life as a prostitute after she was left a destitute by a soldier who she loved passionately. This song also proves to be a warning for Mother Courage’s daughter Katrin against getting involved with a soldier. In the same scene the Chaplain sings a funeral song that is dirge “Song of the Hours” describing the passion of Christ suffering his execution in agony known as ‘The Crucifixion’. The song is an appropriate description and comparison of the impending execution of Swiss Cheese with Christ’s Crucifixion.

In Scene 4 Mother Courage sings the autobiographical song “Song of the Great Capitalization” that describes the disillusionment, frustrations and dashing of hopes related to war. It also describes the bitterness, anger and hatred of Mother Courage towards war and how war forces one to compromise on our principles for the sake of survival. In scene 6, a soldier’s song describes his feelings and attitude who is always on the move and how he tries hard to enjoy the fewer pleasures of life. In the same scene Mother Courage sings about “War as Business” but does not seem to learn any lessons from the horrors and destruction of war but continues to profit from the war.

In Scene 9, the Cook sings a long song titled “The Song of the Wise and the Good” expressing the futility of wisdom, bravery, unselfishness, honesty and every virtue in the world. The Cook

describes himself and Mother Courage as God fearing individuals and faith has only caused them misery. The song also provides a symbolic significance to three children of Mother Courage who represent three cardinal principles such as bravery of Eilif like Julius Caesar, honesty of Swiss Cheese like Socrates and unselfishness of Kattrin like Martin who all meet a tragic end. In scene 10 “The Song of Shelter and Security” sung by the inmate of a prosperous farmhouse and heard by Mother Courage and Kattrin makes the audience aware of the contrast between the prosperity of the farmhouse and the hardships faced by Mother Courage and her daughter.

In the concluding scene 12 there are two songs and a lullaby sung by Mother Courage to Kattrin who has fallen asleep. The song is a painful reminder to the misfortunes in relation to both her sons.
“aya Papaya

Who sleeps in the hay?

I see your eyes close
One kid lies in Poland
The other, well, who knows?”

The last song is sung by the soldiers that describe the devastation of war causing more misery and that war will continue for three generations. The song ends on a painful note of gloom and helplessness. All the songs are integral to the plot and development of action of the play. The enhance the dramatic action of the play and offer commentary on scenes and themes in the play.

4.5 MOTHER COURAGE AS AN EXAMPLE OF BRECHT’S EPIC THEATRE

Bertolt Brecht was the staunch follower of the Epic Theatre and almost all of his plays fall into this category. The alienation method followed by Brecht is a landmark in the Western theatrical world to express the disillusionment, frustrations and discontent of the post war world and Europe. Brecht desired that the audience should be motivated to think and so the character of Mother Courage brings apathy and helplessness to the audience. On the one hand we empathise with Mother and on the other we are shocked with the business like manner conducted by her. Brecht’s technique of theatre and ideas was a product of a devastated world and he used theatre to communicate his perception of reality. Brecht wanted to show Mother Courage unreformed, unadvised and unadvisable. According to him, each society is unique with its own circumstances facing its own problems. The aim of the theatre is to raise such problems. He puts forward the view that the

goodness must be ready to take a stand against the evil rather than meekly resigning to the oppression.

The play *Mother Courage and Her Children* begins with a broad sweep of historical fact that is The Thirty Years' War. It is a chronicle of the Thirty Years War that took place from 1618 to 1648 in Germany fought between the Protestants and Catholics. Though Brecht wrote it as an anti-war play, he does not mention it explicitly. He simply depicts the misfortunes and sufferings of a family against the background of war, and leaves his audiences to draw their own inferences. The play creates a powerful impact upon the minds of the spectators especially because the evils of the war produce tragic effects upon the main characters in the play itself.

The play is divided into 12 scenes that serve the purpose of an episodic structure to explicate the themes of War as Business, Profit and Capitalism. The purpose of the narrative in epic theatre was to reveal the conditions in which people lived.

The play successfully depicts the social conventions in Europe at the time of war. All the characters are meek sufferers of the war unable to express their rebellion or resistance to the war. Katrin who alerted the villagers through drum beats met with death as a punishment for her resistance.

The aim of epic theatre was to clarify the process by which men and women were shaped by their living conditions and by which they were also able to shape those conditions. This aim was the theatrical basis for another technique which Brecht employed was alienation. He wanted his audiences to view characters and their actions on the stage with detachment and with a critical observation. Brecht has certainly used distancing or alienation devices in the course of the play. We do feel alienated from Mother Courage at various points in the play. The contradictions in her character particularly alienate us. She wants the war to continue, and yet she does not want her sons to enlist in the army. She denies that she is a 'hyena of the battlefield' and yet is the most callous towards the Protestants who have been wounded in an attack by the Catholics. She is full of maternal anxiety about the safety of her own children but proves hard-hearted towards a child whom Katrin has rescued. She curses the war, and yet continues to desire continuance of the same and even to sing songs praising the war. And yet at the end of the play, the audience is filled with the deepest sympathy for her so that all the alienating devices in her case ultimately lose their effectiveness. Mother Courage emerges as a noble, tragic figure despite Brecht's own unfavourable view of her. Katrin's heroic deed to save the townspeople is also highly esteemed by the audience.

4.6. LET'S SUM UP

We have learned the character analysis in *Mother Courage and Her Children* discussed various themes such as war, anti-war play, war as business, notion of motherhood and religion. The playwright has brilliantly employed symbols like wagon, red boots, drum and silence and dumbness to reinforce the meaning of the play. The use of song in the play is another important aspect of the play which has been discussed at length. The last section discusses how *Mother Courage and Her Children* is the finest and the most illustrative example of epic theatre.

4.7. IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Identify the various themes in the play and explain each with textual examples.
2. Do you think that the playwright's interpretation of war as reflected in the play? Illustrate with suitable examples.
3. How does the character of Mother Courage shape in the course of the war as depicted in the play?
4. Comment on the importance of songs in the play.
5. Discuss *Mother Courage and Her Children* as an Epic Theatre.

4.8. SUGGESTED READING

- Bertolt Brecht, and Eric Bentley. *Mother Courage and Her Children: A Chronicle of the 30 Years' War*. New York, Samuel French, 1987.
- Bertolt Brecht, et al. *Bertolt Brecht Collected Plays / Translated by John Willett*. London, Eyre Methuen, 1980.
- Esslin, Martin. *Brecht: A Choice of Evils*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1963.
- *Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. ed. John Willet. London: Methuen, 1964
- Anjala Maharishi, Anjala. *A comparative Study of Brechtian and Classical Indian Theatre*. New-Delhi: National School of Drama, 2000



Unit -5

STUDY OF KALIDASA'S SHAKUNTALA PART I

Unit Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Sanskrit Plays
 - 5.2.1 *Natyashastra* and Sanskrit drama and theatre
 - 5.2.2 Characteristics and Types
- 5.3 Major Sanskrit Playwrights
- 5.4 Kalidasa
- 5.5 *Nataka* and Shakuntala
- 5.6 Epic Source and Kalidasa's innovative retelling
- 5.7 Some Translations of Shakuntala
- 5.8 Summing up
- 5.9 Suggested Reading (Print and web resources)
- 5.10 Hints for self-check exercises

5.0 OBJECTIVES

The four objectives of this unit are as follows:

- to acquaint you with some characteristics and types of Sanskrit drama
- to make you familiar with some of the major Sanskrit playwrights
- to understand the form of *Nataka* in Sanskrit drama
- to appreciate the aesthetic range of Kalidasa

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- ✓ recognise the features and types of Sanskrit drama
- ✓ know some major Sanskrit playwrights
- ✓ understand the elements of Sanskrit drama in general and *Nataka* in particular
- ✓ appreciate the artistry of Kalidasa

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we shall provide a brief overview of Sanskrit drama and its types. We shall also shed light on some of the major characteristics of Sanskrit drama. After outlining a few acclaimed Sanskrit playwrights, we will briefly elaborate on Kalidasa's artistic

works. Thereafter, we will highlight the characteristics of *Nataka* as seen in Kalidasa's classic play *Shakuntala* followed by Kalidasa's innovative retelling of the episode from the *Mahabharata*.

5.2 SANSKRIT PLAYS

In this section we will look at the significance of the *Natyashastra* in Sanskrit drama and theatre. Then we will elucidate on the important traits of Sanskrit plays.

5.2.1 *Natyashastra* and Sanskrit drama and theatre

Classical Indian Drama was greatly influenced by the treatise on Sanskrit dramaturgy i.e. *Natyashastra* which is attributed to Bharatamuni. *Natyashastra* laid down the principles to be followed while writing a play. Bharatmuni relates to Atreya and other sages that Lord Brahma took words from *Rigveda*, music from *Samaveda*, movements and make-up from *Yajurveda*, emotional acting from *Atharvanaveda* and produced the *Natyaveda*, the fifth Veda, accessible to all Varnas (castes), on Mahendra's request. The first performance took place at the flag-festival of Mahendrato mark his victory over the demons. The enrageddemons disturbed the performance by paralyzing the actors. Hence a *natyavesham* was constructed and Lord Brahma pacified the demons and reinforced that the *Natyaveda* represented the ways ofthe entire three worlds.

In classical Indian categorization, drama was considered as *drishya kavya*. In simple terms 'drishya' means seeing or visualizing and 'kavya' means poetry which is heard. Indian Classical theatre with reference to the *Natyashastra* consists of two classes: *lokdharmi* (popular and realistic) and *natyadharmi* (conventional and theatrical i.e. marked by artificiality with songs, dances, asides and soliloquies).

5.2.2 Characteristics and Types

Plays were considered as spectacles. So, the term *preksaka* referred to spectators and not merely the audience. Elite spectators and royal patronage ensured that the plays reinforced upper class values and were not a means of mass entertainment.

Sanskrit playwrights dipped into the acclaimed Indian epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* due to three main reasons. First, these epics were part of every Indian's shared stories, a treasure-house of faith and instruction. Second, the *preksaka* could connect to the play and appreciate the playwright's dramatization. Third, the playwright could pick up an episode and subtly connect it to the ruling King.

Dialogues were used effectively by the playwrights to stimulate the imagination of the *preksaka*. The high or divine characters spoke Sanskrit and the other characters spoke Prakrit (colloquial languages). The poetic quality of the plays was due to the mixing of lyrical stanzas (poetic language) with prose dialogues. The aim of the lyrical passages was to allow for commentary or reflection. All characters were placed in *Bharatvarsha* (India) without restrictions of place and time (day/month/year).

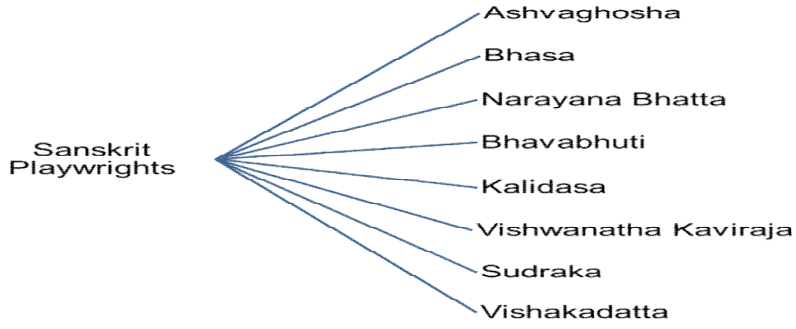
Two interesting characters, always Brahmins, were the Sutradhara/ Stage-director/ Manager and a Vidushaka/ clown/ jester/ fool (a confidante). The Sutradhara performed many functions. He introduced the play and the playwright and directed the play. Sometimes, he was a performer, a narrator and a commentator. The Vidushaka provided comic relief and could easily enter everywhere, even the women's quarters.

Plays began with the preliminaries or what was called as *purvaranga* which consisted of music, song or dance as a means of propitiating the Gods and entertaining the *preksaka*. The *purvarangawas* unrelated to the play. Plays began with the *Nandi* or the benediction to a deity and it was a prayer for the success of the performance. This was followed by the *prastavna* or the introduction (generally done by the Sutradhara) to the play and the playwright and the hero. *Rasa* or 'aesthetic emotion or sentiment' was integral to Sanskrit plays. But, there was no place on the stage for death, curses, degradation, banishment, national calamities, biting, scratching, kissing, eating or sleeping. Tragedy was completely absent and there are only happy endings followed by the *Mangalastuti* or a prayer for the kingdom.

The Sanskrit plays are classified into two main types: the major *Rupakas* (Sanskrit term for drama) and the minor *Uparupakas*. *Rupakam* means that which is presented on the stage and it is further classified into *Nataka*, *Prakarana*, *Bhana*, *Prahasana*, *Dima*, *Vyayoga*, *Samavaara*, *Vithim*, *Anka* and *Ihamrga*. As M.R. Kale and Benegal mention, the basis of differentiation of *Rupakas* is based on three factors, namely, plot (*Vaastu*) Hero (*Neta/Nayaka*) and emotion/sentiment (*Rasa*). Of these, the two principal types of drama are *Nataka* (stories about Kings and divine beings) and *Prakarana* (middle-class characters). Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* is a *Nataka*. Before moving on to Kalidasa, let us list some of the major Sanskrit playwrights.

5.3 MAJOR SANSKRIT PLAYWRIGHTS

A quick overview of some of the famous Sanskrit playwrights is as below:



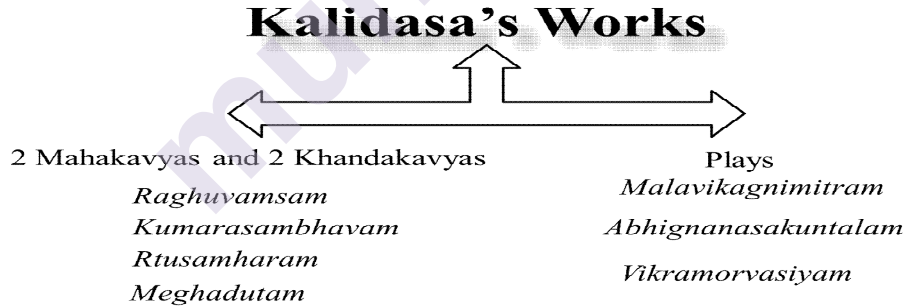
Sudraka wrote only one play *Mrichchakatikam* (English translation -*The Little Clay Cart*) in the *prakarana* form. It depicts a social revolution and the courtesan-heroine loves a poor Brahmin Charudutta. We will focus on Kalidasa's play *Shakuntala*.

Self-Check Exercise 1

1. What were the functions of the *Sutradhara*?
2. Name the two principal types of Sanskrit drama.
3. Surf the web and know more about the plays written by each of the Sanskrit playwrights mentioned above.

5.4 KALIDASA

There are many disputes regarding the times or period of Kalidasa's works but scholars agree on the broad overview of his works as below:



Take a close look at the titles. Interestingly, as Miller (1999) points out, each title includes the names of the protagonists or the story's central idea. *Malavikagnimitram* (*Malavika and Agnimitra*) dips into an episode from History and is a five Act play revolving around the Sunga King Agnimitra from Vidisa and a princess from Vaidarbha, Malavika who serves as the maid of the chief queen Dharini, *Abhignanasakuntalam* (*The Recognition of Shakuntala*) and *Vikramorvasiyam* (*Urvashi won by valour*). Likewise, *Raghuvamsam* (*The dynasty of Raghu*), *Kumarasambhavam* (*The birth of the War-God Kumara*), *Rtusamharam* (*The Song of the Seasons*) and *Meghadutam* (*The Cloud Messenger*).

David Damrosch places *Abhignanasakuntalam* as one of the 'two masterpieces of world drama (besides Sophocles' *Oedipus*). (2008, p.47) Let us now understand as to why *Abhignanasakuntalam* is considered as a *Nataka*.

5.5 NATAKA AND SHAKUNTALA

Nataka, considered as the highest form of drama, drew its subject from epic tradition. The subject was famous, for instance, a King was its hero. The dominant emotion was heroic and erotic. The play had a happy ending. The play *Shakuntala* fulfils these three requirements of *Nataka*. The plot was from epic tradition i.e., the narrative of Shakuntala from the *Mahabharata*. The hero was the brave King Dushyanta and the dominant emotion was *sringara rasa* or love or heroism.

5.6 EPIC SOURCE AND KALIDASA'S INNOVATIVE RETELLING

Kalidasa has drawn from the Sakuntalopakhyana from the Adi Parva of the *Mahabharata*. Refer to one of the translated versions for appreciating as to how Kalidasa has dramatized the epic narrative and understand the difference between narration and dramatization. As Thapar suggests, Kalidasa's use of the dramatic form indicates the 'deliberate distancing from the epic' for the epic genre and the dramatic genre reflect 'diverse literary and social interests' (*Preliminaries*, 5).

In Vaisampayana's narration, we find only four main characters, namely, King Dushyanta, Shakuntala, Bharata (son of King Dushyanta and Shakuntala) and Sage Kanva. Kalidasa's retelling of the Shakuntala narrative involves many invented characters and interesting devices. Kalidasa uses the benediction or *Nandi* followed by the Prologue (a conversation (between the Stage Director or *Sutradhara* and the actress). These highlight the varied elements in the making of theatre. We will learn more about the functions of the prologue in the section on the play's structure.

Whereas the forthright Shakuntala herself relates the story of her birth and abandonment in the epic narrative, Kalidasa introduces two friends Anusuya and Priyamvada who relate the story of the coy Shakuntala to King Dushyanta. The innovative device of the love-letter (writing with nails on a lotus leaf) is used to allow Shakuntala to express her romantic feelings for the King and move the action forward. King Dushyanta feigns ignorance of his marriage vow to Shakuntala in the epic narrative for fear that his subjects won't accept Shakuntala's son as the King. It takes a heavenly voice to resolve the doubts of the courtiers.

In Kalidasa's retelling, the King is made to appear as noble by three dramatic techniques: the curse, the loss of the ring and the discovery of the ring by the fisherman. Shakuntala, lost in thoughts of Dushyanta, does not extend her hospitality to Sage Durvasa. The angry sage curses her that she the person she was thinking of would forget her. The curse is not heard by Shakuntala but by her friend who requests the Sage to take back the curse. The Sage cools down and informs that the King would remember Shakuntala on seeing a token (ring). Another interesting device is the use of a heavenly voice to inform Sage Kanva about Shakuntala's marriage and pregnancy which is brought home to us through the conversation of her friends. Dushyanta, under the effect of the curse, forgets Shakuntala and regains his memory when he sees the signet ring that he had given to her. These invented scenes make the King appear noble and the *preksakas* sympathise with the King. Read the episode and the play and discover the numerous additions and deletions. The most interesting part is Act IV wherein the trees bless her and present her with jewels and clothes befitting a queen.

Self-Check Exercise 2

1. Name three plays written by Kalidasa.
2. Explain how the play Shakuntala fulfils the requirements of a *Nataka*.
3. Surf the web and know more about the plays written by Kalidasa.

5.7 SOME TRANSLATIONS OF SHAKUNTALA

Do keep in mind that we are studying the play *Shakuntala* in English translation while the play was originally written in Sanskrit. Indeed, Sanskrit literature became known to the West through William Jones' English translation of *Shakuntala* in 1789. Sir Monier Williams in the preface to his English translation has hailed Kalidasa as 'the Shakespeare of India' and placed him among the foremost literary figures in Sanskrit.

English translations of Shakuntala and the debates centred on the translated versions continue to grow. They enrich the repertoire of translations of the play and shed light on the variations. Some translators of *Abhignanasakuntalam* from Sanskrit into English are: Sir William Jones, William Moniers, M.R. Kale, C.S.R. Shastri, J.G. Jennings, Richard Pischel and Arthur W. Ryder. There are many more and you can make a list. As Thapar observes, we can understand the play better when we familiarize ourselves with the way the many translations remodelled the play to offer multiple perspectives or illuminate the text or reflect the historical moment.

In order to draw your attention to the differences in the varied versions of the English translations, it would be apt to quote a few lines from Act I when Dushyanta is jealous of the bee which is disturbing Shakuntala.

Translation 1 William Jones	Translation 2 Monier Williams	Translation 2 Arthur Ryder
<p>Dushm. [<i>Aside, with affection.</i>] How often have I seen our court damsels affectedly turn their heads aside from some roving insect, merely to display their graces! but this rural charmer knits her brows, and gracefully moves her eyes through fear only, without art or affectation. Oh! happy bee, who touchest the corner of that eye beautifully trembling; who, approaching the tip of that ear, murmurest as softly as if thou wert whispering a secret of love; and who sippest nectar, while she waves her graceful hand, from that lip, which contains all the treasures of delight! Whilst I am solicitous to know in what family she was born, thou art enjoying bliss, which to me would be supreme felicity.</p>	<p>http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mea/la/pritchett/00litlinks/shakuntala_jones/01_act.html Thou touchest repeatedly her quivering eye, whose outer-corner moves (playfully); going close to her ear, thou art softly humming as if whispering a secret (of love); thou art drinking the lip, containing all the treasures of delight, of her waving her hand ; (whilst) we, bee ! through (the necessity for) inquiring into the truth (of her origin), are disappointed (of immediate fruition), thou indeed art in the full enjoyment (of thy desire).'</p>	<p>King (ardently) As the bee about her flies, Swiftly her bewitching eyes Turn to watch his flight. She is practising to-day Coquetry and glances' play Not from love, but fright. (Jealously.) Eager bee, you lightly skim O'er the eyelid's trembling rim Toward the cheek a-quiver. Gently buzzing round her cheek, Whispering in her ear, you seek Secrets to deliver. While her hands that way and this Strike at you, you steal a kiss, Love's all, honey-maker. I know nothing but her name, Not her caste, nor whence she came – You, my rival, take her.</p>

5.8 SUMMING UP

In conclusion, we provided an overview of some Sanskrit playwrights. Then we outlined some of the major features of Sanskrit plays and the various forms of *Rupakam*. After mentioning some works by Kalidasa, we delineated the characteristics of the play as a *Nataka* and the innovations of Kalidasa. Finally, we attempted to illustrate the difference in some western translations of the play. In the next unit, we will examine the play in greater detail.

5.9 SUGGESTED READING/VIEWING (PRINT AND WEB RESOURCES)

- Damrosch, David. *How to Read World Literature*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, 2008. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/inflibnet-ebooks/detail.action?docID=416426>.
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- <http://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/64650/1/Unit3.pdf>
- <https://www.textlog.de/22272.html>
- <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupname?key=Kalidasa>
- <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16659/16659-h/16659-h.htm>
- www.columbia.edu/itc/mealc/pritchett/00litlinks/shakuntala_jones/index.html

5.10 HINTS FOR SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

- Self-Check Exercise 1 Refer to Section 5.2.
- Self-Check Exercise 2 Refer to Section 5.4 and 5.5.



Unit -6

STUDY OF KALIDASA'S SHAKUNTALA PART II

Unit Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Structure
 - 6.2.1 Overall Structure
 - 6.2.2 Prologue
- 6.3 Summary
- 6.4 Characters
- 6.5 Themes
 - 6.5.1 Love and Duty
 - 6.5.2 Ecology and Nature
- 6.6 Allusions
- 6.7 Rasa
- 6.8 Summing up
- 6.9 Suggested Reading (Print and web resources)
- 6.10 Hints for Self- Check Exercises

6.0 OBJECTIVES

The three objectives of this unit are as follows:

- ✓ read and appreciate the Sanskrit play *Shakuntala* in English translation
- ✓ familiarize yourselves with the characters and themes of the play
- ✓ learn more about some allusions and rasas in the play.

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- ✓ understand and appreciate the play *Shakuntala* in English translation
- ✓ become familiar with the characters and themes of the play
- ✓ identify the allusions and rasas in the play.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we learnt about some Sanskrit playwrights and characteristics of a Sanskrit play. We explained the innovations of Kalidasa and dwelt briefly on some translations of

the play. In this unit, we will gain a better understanding of *Shakuntala* through a study of its structure, summary, characters, themes, allusions and rasas.

6.2 STRUCTURE

The play begins with the benediction (*Nandi*), a prayer to the *Ashtamurthi* (eight manifest forms) Lord Shiva. The prologue and seven acts are followed by the *Bharatavakya* or epilogue or blessings for the Kingdom.

6.2.1 Overall Structure

As mentioned in unit 5, located in Bharatavarsha, the play's action takes place in varied geographical areas like the forests (hermitage), Palaces (cities) and the Mountains (abode of the Gods). There are three locations. Act I - IV - Sage Kanva's hermitage, Act V and VI - King Dushyanta's Palace and Act VII - Heavenly Mountains. The table below depicts the seven-acts with the action spread over seven years:

Prologue	
Act I	The Hunt
Act II	The Secret
Act III	The Love-Making
Act IV (Scene I and Scene II)	Shakuntala's Departure
Act V	Shakuntala's Rejection
Act VI (Scene I and Scene II)	Separation from Shakuntala
Act VII	Reunion

Scenery and stage properties are absent. There are no curtains or lights or announcements and the scene is indicated or evoked through vivid dialogues. There is no chariot and no deer in Act I but only artificial theatrical conventions. The vivid description of the chase conveyed by King Dushyanta and his charioteer helps to recreate the scene. There is no actual attack by the bee in Act I but the King's verbal description and Shakuntala's gestures, both natural and conventional or stylized enable the *preksaka* to vividly imagine the scene. Some more examples include Sage Durvasa's curse (reported by her friends) and the trees presenting Shakuntala with clothes and jewellery (reported by the hermits).

Scholars have noted the parallels and contrasts when the Acts are considered as reflections of each other as given in the table below (1 and 7, 2 and 6, 3 and 5):

<p style="text-align: center;">Act I</p> <p>Dushyanta and his earthly charioteer arrive at Sage Kanva's hermitage. He receives a blessing that a son as great as King Puru would be born to him. He meets Shakuntala and makes inquiries about her parentage with her friends. His signet ring reveals his identity.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Act VII</p> <p>Dushyanta and the heavenly charioteer Matali arrive at Sage Kashyapa's hermitage on the heavenly mountains. The amulet reveals Dushyanta's identity as the young Bharata's father. Dushyanta reunites with his wife Shakuntala and son Bharata. They receive the blessings of Sage Kashyapa and Aditi.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Act II</p> <p>Dushyanta confesses his love (for Shakuntala) to his companion Madhavya and plans to win her over. When the hermits arrive at his camp and request him to stay back to protect them from demons, Dushyanta gets an opportunity to woo and wed Shakuntala.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Act VI</p> <p>Dushyanta regains his memory on seeing the signet ring. In Madhavya's company in the garden, he paints Shakuntala's portrait and grieves for her. Charioteer Matali informs that Lord Indra needs protection from demons. This paves the way for Dushyanta's reunion with wife Shakuntala and son Bharata.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Act III</p> <p>Dushyanta conceals himself and learns that Shakuntala too loves him. They marry secretly (<i>gandharva</i> marriage). They separate when the hermit mother Gautami calls Shakuntala and the hermits ask for Dushyanta's help against the demons.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Act V</p> <p>A heavily pregnant Shakuntala is escorted to Dushyanta's court by Gautami, and hermit pupils, Sharadvata and Sharngarva. Dushyanta fails to recognise her and disowns her and her child. Shakuntala is left at the palace but an invisible fairy carries her away. There is a long separation of six years.</p>

6.2.2 Prologue

As mentioned in unit 5, the prologue is significant. It is agreed that the prologue captures the theatrical worldview expressed in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Two theatrical techniques are used, namely, the benediction (to ward off obstacles) and the witty conversation between the *Sutradhara* and the actress. The mention of all the elements of a theatrical performance make it metadramatic (drama about drama.) The *Sutradhara*'s presence - between the world of the *preksaka* (hall) and the world of the play (stage) - and his interaction links the two worlds, enabling a smooth transition from the *lokdharmi* (real) world into the *natyadharmi* (theatrical) world.

The opening interaction between the *Sutradhara* and the actress informs about the staging of the play (Shakuntala) and the playwright (Kalidasa). The song sung by the actress is both a device to entertain the *preksaka* and verbally indicate the summer season, the settings, timings and locations and create a total theatre. The *Sutradhara* foreshadows the theme of forgetting by assuring the actress that she has enchanted him with her song (making him forget) and hints at the entry of King Dushyanta, who is chasing a deer, in Act I. Thus, the prologue creates 'a willing suspension of disbelief' and allows for an intellectual engagement.

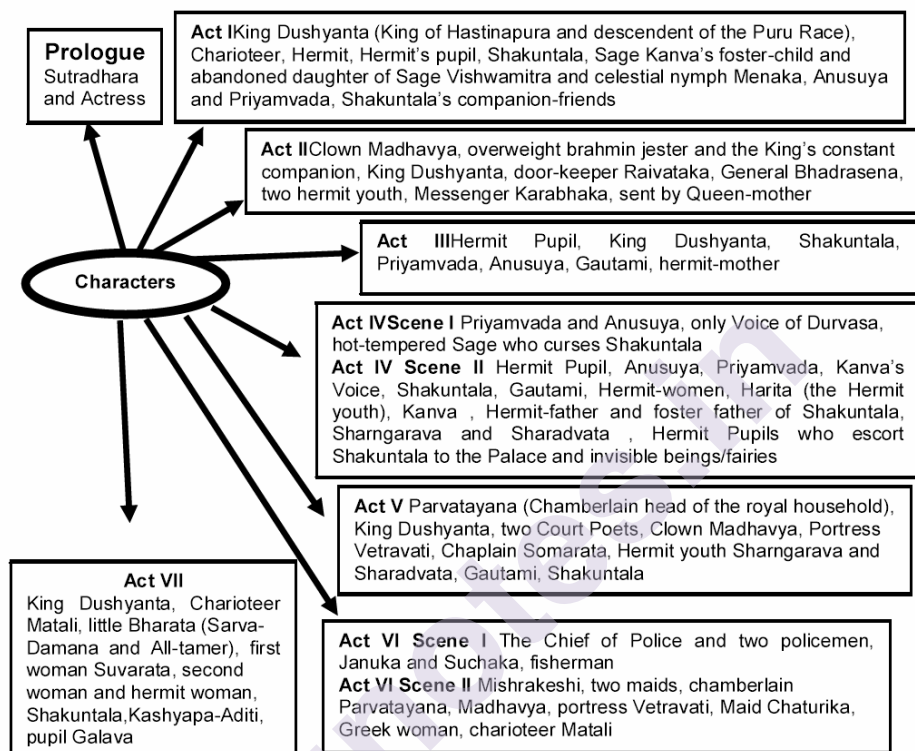
6.3 SHORT SUMMARY

In Act I, King Dushyanta is chasing a deer. A hermit informs that the deer belongs to Sage Kanva's hermitage, which is under the King's protection. The King obeys the hermit who prophesies the birth of a son as mighty as Puru. The hermit tells him that Shakuntala would receive the King in Sage Kanva's absence. On entering the hermitage, the King hides himself and sees Shakuntala and her friends watering the trees. Both Dushyanta and Shakuntala are drawn to each other. He asks her companions about her parentage. Offering his signet ring to free Shakuntala from the debt of watering more trees, he hears cries of the hermits warning of an injured Elephant. In Act II, the King confides his love for Shakuntala to Madhavya and receives a message from the Queen Mother. The hermits request the protection from evil spirits, so he sends Madhavya to the palace. In Act III, the King overhears Shakuntala's love poem and declares his love. They unite in gandharva marriage and he assures her that he would send for her. In Act IV, Shakuntala's friend reports about Sage Durvasa's curse and remedy. A heavenly voice announces Shakuntala's marriage and pregnancy to Sage Kanva and he prepares to send her to the palace.

In Act V, the King receives the hermits but denies any relation with Shakuntala. She wishes to remind him by showing the ring but the ring is missing. The hermits leave the weeping Shakuntala at the palace but a celestial nymph carries her away. In Act VI, a fisherman discovers the ring in a fish's belly. The King regains his memory and cancels the spring festival in grief. Mishrakeshi, Menaka's friend, spies on the King, who paints Shakuntala's portrait, and affirms that he is depressed with Shakuntala's absence. Matali, Lord Indra's charioteer takes him to fight the demons. After being honoured by Lord Indra, the King and Matali descend in Marica's hermitage. The King sees a young boy playing with a lion cub. When the King picks up the magical amulet, his paternity is proved and he is reunited with his wife Shakuntala and son Bharata. All misunderstandings are cleared when the sage explains about the curse and blesses them and their Kingdom.

6.4 CHARACTERS

In addition to the invisible fairies, divine voices and voices of characters who are not actually visible (Sage Durvasa) on the Stage, the characters of all classes in their order of appearance in each Act/Scene is as follows:



Self-Check Exercise 1

1. Explain the significance of the prologue in the play Shakuntala.
2. Write in brief about the play's locations.
3. In which Acts is Shakuntala not present physically?
4. Who were Shakuntala's parents?

6.5 THEMES

The play reflects the social-cultural and ecological consciousness of the playwright and his times. The theme of love and duty encompasses two of the four *purushartas*, namely, *dharma* (duty), *artha* (material/meaning), *kama* (desire) and *moksha* (liberation). The second theme proves Kalidasa's non-binary thinking i.e., the harmonious blending of the humans and the non-humans in the pious hermitage.

6.5.1 Love and Duty

Dushyanta loves hunting but stops when reminded of his duty to protect the hermitage. He is bound to pay his respect to Sage Kanva and meets Shakuntala in Kanva's absence. He falls in love at first sight but upholds social values (here caste) and inquires if Shakuntala was a Kshatriya (not a Brahmin) and if she was to be married. He reflects on the social order and proposes his love and suggests *gandarva -vivah* (marriage by mutual consent) only after ascertaining that she was a Kshatriya's daughter. Shakuntala and her friends dutifully water the trees daily. She is duty-bound to extend hospitality to Sage Durvasa but her absent-mindedness makes her forget her duty resulting in the curse and separation of the lovers.

6.5.2 Ecology and Nature

There is a peaceful co-existence of humans, plants and animals in the hermitage. Shakuntala wears sirisha blossoms and lotus bracelets. Besides watering the trees which bloom during summer, she waters plants which are past their flowering time. She calls the spring-creeper as her sister and the young fawn as her adopted son. As Miller observes, infused with the spirit of interchange ability between the *nayika* (heroine) and nature's elements, Shakuntala is depicted as an embodiment of the fertile nature and her bodily parts are equated with natural objects. (p.29) The mango-tree gestures to her and the jasmine vine chooses the strong mango-tree as husband (symbolic of Shakuntala and Dushyanta). The trees give gifts (silken marriage dress, lac-dye for feet), invisible fairies give gems and cuckoos sing a farewell song. Shakuntala employs nature imagery to express her anguish when she parts from Kanva "I am torn from my father's breast like a vine stripped from a sandal tree on the Malabar hill. How can I live in another soil? (Ryder, Act IV, p.48).

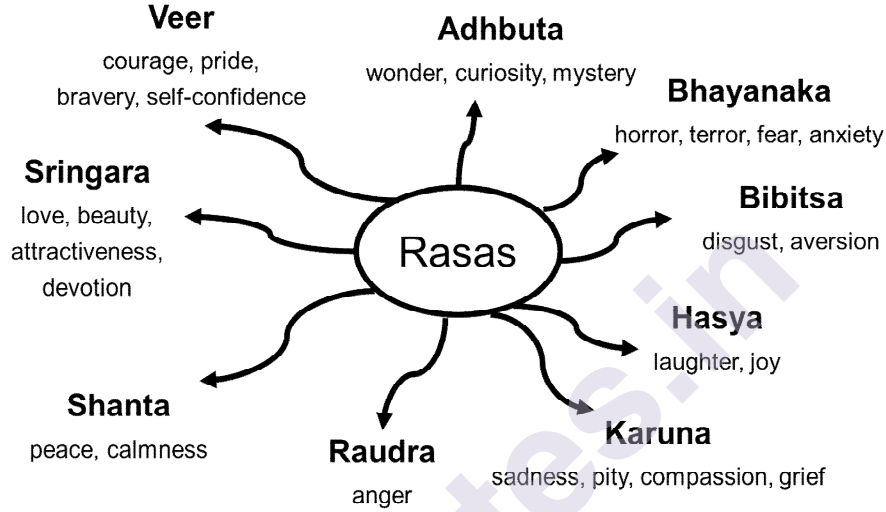
6.6 ALLUSIONS

Allusion is an indirect or implied reference (to a person, place, event or a text) and dips into shared stories. Let us look at some of the allusions. In Act I, there is a reference to God Shiva's immortal chase. This story draws upon Sati's self-immolation and Shiva's hunting down the sacrificial fire which takes the form of a deer. The reference to Kaushika (Act I) brings to mind the story of Vishwamitra's seduction by celestial nymph Menaka and Shakuntala's birth. Dushyanta's reference to the burning of love-tree by an angry Shiva in Act II reminds one of the destructions of love-God Kama when Shiva opens his third eye. Kama disturbs Shiva's meditation and shoots an arrow to fill Shiva with love for Parvati. The reference to Puru (not once but thrice) and 'Sharmishtha, Yayati's wife and kingly son Puru' in Act IV brings to

mind the exchange of the curse of old age between father Yayayi and son Puru.

6.7 RASA

Rasa means 'aesthetic emotion or sentiment' and was a significant aspect of Sanskrit plays. This is a mind map which captures the nine *rasas* in Sanskrit dramaturgy:



Read the play slowly and learn to savour the *rasas*. Do remember that the *rasas* can be experienced more deeply when one reads the play in Sanskrit! Let's illustrate a few instances of the varied *rasas* in the play. The main emotion of *Sringara Rasa* which consists of both union and separation. Dushyanta and Shakuntala experience mutual attraction/love for each other in Act I and their long separation makes them spiritually stronger in Act VII. When Dushyanta's right arm throbs, he experiences *Adhbuta Rasa* and wonders if love can blossom in a hermitage. The parting gifts of the trees to Shakuntala in Act IV exemplifies *Adhbuta Rasa*. *Bhayanaka Rasa* is felt when the injured elephant or the flesh-eating demons in Act III disturb the hermits. Madhavya's comments in Act II create *Hasya Rasa*. One experiences *Bibitsa Rasa* in Act V on seeing the King's rejection of Shakuntala and *Raudra Rasa* when Sharngrava accuses the King of treachery. One experiences *Karuna Rasa* on seeing the weeping Shakuntala who is left behind in the palace by her hermit-brothers and mother. Dushyanta's courage in extending protection to the hermits and Lord Indra against the demons are instances of *Veer Rasa*. The happy ending of Act VII culminating in a *Bharatavakya* or epilogue leads to *Shanta Rasa*.

Self-Check Exercise 2

1. Which duty did Shakuntala neglect?
2. Give more instances of *Adhbhuta Rasa* in the play.

6.8 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we developed a deeper understanding of Kalidasa's acclaimed play *Shakuntala*. We analysed the overall structure and explained the significance of the prologue. We gave an overview of the summary and the characters and elaborated on some themes, allusions and rasas in the play.

6.9 SUGGESTED READING/VIEWING

- Figuera, Dorothy Matilda. *Translating the Orient: The Reception of Sakuntala in Nineteenth Century Europe*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1991
- Jones, Sir William. Trans. *Sacontala or The Fatal Ring: An Indian Drama*. By Kalidas. Calcutta: Joseph Copper. 1789
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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pR5LE3X7Jko>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U7TOT2xtlo> Act IV
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVqBD_2P4Pg short stop-animation film

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP75esh1hA0> Vinay Dharwadkeron *Shakuntala*
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieRAMZabsdl> *Shakuntaladir.* Dr. Ananda Lal
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlg5HXUudNM> Romila Thapar on *Shakuntala*
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haZGHUcVbzQe> - paathshaala, play synopsis
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3nilC60ull> Sanskrit Drama and Theatre

6.10 HINTS FOR SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Exercise 1 Refer to section 6.2. 2 and 6.2.1 for questions 1 and 2 and section 6.4 for questions 3 and 4.

Exercise 2 Refer to section 6.5 for question 1. Read the play and discover more instances.



Unit -7

A STUDY OF HENRIK IBSEN'S A DOLL'S HOUSE PART I

Unit Structure

- 7.1 Objective
- 7.2 About Author: Henrik Ibsen
- 7.3 Biography
- 7.4 His Style
- 7.5 About the Play: A Doll's House
- 7.6 Plot
 - 7.6.1 Act I
 - 7.6.2 Act II
 - 7.6.3 Act III
- 7.7 Important Questions
- 7.9 Bibliography

7.1 OBJECTIVES

The basic objective of this unit is to make learners aware about the play 'A Doll's House' and to provide the basic information about the author, the period and the text.

7.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: HENRIK IBSEN

As one of the founders of Modernism in theatre, Ibsen is usually mentioned as "the father of Realism" and therefore the second most influential playwright of all times – after Shakespeare. Within the late 19th century, the playwright Ibsen completely rewrote the principles of drama with a realism that we still see in theatres today. He transformed the stage faraway from what it had become – a plaything and distraction for the bored – and introduced a replacement-order of ethical analysis. His major works include *Brand*, *Peer Gynt*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Emperor and Galilean*, *A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts*, *The Wild Duck*, *When We Dead Awaken*, *Rosmersholm*, and *The Master Builder*.

7.3 BIOGRAPHY

Henrik Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, in Skien, Norway. In 1862, he was exiled to Italy, where he wrote the tragedy *Brand*. In 1868, Ibsen moved to Germany, where he wrote one among his most famous works: the play *A Doll's House*. In 1890, he wrote *Hedda Gabler*. By 1891, Ibsen had returned to Norway a literary hero. He died on May 23, 1906, in Oslo, Norway.

7.4 HIS STYLE

Unlike his predecessors, without using fairy tale figures and unlikely plots, Ibsen brought his audience into regular people's homes, where the bourgeois and upper-middle-class people kept their carefully guarded secrets. He then placed the conflicts that arose from challenging assumptions and confrontations against a realistic middle-class background and developed them with piercing dialogue and meticulous attention to detail. For this, he has earned his place in history.

7.5 ABOUT THE PLAY: A DOLL'S HOUSE

A Doll's House is perhaps the most played throughout the planet. The play culminates within the character of Nora leaving her husband Torvald and her three children – something which was unprecedented in 1879 when it had been first performed. It is still considered one of the foremost famous gender political moments in world literature. The role of Nora even holds an iconic status: Unesco's Memory of the planet register calls Nora "a symbol throughout the planet, for ladies fighting for liberation and equality".

A Doll's House is a three-act play written by a Norwegian playwright Ibsen. It premiered at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 21 December 1879, having been published earlier that month. The play is about a Norwegian town around 1879. The play is critical and controversial for the way it deals with the fate of a wife, who at the time in Norway lacked reasonable opportunities for self-fulfillment during a male-dominated world. Though Ibsen denies he had intended to write down a feminist play. It aroused an excellent sensational response at the time and caused a "storm of outraged controversy" that went beyond the theatre to the media and society.

Once the topic of public controversy, defended only by the avant-garde theatre critics of the nineteenth century, Ibsen's

prose dramas now are famous as successful television plays and are an important part of the repertory theatre everywhere. They no more invite inflaming audience reactions and now acceptable fare to the foremost conservative theatre-goer.

7.6 PLOT

7.6.1 Act I

Act I of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* opens with the housewife Nora Helmer arriving home from a Christmas shopping trip. Her husband, Torvald, greets her and playfully comments on her for spending such a lot of money. Nora argues that since Torvald was recently promoted at work, the Helmers have more financial comfort than they had in previous years. As they talk, the doorbell rings. The Helmers' maid Helene informs them that two guests have arrived: Dr. Rank, an old and close family friend who is terminally ill, and, much to Nora's shock, her old-fashioned friend Christine Linde.

After the guests are admitted, Dr. Rank and Torvald meet in Torvald's study while Nora and Mrs. Linde remain in the living room. Nora feels bad for Mrs. Linde as she is now a childless widow and apologizes for not staying in-contact after marrying Torvald. Mrs. Linde explains that she has lived a tough life since her husband died and feels lost with nobody to care for and concern for. Mrs. Linde hopes Nora might convince Torvald to offer her employment or some work at the Bank that he now manages, which Nora agrees to try to do. Nora then recounts the woes of her first year of marriage, wherein Torvald fell ill from overwork. To treat him and revive his health, the Helmers had to require an upscale trip to Italy. At first, Nora claims that her wealthy father gave them the cash. However, after Mrs. Linde insinuates that Nora doesn't understand true suffering, Nora reveals that she acquired the cash by removing a loan—something she shouldn't have legally been ready to do.

When a junior bank employee named Krogstad arrives requesting to ascertain Torvald, both Nora and Mrs. Linde react uneasily. Dr. Rank, who joins Mrs. Linde and Nora to offer Torvald and Krogstad privacy, calls Krogstad "morally sick." After Torvald and Krogstad's meeting ends, Torvald, Dr. Rank, and Mrs. Linde depart the Helmers' home, leaving Nora to play together with her children. Krogstad then returns to talk with Nora privately, revealing that he's the source of her loan. He also reveals that he is aware of Nora illegally forging her father's signature on the bond. Torvald intends to dismiss Krogstad from the bank, so Krogstad uses the proof of Nora's forgery to

blackmail her into advocating for him and supporting his job. When Torvald returns home, Nora talks to him and attempts to convince him to stay Krogstad employed at the bank. Torvald reprimands her for advocating for Krogstad and shares with her that the first crime that ruined Krogstad's reputation was a forgery. Torvald further reiterates that he hates people who lie, keep secrets and corrupt their families. This opinion disturbs Nora.

7.6.2. ACT II

As Act II opens, Nora nervously paces the front room. Her maid Anne-Marie arrives with the dress that Nora is going to be wearing to a celebration subsequent night. As Nora and Anne-Marie converse, Nora reveals that she has been avoiding seeing her children. She also laments that they might probably ditch her if she left permanently.

Mrs. Linde arrives to assist Nora to manage her dress for the party. She tries to ask Nora about her relationship with Dr. Rank, implying that Nora may have received the cash from him. Nora denies the accusation but seems intrigued by the thought. Their conversation is interrupted by Torvald's arrival. Nora once more attempts to convince Torvald to not fire Krogstad. She tells him that she is worried that Krogstad will write slanderous and defamatory articles about the Helmers. Torvald reassures her that he will handle any fallout, which only distresses Nora further. She decides to not allow Torvald to require the autumn for her actions.

Dr. Rank arrives soon after and informs Nora that he is very sick and will die soon. He asks Nora to not tell Torvald because Torvald doesn't handle "ugly" things well. As they talk, Nora asks Dr. Rank if he would do her a favor. He agrees and adds that he would do anything for her because he's crazy together with her. Unsettled by his remarks, Nora scolds Dr. Rank and refuses to inform him what favor she had planned to ask him for. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of a visitor. Knowing that it's Krogstad, Nora asks Dr. Rank to stay. Torvald occupied, claiming that she doesn't want her husband to ascertain her in her finished dress.

Krogstad reveals that he has received his dismissal letter. He tells Nora that he will now not publicly expose her forgery but makes a plan to blackmail Torvald into giving him a promotion at the bank to fix his reputation. Nora gets scared and offers to finish her own life to spare Torvald the blame, shame, and scandal, but Krogstad tells her that it'll not change anything.

Torvald believes that a man always remains socially in charge of his woman's actions.

As he leaves, Krogstad drops a letter explaining Nora's actions into the Helmers' letterbox. After Krogstad leaves, Nora frantically reveals everything to Mrs.Linde. Shocked, Mrs. Linde informs Nora that she and Krogstad wish to be romantically involved. Mrs.Linde promises to undertake to convince Krogstad to require his letter back. Meanwhile, Nora attempts to stop Torvald from reading the letter. She asks him to assist her to rehearse the dance she is about to perform at the party the subsequent night. Torvald indulgently agrees.

Mrs.Linde returns with the news that Krogstad has left town and won't return until the subsequent night. Mrs.Linde left a letter for him and plans to talk with him when he returns. An increasingly desperate Nora redoubles her efforts to distract Torvald from the letters.

7.6.3 Act III

Act III begins the next day evening. The Helmers are attending a celebration, and Mrs.Linde is waiting there for Krogstad. When Krogstad arrives, he's initially hostile towards Mrs.Linde, accusing her of abandoning him for a richer man. Mrs.Linde tells him that she did what she had to try to supply for her family. After revealing their mutually unhappy circumstances, the two reconcile and comply with marriage. Krogstad remorsefully agrees to require his letter back, but Mrs.Linde stops him. She believes that it's important for Nora to be honest with Torvald. Krogstad then departs after agreeing to send a second letter clarifying that he does not intend to use Nora's forgery against the Helmers.

Nora and Torvald return from the party shortly after that. Mrs.Linde greets them and tells Nora that Krogstad has not taken the letter back. Mrs.Linde then departs, and Dr. Rank arrives. He uses coded gestures and tells Nora that his disease has progressed to a fatal point in which he plans to lock himself awaytodie. Nora tells him to "sleep well" and asks him to wish an equivalent for her.

After Dr. Rank leaves, Torvald checks the letterbox. The onlyletter he gets is Dr.Rank's death notice. Torvald is saddened to listen to his friend's impending death. He retires to his study. Nora hurriedly prepares to go away from the house. She has decided to end her own life. But before she leaves, Torvald confronts her about Krogstad's letter. Nora is scared whenTorvald furiously berates her. He threatens to bar her from

seeing her children because he believes she would corrupt them. Finally, instead of risking the damage to his reputation, he plans to travel alongside Krogstad's demands. Nora grows increasingly cold as Torvald insults and humiliates her. She realizes that he's not the person she thought he was.

Torvald's diatribe is interrupted by the arrival of Krogstad's second letter. The second letter contains Nora's bond and a promise from Krogstad that the Helmers don't have anything to fear from him. Torvald is overjoyed, and he immediately claims to possess forgiven Nora for everything. However, after seeing Torvald's reaction to the primary letter, Nora decides to go away from him. She accuses both Torvald and her father of infantilizing her, treating her as sort of a "doll" instead of a rational person. Torvald attempts to convince her to remain by citing the social, moral, and nonsecular repercussions of her leaving. However, Nora insists that she must become independent and learn to think for herself. She insists that the laws prohibiting women from removing loans are unjust, and she or he points out that Torvald would have died had she not taken him to Italy. Despite Torvald's begging, Nora leaves him and her children. the ultimate direction depicts Nora shutting the door behind her as she leaves

7.7 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss important features of the plot of 'A Doll's House' with reference to the position of Nora as a woman of the house
2. Discuss Henrik Ibsen as a play-wright of the 'New Age' literature.

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Unit -8

A STUDY OF HENRIK IBSEN'S A DOLL'S HOUSE PART II

Unit Structure

- 8.1 Objective
- 8.2 Significance of the Title
- 8.3 Important Literary Devices
- 8.4 The Setting of the Drama
- 8.5. Major Themes
 - 8.5.1 Marriage, Family and Love
 - 8.5.2 Importance and Stereotyping of Man-Woman Relationship
 - 8.5.3. Importance of Money in Marriage
 - 8.5.4 Lack of Trust in a Family
 - 8.5.5 Individual's Agonies Vs Morality of the Society
- 8.6 Character Analysis
- 8.7 Critical Analysis of the Play
 - 8.7.1 Ibsen and His Social Experiments
 - 8.7.2 Ibsen's Ideas on Lack of Love for a Woman
 - 8.7.3 Insights into Human Nature
- 8.8 Important Questions
- 8.9 Bibliography

8.1 OBJECTIVES

This unit is an extension of the Unit 7. The objectives of this unit are to provide the in-depth analysis of the play 'A Doll's House'. This unit covers the character sketch of the major characters, discusses the significance of the title of the play and also provides the critical analysis of the play.

8.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE

The play carries a very significant title. Nora is not the only a doll in this house but she has also made her children dolls/puppets. Many times, when they return from playing

outside (right before Krogstad appears for a personal visit with Nora in Act 1), she calls Emmy "my sweet little babydoll" and all her children "my pretty little dollies." Nora flings their coats and hats as if she were undressing dolls then proceeds to play hide-and-seek with them as if she were twiddling with dolls herself.

A Doll's House is an appropriate title for the story. She is that doll, and therefore the home is of her creation. She realizes this at the top. She has allowed herself to be established within the role of the doll - she allowed her father to treat her that way and she or he has allowed Helmer to try to an equivalent. More so than allowed, she has played the sport with them, using it to her advantage. She is the creator of her house and her decision to go away from her marriage house at the top is symbolic of her decision to go away from the role she created for herself. Nora has little idea of the way to be a mother, having had only Anne Marie to serve therein role. Now Anne Marie continues therein position with Nora's children. Is Anne Marie also liable for making Nora a doll? Her stunted personality development is usually attributed to her father and Helmer, but the nurse features a role as well.

8.3 IMPORTANT LITERARY DEVICES

Significant literary devices utilized in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* include foreshadowing and symbolism. Foreshadowing is when a storyteller drops hints about events to return within earlier scenes. This is often how of making suspense and continuity within a piece. Foreshadowing and symbolism are major literary devices utilized in *A Doll's House*. The play opens with several instances of foreshadowing, like when Nora lies to Torvald about eating macaroons and when she asks for money as her Christmas present. These actions foreshadow the revelation of Nora's secret from Torvald, that she has been paying off a loan that she took out illegally. Dolls are significant symbols within the play demonstrating how the characters treat each other as mere playthings. *A Doll's House* uses foreshadowing quite a bit. The foremost notable case is when Nora eats macaroons without her husband's permission.

8.4 THE SETTING OF THE DRAMA

A Doll's House takes place entirely within the confines of the Helmer household; other locations are merely alluded to within the work. The author of the play, Henrik Ibsen, was Norwegian, and therefore the characters have names with a definitive Scandinavian feel, so it's assumed that their apartment is in Norway. Setting here is especially important because it

mirrors not only the title of the work but also several thematic elements. The Helmer house becomes a dollhouse. it's tastefully decorated and kept neat and cozy for the entertainment of their guests—and to stay the looks of a cheerful, loving household. At the opening of the play, the most room is described as "furnished comfortably and tastefully, but not extravagantly," alluding to the family's bourgeoisie lifestyle. It is wintertime, but the house has carpeted floors and always features a fire going, making it a clumsy place for Nora and Torvald's family and their guests.

8.5 MAJOR THEMES

8.5.1 Marriage, Family, and Love

As a play focused around the marriage between Nora and Torvald, *A Doll's House* is often seen as a person's search of affection and marriage, or even, more profoundly, on whether there is often love in marriage. At the start of the play, Nora and Torvald appear to be very happily married, even to themselves. At first, it seems that Nora and Torvald both enjoy playing the roles of husband and wife in a way that's considered respectable by society. However, Nora soon reveals to Mrs.Linde that she went behind Torvald's back by borrowing the cash from Krogstad, and thus has already broken both the law and therefore the rules of marriage at the time. This creates a dilemma: Nora broke the principles of marriage, yet did so to save lots of her husband's life—a true act of affection. Nora talks joyfully about her love for Torvald, and Torvald refers to Nora using affectionate pet names. Their loving marriage stands in stark contrast with the lives of the opposite characters: the marriages of Krogstad and Mrs.Linde have supported necessity instead of love and were unhappy. While Dr. Rank was never married, and, it's revealed, has silently loved Nora for years. Yet although Nora and Torvald's marriage is predicated on love (as against necessity, as was the case with Krogstad and Mrs.Linde), it's nonetheless still governed by the strict rules of society that dictated the roles of husband and wife. It is clear that Nora is predicted to obey Torvald and permit him to form decisions for her; meanwhile, it's important for Torvald's career that he's ready to boast a successful marriage to a dutiful woman.

Yet this is often an act of affection that society condemns, thereby placing the principles of marriage above love. Within the final moments of the play, it's revealed that Nora's fear of the key getting out isn't a fear that she is going to find herself shamed and punished, but rather is predicated on her

certainty that Torvald will protect her by taking the blame, and in so doing will ruin himself.

Nora is for certain that beneath the role Torvald is playing, that he loves her even as deeply as she loved him when she secretly broke the principles of society. Of course, Torvald's reaction reveals that he is not actually "playing a role" at all—he does put his reputation first, and he would never sacrifice it to guard Nora. What Nora thought was role-playing was the whole reality. This cements Nora's disillusionment together with her marriage, and with marriage in general—she involves the conclusion that not only does Torvald love her but that the institution of marriage because it is conceived and practiced in her society. While Krogstad and Mrs. Linde's joyous option to marry may suggest that the play doesn't entirely share Nora's view. It is important to notice that their marriage doesn't in the least conform to the norms of society. Mrs. Linde yearns for the aim she would get by truly caring from someone she loves, while Krogstad sees Mrs. Linde not as some ornament to reinforce his reputation but because of the source of the salvation of his integrity.

8.5.2. Importance and stereotyping of Man- Woman relationships

A Doll's House exposes the restricted role of girls during the time of its writing and therefore the problems that arise from a drastic imbalance of power between men and women. Throughout the play, Nora is treated as a sort of child by the opposite characters. Torvald calls her his "pet" and his "property," and implies that she isn't smart or responsible enough to be trusted with money. Neither Krogstad nor Dr. Rank takes her seriously, and even Mrs. Linde calls her a "child." While this treatment does seem to mildly frustrate Nora, she plays alongside it, calling herself "little Nora" and promising that she would never dream of disobeying her husband. However, there are clues that she isn't entirely proud of the limited position she has as a lady. When revealing the key of how she borrowed money to finance the trip to Italy, she refers thereto as her "pride" and says it had been fun to be on top of things of cash, explaining that it had been "almost like being a person"

Although she regrets her decision to borrow money, Nora's dissatisfaction together with her status as a lady intensifies over the course of the play. Within the final scene, she tells Torvald that she isn't being treated as an independent person with a mind of her own. Her radical solution to the present issue is to go away domestic life behind, despite Torvald's declaration that he will change. Nora's decision suggests that she, and therefore the play, see the difficulty as

only partially with Torvald. The more fundamental issue is with domestic life because it was conceived and lived at the time, within the way it legally and culturally infantilized women and made it impossible for them to be recognized or treated as full individuals.

Meanwhile, the lads of the play also are expected to fill a particular role. Both Torvald and Krogstad are very ambitious, driven not only by the necessity to supply for his or her families but also by a desire to realize seniority. Respectability is of great concern to both of them; when Nora's borrowing is revealed, Torvald's first thoughts are for his reputation. Meanwhile, Krogstad is fixated on achieving success now that he has "gone straight," and intends to at least one day take over Torvald's job and run the bank.

8.5.3 Importance of Money in Marriage

A need for money affects all the main characters in *A Doll's House*. At the beginning of the play, it's revealed that Torvald was recently promoted and can receive "a big fat income," however he still chastises Nora for spending an excessive amount of, arguing that they have to take care of financially. Mrs. Linde is in desperate need of employment following the death of her husband, and after her replacement of Krogstad at the bank leaves him threatening to show Nora in to urge his job back. Indeed, the bank works as a logo for the pervasive presence of cash within the characters' lives.

In the play, money symbolizes the power and dominance that the characters have over each other. In the first scene, Torvald's ability to dictate what proportion Nora spends on Christmas presents shows his power over her. Meanwhile, the debt that Nora owes Krogstad allows him to possess power over her and Torvald. Both Nora and Mrs. Linde cannot earn large incomes because they're women; their inability to access significant amounts of cash is a method that they're oppressed by the sexism of the time.

The play also shows that, while earning money results in power, it also can be dangerous. In the beginning of the play, Nora is pleased with the very fact that she "raised" the cash for her and Torvald's trip to Italy. However, the debt she owes soon becomes a source of terror, dread, and shame. The joys of obtaining money are therefore shown to possess a downside.

8.5.4 Lack of Trust in a Family

Nora, a dutiful mother, and a wife spent most of the play putting others before herself. She thinks little of how her act of forgery and debt to Krogstad affect her personally, opting instead to stress about how they could impact the lives of her husband and youngsters. Even when she plans to kill herself near the top of the play, it's not to hide her shame but rather because she thinks that if she is alive then Torvald will ruin himself in trying to guard her. During a similar vein, Mrs.Linde admits that, without a husband or any relations to worry for, she feels that her life is pointless. Therefore, both women find a way of meaning in their lives through serving others and performing the caring, obedient role that society requires of them. During the play, however, Nora learns that prioritizing her duty as a wife and a mother cannot bring real happiness. She realizes when it becomes clear that Torvald would never have sacrificed his reputation to guard her, that while she thought she was sacrificing herself to guard her love, actually no such love existed, and indeed the structure of society makes the love she had alleged to be an impossibility. She, therefore, decides to go away from him to develop a way of her own identity. The play ends with Nora choosing to place herself as a private before society's expectations of her.

At the start of the play, Nora appears to be a dutifully obedient and honest wife, however it's quickly revealed that she is hiding a significant secret from him—the incontrovertible fact that she borrowed money from Krogstad to finance a visit to Italy that she claims saved Torvald's life. This renders all her statements about never disobeying him or hiding anything from him deceitful. When she reveals her dishonesty to Mrs.Linde, Mrs.Linde insists that she needs to confess to Torvald immediately, insisting that a wedding cannot succeed when husband and wife aren't completely honest with one another. A parallel occurs between Nora and Krogstad when it's revealed that they both committed forgery. Their acts of deception spark the unraveling of both their lives—Krogstad's reputation is ruined, and Nora is forced to re-evaluate everything about herself and therefore the society around her, eventually leading her decision to go away from her husband and family.

In some ways, deceit is presented as a corrupting and corroding force within the people's lives; however, in Nora's case, it's clear that the motivation for her dishonesty was love—she lied to save lots of her husband's life. Furthermore, her actions wouldn't have had to be deceitful if it weren't for societal law dictating that ladies weren't allowed to handle financial matters independently. Therefore, Nora's deceit wasn't there sults of a private flaw, but rather the sole means necessary of overcoming restrictions to commit a noble act.

8.5.5 Individual's Agonies vs Morality of the Society

Throughout the play, it seems that Krogstad cares more about his reputation than anything. Punished by society for his act of forgery, he's wanting to reclaim respectability within the eyes of others. However, his conversation with Mrs.Linde in the third act shows that he will only achieve happiness through truly reforming himself and regaining the private integrity that he lost instead of outward respectability. Krogstad learns that society's view of him is meaningless if he doesn't respect himself.

8.6 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

NORA

Nora, a dutiful mother and a wife, occupies major part of the play putting others before herself. She thinks little of how her act of forgery and debt to Krogstad affect her personally, opting instead to stress about how they could impact the lives of her husband and youngsters. Even when she plans to kill herself, it's not to hide her shame but rather because she thinks that if she is alive then Torvald will ruin himself in trying to guard her. In a similar vein, Mrs.Linde admits that, without a husband or any relations to worry for, she feels that her life is pointless. Therefore, both women find a way of meaning in their lives through serving others and performing the caring, obedient role that society requires of them. During the play, however, Nora learns that prioritizing her duty as a wife and mother cannot bring real happiness. She realizes when it becomes clear that Torvald would never have sacrificed his reputation to guard her, that while she thought she was sacrificing herself to guard her love, actually no such love existed, and indeed the structure of society makes the love she had alleged to be an impossibility. She, therefore, decides to go away from him to develop a way of her own identity. The play ends with Nora choosing to place herself as a private before society's expectations of her.

Torvald Helmer

Torvald Helmer may be a lawyer who at the play's outset has recently been promoted to director. He's married to Nora Helmer, with whom he has three children. He doesn't seem particularly keen on his children, even once saying that their presence makes the house "unbearable to anyone except mothers." Straightforward and traditional in his beliefs about marriage and society, he loves and is extremely affectionate towards Nora, but often treats her more as a pet, child, or object than as a true person. His ally is Dr. Rank, who visits him one day. However, this friendship is revealed to be

something of a façade, as Torvald seems untroubled and even a touch relieved at the thought of Dr. Rank's death. An identical occurrence happens when he finds out about Nora's secret debt and instantly activates her until he realizes that his reputation is safe. Torvald's specialization in status and being treated as superior by people like Nils Krogstad highlights his obsession with reputation and appearances. When Nora tells him she is leaving him, Torvald initially reacts by calling her mad and saying she is acting sort of a stupid child. However, when he realizes how resolute she is in her decision, Torvald offers to vary and desperately searches for how to remain together with her. His despair as Nora exits at the very end of the play suggests that, despite his patronizing and unjust treatment of her, Torvald does love Nora.

Mrs. Linde

Mrs. Linde, as she is usually known to the opposite characters, is an old flame of Nora's. She may be a woman whose marriage was loveless and supported a requirement for financial security, and who doesn't have any children. She and Krogstad had been crazy at the time, but he was too poor to support her family. She arrives in town in search of employment to earn money and survive independently. In this way, she may be a fairly modern woman. She explains to Krogstad that she finds joy and meaning in work. However, in other ways, she is more traditional. She tells both Krogstad and Nora that she is miserable without people to require care of, thereby fitting into the normal role of girls as caretakers and nurturers. It's this conviction that causes her to marry Krogstad. She believes very deeply in honesty and stops Krogstad from taking the letter he wrote to Torvald back, thereby ensuring that Torvald determines Nora's secret. Although this initially looks like a betrayal of Nora, it seems to ultimately be a choice to Nora's benefit because it is after Torvald finds out about the debt that Nora is in a position to ascertain true nature of her marriage. This twist confirms Mrs. Linde's belief that honesty is usually better than deceit, albeit Mrs. Linde expected that it had been Nora's deceit that needed to be exposed, not the vanity of Torvald's feelings.

Nils Krogstad

Nils Krogstad is an antagonist of the play. He is an unscrupulous and dishonest. He blackmails Nora, who borrowed money from him with a forged signature, after learning that he's being fired from his job at the bank. In the past, he too committed the crime of forgery, an act that he didn't attend prison for but that nonetheless ruined his reputation and made it extremely difficult to seek out a good job. Later in the play, it's revealed that he was once crazy with Kristine Linde, who ended up marrying another man to possess enough money

to support her dying mother and young brothers. This left Krogstad lost and embittered, unhappy in his marriage, and is presented because of the reason behind his moral corruption.

Initially, he treats Nora without mercy on the idea that no mercy has been shown to him in life; however, after he and Mrs. Linde plan to marry, he becomes happier and rescinds his threats to Nora, saying he regrets his behavior. He's one among several examples within the play of an individual being forced into morally questionable action as a result of the rigid and unmerciful forces of society.

Dr. Rank

Dr. Rank may be a doctor who is best friends of Torvald and Nora, whom he visits one day. Dr. Rank suffers from spinal tuberculosis, a condition he believes was caused by his father's vices, including having extramarital affairs and consuming an excessive amount of luxurious food and drink. Dr. Rank is unmarried and lonely. It is revealed that he's crazy with Nora. Cynical about life, he rejoices when he finds out that his illness is terminal, and insists that neither Torvald nor Nora visits him in his dying days.

8.7 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

8.7.1 Ibsen and His Social Experiments

Ibsenian drama has become a part of the social history of the stage and a study of his work gives us a special insight into contemporary writings. The fashionable "theatre of the absurd," as an example, expressing a private alienation from society, is simply another sort of social criticism which Ibsen first inspired. All his plays are interesting for their social message. Ibsen's dramas wouldn't survive today, were it not for his consummate skill as a technician. Each drama is carefully wrought into a decent logical construction where characters are delineated and interrelated, and where events have a symbolic as well as actual significance. The symbolism in Ibsen's plays is never overworked. Carefully integrated to unify the setting, events, and character portrayals, the symbols are incidental and subordinate to the reality and consistency of his picture of life.

Because of his interest in painting as a youth, Ibsen was always aware of making accurate observations. As a dramatist, he considered himself a photographer also, using his powers of observation as a lens, while his finished plays represented the proofs of a talented darkroom technician. The realism of his plays is supported by his visualization skills. The credibility of his characters, the immediacy of his themes, and his ability to

the finest details are the result of those photographic skills at which Ibsen so consciously worked. Among his countless revisions for every drama, he paid special heed to the accuracy of his dialogue. Through constant rewriting, he brought out the utmost meaning within the fewest words, attempting to suit each speech into the character of the speaker. Additionally, Ibsen's ability as a poet contributed a special beauty to his crisp prose.

8.7.2 Ibsen's Ideas on Lack of Love for a Woman:

The problems of Ibsen's social dramas are consistent throughout all his works. In *A Doll's House*, he especially probed the issues of the social passivity assigned to women during a male-oriented society. After considering the plight of Nora Helmer, he then investigated what would happen had she remained reception. The consequence of his thoughts appears in *Ghosts*. His concept of the individual love is of supreme importance. Ibsen believed that the ultimate personal tragedy comes from a denial of any kind of love. From this viewpoint, we see that Torvald is an incomplete individual because he attaches more importance to a criminal offense against society than a sin against love.

8.7.3 Insights into Human Nature

In an age where nations were striving for independence, Ibsen's sense of democracy was politically prophetic. He believed not that "right" was the prerogative of the mass majority, but that it resided among the educated minority. In the development and enrichment of the individual, he saw the sole hope of a very cultured and enlightened society. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, the theatre remained a vehicle of entertainment. Insights into the human condition were merely incidental factors within the dramatist's art. Ibsen, however, contributed replacement significance to the drama which changed the event of the recent theatre. Discovering dramatic material in everyday situations was the start of realism that novelists as different as Zola and Flaubert were already exploiting. When Nora quietly confronts her husband with "Sit down, Torvald, you and that I have much to mention to every other," drama became not a mere diversion but an experience closely impinging on the lives of the playgoers themselves. With Ibsen, the stage became a pulpit, and therefore the dramatist exhorting his audience to reassess the values of society.

8.8 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss 'A Doll's House' as a Realistic Play.
2. Discuss major characters of the play.
3. Critically discuss the significance of the title of the play.

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Unit -9

A STUDY OF CHRISTOPHER FRY'S *A PHOENIX TOO FREQUENT* PART I

Unit Structure:

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction: Christopher Fry and Post-war Britain
- 9.2 Verse Drama
- 9.3 *A Phoenix Too Frequent*: A Brief Overview
- 9.4 Conclusion
- 9.5 Important Questions
- 9.6 References

9.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are firstly, to ensure that the student develops an understanding of the social position of verse drama and a playwright such as Christopher Fry in the mid-20th century Britain, and secondly, to introduce Fry's *A Phoenix Too Frequent* as a play that succeeded in the immediate post-war period before the onset of a more realistic and minimalist style of theatre.

9.1 INTRODUCTION: CHRISTOPHER FRY AND POST-WAR BRITAIN

Christopher Fry (18 December 1907 – 30 June 2005) was a British poet and playwright. He was born as Arthur Hammond Harris to Charles John Harris, a master builder who retired early to work full-time as a licensed Lay Reader in the Church of England, and his wife Emma Marguerite Fry Hammond Harris in Bristol, England. In his youth, Fry took his mother's maiden name because he believed her to be related to the 19th-century Quaker prison reformer Elizabeth Fry. He eventually admitted that the relation to Elizabeth Fry was rather unsubstantiated. Nevertheless, Fry also adopted Elizabeth Fry's faith to become a Quaker, and consequently, a lifelong pacifist. As a pacifist, Fry played the role of a conscientious objector during World War II, and went on to serve in the Non-Combatant Corps. Accounts suggest that for a part of the time, he cleaned London's sewers. It was after this brutally trying period of war that Fry wrote a comedy: *A Phoenix Too Frequent*. (Nightingale)

A formidable figure in the British theatre scene of the mid-20th century, Fry was best known for his verse drama. His popularity sustained in the five years beginning in 1946, immediately after the end of the second World War— five of his major dramas, plus his translation of a Jean Anouilh play, achieved critical and public appreciation.

Fry is placed in the literary tradition of several other post-war playwrights such as T. S. Eliot and Archibald MacLeish who attempted a revival of drama in verse. The rich, poetic grandeur of the genre is most fully visible in Fry's *The Lady's Not for Burning* (1948), which remains till date his best-known play and is produced regularly. Fry's mainstream popularity first began when he was commissioned by Alec Cunes, the manager of the Arts Theatre in London. This commission led to the writing of *The Lady's Not for Burning*, which was first performed there in 1948 and directed by the actor Jack Hawkins. The play met with great success and was eventually transferred to the West End for a nine-month run, starring John Gielgud as well as Richard Burton and Claire Bloom as a part of its cast. *The Lady* went on to be presented on Broadway in 1950, again with Burton. The warm reviews and critical acclaim that Fry's play received marked an undeniable revival in the audience's interest in poetic drama. *The Lady* remains one of Fry's most performed plays and has also gathered some popular and political significance after it inspired British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to declaim, "You turn if you want to — the lady's not for turning," at the Conservative Party conference in 1980.

The 1950s were speckled with several adaptations and translations from Fry, including the adapted translation of Jean Anouilh's *Invitation to the Castle* as *Ring Round the Moon* for director Peter Brook. In the same period, Fry also wrote *Venus Observed*, which was produced at the St James's Theatre by Laurence Olivier. Shortly after, in 1951, Fry wrote *A Sleep of Prisoners*, which was first performed at St Thomas' church in Regent Street, London, and went on tour with Denholm Elliott and Stanley Baker.

In 1954, Fry penned a winter play starring Katharine Cornell and Edith Evans, called *The Dark is Light Enough*. The play was the third in a quartet of seasonal plays and notably featured Leonard Bernstein's famed incidental music. This play followed the springtime of *The Lady's Not for Burning* and the autumnal *Venus Observed*. The quartet was completed in 1970 with *A Yard of Sun*, representing summer.

A number of works by Fry in the period that followed these seasonal plays were translations from French dramatists. These

included a play called *The Lark*, which was an adaptation of Jean Anouilh's *L'Alouette* ("The Lark"). In 1955, Fry translated both a *Tiger at The Gates*, which was based on Jean Giraudoux's *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, as well as *Duel of Angels*, adapted from Giraudoux's *Pour Lucrèce*. Fry went back to Giraudoux in 1960 with his *Judith*.

The fullness of verse drama such as Fry's was, unfortunately, short lived. After the success of several dramas in verse in the immediate post-war period, the scene and aesthetic tastes of modern English theatre shifted to realism and minimalism. The existential minimalism of the plays of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, the arrival of John Osborne, and the 'kitchen-sink' realists in the 1950s contributed directly to a decline in the popularity of poetic language and theatrical grandeur.

After Fry's poetic style of drama fell out of fashion in the mid-1950s, his focus shifted to writing and working mainly for cinema in the 1960s. He had numerous cinematic collaborations to his credit, including one with Denis Cannan on a screenplay for the film version of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1953), for director Peter Brook, and starring Laurence Olivier. Fry's work as one of the writers of the widely popular film, *Ben-Hur* (1959), directed by William Wyler, remained uncredited for several years. Nevertheless, drama seemed to have remained Fry's first love, and he continued to write plays, including *Curtmantle* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1962, and *A Yard of Sun* – the fourth in his seasonal quartet as mentioned earlier – for the Nottingham Playhouse in 1970.

Fry's popularity, albeit short-lived in the theatre scene, is still sustained as an important figure in the proliferation of drama in verse. Diane Gillespie writes:

"Poetry in the theatre, Christopher fry says, is a response to the twentieth-century need for a new realism.' In saying so, he follows in the wake of W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge, and T. S. Eliot, and is joined by other English-speaking dramatists like Archibald MacLeish. Maxwell Anderson. Robert Frost. W. H. Auden, and Christopher Isherwood. However diverse and uneven their achievements are in practice, these men are remarkably consistent in theory: the realistic or naturalistic theatre dominated by imitators of Ibsen's social-problem plays, they insist, must be amplified or replaced' instead of mundane, trivial human lives lived in powerlessness and despair, they emphasize deeper emotion and sensitivity in man, or they insist that

man and his efforts are potentially noble however much his modern environment seems to degrade him. Poetry, they insist, communicates these complexities more successfully than prose.' Fry's own emphasis is on the spiritual dimension in the human experience and the poetic language that can say "heaven and earth in one word." (287)

Benedict Nightingale also suggests that Fry's plays were often spiritual at their core, and radiated an optimistic faith in God and humanity, evoking, in his words, "a world in which we are poised on the edge of eternity, a world which has depths and shadows of mystery, and God is anything but a sleeping partner." (qtd. in Nightingale). Fry is said to have written his plays in poetry because that was "the language in which man expresses his own amazement" at the complexity both of himself and of a reality which, beneath the surface, was "wildly, perilously, inexplicably fantastic." (Nightingale)

9.2 VERSE DRAMA

Verse drama, as a genre, can be described quite broadly as any drama written in verse, and such a form may also be called 'poetic drama'. In poetic drama the dialogue is written in verse, and the forms of such verse vary according to languages and at times literary traditions. For instance, poetic drama in English is usually in blank verse, which consists of lines in iambic pentameter which are unrhymed. In French, the verse in poetic drama is the twelve-syllable line called the *alexandrine*.

Drama in verse was for several centuries the most dominant mode of drama in both European and non-European literary and artistic cultures. Most dramatic works in Elizabethan and Restoration England were in verse, including the plays of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. In Germany, Johann Wolfgang Goethe's much acclaimed and influential *Faust*, among others, was a verse drama as well. Due to its continued use in the literary works of the 'Golden Age' of literature, especially in England, verse drama has come to be associated with the seriousness, heroism, and grandeur of tragedy. Aside from the artistic and aesthetic pull of this form, a more practical advantage of verse drama is that lines in verse are often easier for the actors to memorize in the original, precise form.

The immediate period following the end of the second World War in the twentieth century, proved to be a period conducive to the revival of drama written in verse. The ravages of war, the social and moral upheaval of society, as well as a general desire for optimism made the theatre scene prime for the richness of poetic plays.

In what David Daiches calls “by far the most interesting development in dramatic literature in the first half of the twentieth century” (1109), writers such as W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot began their experiments in reviving poetic drama. Yeats, especially, began by writing fantastical plays on Irish mythological themes, but from the beginning he showed a symbolic power in both action and imagery, which suggested levels of meaning the drama had not sought after for a long time (Daiches 1109). The period also saw the verse-drama of John Millington Synge, whose poetic prose based on the speech rhythm of the Irish peasantry provided him with some of the resources of his unique vocabulary, which in drama was both poetic and real, both rich and natural (Daiches 1110). T. S. Eliot, another stalwart of this tradition, attempted to restore ritual to drama; Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), arguably remains the most successful of his plays because the poetic, lilting ritualistic element is implicit in the situation (Daiches 1111). Christopher Fry followed in this tradition with an airy exuberance in both imagery and wit, with *A Phoenix Too Frequent* (1946), *The Lady’s Not for Burning* (1948), and *Venus Observed* (1950).

The sudden and intense popularity of such verse-drama was also a reaction to the realistic ‘problem’ plays of G. B. Shaw or John Galsworthy written in straightforward prose. While these plays provided an understanding of the social ills of the age in great depth, their tone often bordered on pedantic and did little to address the sentimental requirements of the immediate post-war age.

As societal narratives progressed, and the ideas of fragmentation, minimalism, and alienation took hold and the dramatical aesthetic of England and other neighbouring countries, verse-drama rapidly declined in popularity, making the poetic plays of Yeats, Eliot, Synge, and Fry the last of a rich and long tradition.

9.3 A PHOENIX TOO FREQUENT: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

After the end of the second World War, in which Christopher Fry served in the Non-Combatant Corps, he wrote a comedy called *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, which was produced at the Mercury Theatre, Notting Hill Gate, London, in 1946, starring Paul Scofield. The Mercury Theatre was opened by Ashley Dukes in 1933. A part of the theatre’s brief was to strive to present new and experimental drama. Before the second World War and the subsequent upheaval began, plays by T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood and many other verse dramatists of the time were presented there. After the war, the Mercury reverted to its endeavour to showcase new plays and forms of theatre. In the April

of 1946, shortly after the end of the war, the theatre staged the first British performance of *The Resurrection* by W. B. Yeats as well as the world premiere of Fry's comedy *A Phoenix Too Frequent*. Interestingly, both works had a limited cast, with only four performers in the Yeats play, and three in that of Fry.

For *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, Christopher Fry took as his inspiration Jeremy Taylor's retelling of a tale from Petronius, while the title of the play comes from Robert Burton's translation of lines from an epigram of Martial, lamenting his lost love, in comparison with whom a 'peacock's undecent, a squirrel's harsh, a phoenix too frequent'.

The play is a comedy that is based upon the once well-known tale of the "Widow of Ephesus" told in Petronius' "Satyricon". The Widow, here named Dynamene, has vowed to join her husband Virilius in the afterlife by starving herself to death in his tomb. Her faithful servant Doto has to follow her mistress into death. Dynamene and Doto while away their time in the tomb by discussing their mental states and recalling Virilius' exaggerated grandeur, thereby setting the comic tone of the play.

The situation becomes complicated when a Roman soldier, Tegeus, guarding six recently hanged prisoners, follows the light into the tomb and finds the women. At first, Doto is quite taken by Tegeus and attempts to woo him. However, Tegeus finds greater interest in Dynamene. In these exchanges, Doto's insatiable appetite for men in combination with her imminent death becomes a source of humour. It is notable that Fry presents Doto's dalliances in a positive light, with an air of celebration rather than moral highhandedness, and sets a decidedly secular tone for the play.

Tegeus offers Doto and Dynamene wine, and the women begin to chat more animatedly under the influence. Tegeus' consistent admiration for Dynamene's faithfulness soon turns to love while Dynamene is torn between her vow and the possibility of new life. At the end of the play, Tegeus steps out to check on the bodies he is guarding and finds one of them missing. Tegeus returns to the tomb and reports to Dynamene that he must kill himself honourably rather than be hanged after he is found guilty of misplacing a body. Here, Dynamene resolves to save Tegeus' life by sacrificing Virilius literally and figuratively. Virilius is 'resurrected' from the tomb to give Tegeus a 'new life', and thus ensure that Dynamene continues to live on. Fry's play draws both its humour and its philosophy from the false heroics of Dynamene's mourning of her husband in his tomb, and her reawakening to the joy of life by a handsome officer who enters the tomb to rest on a course of duty (Fry).

Through *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, alongside several other of his plays, Fry thus brings colour and gaiety to the stage in the form of humour, while also artfully rendering myth and allegories through his rich verse. The play is an artful blend of an old dramatic form and new thematic as well as comic styles.

9.4 CONCLUSION

A study of Christopher Fry's play, *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, is of great importance to gain a fuller understanding of drama in the mid-20th century. The play allows a glimpse not only into classical techniques and contemporary humour, but also allows a study of the counter-views to the realists of the 1940s and 50s. After the temporal distance of over half a century, Fry's verse drama can be appreciated not only for its inauguration of a particular trend, but also for its inherent worth. Fry's work remains a beacon of the lively, dialogic nature of drama, and of literature as a whole.

It is important to credit Christopher Fry with not only bringing a neo-Elizabethan verbal dash to a theatre scene that was growing increasingly dry, but also as the writer who brought a refreshing warmth and to post-war Britain. Even at the time, Fry was not without critics who argued that Chekhov, Ibsen and Shaw had proved that prose was the proper form for contemporary drama. But Fry, through his suppleness and versatility, remained a dominant figure in the English theatre of the early 1950s. For Kenneth Tynan, "he gave us access to imagined worlds in which rationing and the rest of austerity's paraphernalia could be forgotten." Fry, who took a quiet pride in liberating the theatre from one-dimensional realism, often found his works side-lined on account of escapism by the adherents of the "angry young men" and the existential minimalists. His poetry was increasingly dismissed as affected and decorative. The critic Denis Donoghue talked of "the wanton prancing of words." (Nightingale; Billington)

Nevertheless, Fry still believed passionately in the validity of poetic drama. As he wrote in the magazine, *Adam*: "In prose, we convey the eccentricity of things, in poetry their concentricity, the sense of relationship between them: a belief that all things express the same identity and are all contained in one discipline of revelation." (Billington)

9.5 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Critically examine the socio-political factors that determined the theatre scene in mid-20th Century Britain.

2. How does verse drama differ from the realistic and minimalist plays of the 1950s?
3. Discuss the style of the literary tradition that Christopher Fry was placed in.
4. Offer a brief overview of Christopher Fry's body of work.
5. Comment on the decline of verse-drama in the second half of the 20th century, and the subsequent shifts in English theatre.

9.6 REFERENCES

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Unit -10

A STUDY OF CHRISTOPHER FRY'S *A PHOENIX TOO FREQUENT* PART II

Unit Structure:

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Synopsis

10.2 Significance of Character Names

10.3 Themes

10.3.1. The Archetypal Dialectic of Life, Death, and Resurrection

10.3.2 Moral Dilemma

10.4 Symbolic Layers in *A Phoenix Too Frequent*

10.5 Conclusion

10.6 Important Questions

10.7 References

10.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are, firstly, to help students develop an in-depth understanding of the themes, symbols, and literary techniques that are at play in Christopher Fry's *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, and secondly, to equip them with the tools to form their own interpretation of the play after engaging with a variety of perspectives.

10.1 SYNOPSIS

The one-act play is set in the underground tomb of the recently-dead Virilius, near Ephesus. Dynamene, Virilius' grieving widow, has determined to remain in the tomb until she can join Virilius in the underworld. She is accompanied by her maid Doto. Outside the tomb, there are several human bodies hanging on trees. The play opens during the night, as Doto and Dynamene fast. The two ladies are disturbed at 2 a.m. by Tegeus, a soldier on guard nearby, who comes to investigate the activity taking place in the tomb, drawn by the light inside. He has originally been put on guard over the bodies of six criminals hanged nearby. Doto and Tegeus begin bantering as Dynamene sleeps, and share wine as well. When Dynamene wakes up, she is at first displeased by Tegeus' presence in her place of mourning and thinks of him as a trespasser, but warms up to him eventually. The intimacy between

the two increases, and Dynamene renames Tegeus as Chromis. However, Tegeus eventually has to return to check on his guard post, which he leaves unmanned while spending time in the tomb. When Tegeus returns shortly after, he reports that one of the bodies from his post is missing, and was most likely cut down by the family members for a proper funeral. He further reports that when his neglect of his duties will be discovered, he is liable to court martial. Tegeus then resolves to kill himself rather than be dishonoured thus. Once again, Dynamene finds herself faced with the prospect of losing her love a second time. However, she suggests that the use Virilius' body as a substitute for the body that has gone missing on Tegeus' watch. While Tegeus is appalled at first, she manages to persuade him. Dynamene, Tegeus and Doto drink a toast to the memory of Virilius as the play ends, as Dynamene opts for life with Tegeus/Chromis rather than death with the entombed Virilius.

10.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF CHARACTER NAMES

The characters in Christopher Fry's *A Phoenix Too Frequent* are limited, yet layered with meaning.

Dynamene, whose name means power/energy, is the character at the centre of the play. She is recently widowed and has made the decision to join her husband in the afterlife. However, she finds that her penance and her sentiments are ceremoniously interrupted by Tegeus, and is eventually attracted to him. Dynamene, like the reference of her name suggests, does indeed wield a considerable amount of power over the rest of the characters in the play. Doto is condemned to die simply as a companion for Dynamene, and she further decides what is to be done with the dead Virilius' body in order to save Tegeus, who she takes the liberty of re-naming Chromis.

Dynamene is accompanied by Doto, whose name refers to 'dowry', which could mean property. In this case, the name is perhaps a suggestion of the slave-like position that Doto occupies under Dynamene. Doto is 'meant to' die alongside Dynamene and keep her company in her mourning. The lack of choice and agency given to the character of Doto is thus foregrounded in the meaning of her name. Phonetically, Doto also sounds like 'doting', wherein she dotes on Dynamene and on several of her own lovers, or alternatively, 'dodo' suggestive of her comical role in the play.

Tegeus is the handsome soldier who acts as an intervention in Dynamene and Doto's resolution to mourn until death. His name is phonetically similar to the word 'tedious', and may be thus seen as a suggestion of his (at first) tiresome interruption of the two ladies' attempt at death by starvation. He also offers them food and

wine in the course of the play. Dynamene decides to rename Tegeus as Chromis, stating “I shall call you Chromis. It has a breadlike I think of you as a crisp loaf”. The signification of Tegeus as colour may be a marker of his role in returning the colour to the prospects in Dynamene’s, and indirectly Doto’s, life. He also literally returns the colour to their cheeks by offering them wine.

The play is set in the tomb of Virilius, whose name harks to ‘virility’. However, his absence in the play, an ironic description of him by Dynamene, alongside his replacement by Tegeus adds a rather comical effect to the association of Virilius to virility. At one point, while mourning for Virilius, Dynamene declares “I am lonely, /Virilius. Where is the punctual eye/ And where is the cautious voice which made/ Balance-sheets sound like Homer and Homer sound/ Like balance-sheets?”. These descriptions of Virilius grate against the traditional definition of virile masculinity, and enhances the effect that Tegeus’ virility has on Doto, Dynamene, and the comic irony of the play. However, Virilius’ is able to figuratively ‘give life’ to Dynamene and Tegeus when his body is used to evade Tegeus’ court martial and/or impending death.

10.3 THEMES

10.3.1. The Archetypal Dialectic of Life, Death, and Resurrection

The saving of one’s life, and losing that life, exist in a dialectical, reciprocal relationship in Christopher Fry’s *A Phoenix Too Frequent*. After Tegeus and Dynamene fall in love, Tegeus discovers that one of the bodies that he was guarding is missing, and resolves to kill himself instead of being discovered in dishonour. Death, thus arrives close on the heels of the newfound life shared by Dynamene and Tegeus. Emil Roy notes interestingly that in a number of plays by Fry one finds “the overt and concealed suicide attempts, a motif which Fry had observed in a hospital for shell-shocked patients after the war while he was considering the problem of acting Hamlet. Although he had the reluctant prince in mind, his insights illuminate the conflicts of most of his displaced seekers for identity” (96), thus situating the life-death dialectic of Fry’s play in the context of its time, alongside its mythological significance.

Tegeus’ fate is resolved by Dynamene’s decision to use Virilius’ body as a substitute; the lover’s dalliance in the tomb is “not regular and circular, but elastic and elliptical” between life and death, much like the Christian myths that Fry borrows so heavily from. Unlike Virilius’ “daily revolution of habit” (Fry 167), the relationship between the two new lovers, Dynamene and Tegeus, is counterpointed by its occurrence, as it were, between life and death.

The title of the play becomes a significant image in such a dialectic context between life and death, for it references the phoenix that gets new life out of its own death. The phoenix submits to time and death, and in doing so is paradoxically liberated into a new life. A life together for Dynamene and Tegeus too comes out of time and (a) death:

DYNAMENE. Time runs again; the void is space again;
Space has life again; Dynamene has Chromis(Fry 198)

Tegeus and Dynamene discover at the end of the play that they need not necessarily become the victims of death, but can harness it for their own benefit and life instead. Alvin Vos argues that the life-death dialectic is linked specifically to its Christian substructure. The lifeless corpse of Virilius suddenly acquires the power to save the erring soldier from his doom. Virilius is to accomplish his mission as Christ did, by hanging from a holly tree. Moreover, his substitutionary atonement is, from another perspective, his resurrection from the tomb. He figuratively moves again in the world to achieve the welfare of the lovers (240). The theme of resurrection in the play thus becomes a potent one; as a result of Virilius' resurrection, Dynamene's and Doto's imminent death in the tomb is subverted, while Tegeus is given a 'new life' by the use of Virilius' body.

Fry himself explained in a lecture delivered on "Death" at Chichester Cathedral that "The nature of love and the nature of death... are not opposites, but correlatives... If death has the quality of mystery it is only so because of the abundant mystery of life" (qtd. in Vos 239).

10.3.2 Moral Dilemma

The characters in Fry's play consistently display a moral and/or psychological dilemma.

The actions of the widow of Ephesus, who is Dynamene in Fry's play, serve as moral as well as philosophical markers for the concepts of love, loyalty, atonement, and choice. Dynamene, who has made a seemingly permanent decision of starving to death in Virilius' tomb, is faced with multiple choices, especially when she is confronted with the prospect of a life with Tegeus. Even as she is prepared to die, she confesses her dilemma while speaking to Tegeus (and to herself):

DYNAMENE. Stop, stop, I shall be dragged apart!
Why should the fates do everything to keep me
From dying honourably? They must have got
Tired of honour in Elysium. Chromis, it's terrible
To be susceptible to two conflicting norths.

I have the constitution of a whirlpool.
Am I actually twirling, or is it just sensation? (Fry 192)

With the arrival of Tegeus, she is drawn into conversation and offered wine, where her decision to starve and mourn is challenged. Further, she finds herself attracted to Tegeus while still in Virilius' tomb, and acting upon her vow to join him in death. Dynamene is faced with firstly, the choice of her older love for the dead Virilius and her newfound love for the lively Tegeus, and secondly with the choice of death as per her vow and of life in what Tegeus has to offer. It is her choice of life with Tegeus that allows her to navigate the decision to use Virilius' body to save Tegeus from the court martial and secure her life with him.

Doto, Dynamene's maid, is jolly, and celebrates her colourful life even when she is faced with her own imminent death. She does not attempt to rid any thoughts about the men she has had relations with in the past, and proceeds to philosophise about her choices in with the arrival of Tegeus. Although Doto assures Dynamene that she is "dying to be dead" (Fry 195), just like her mistress, her appetite for her lovers consistently subverts her resolve. She continually oscillates between the commitment to join Dynamene in the quest for death and her scarcely repressible desire to have the interloper Tegeus as her lover (Vos 234). Such a breach of moral 'propriety', and its presentation through Doto's humorous philosophy of life make the question of bodily desire in Doto's mind, and in the play, an ambivalent one (Wiersma 295). When she admits to her mistress that she would not have allowed the soldier into the tomb, she becomes explicit about her dilemma:

DOTO. Maybe I could have kept him out
But men are in before I wish they wasn't.
I think quickly enough, but I get behindhand
With what I ought to be saying. It's a kind of stammer
In my way of life, Madam. (Fry 196)

However, Vos writes that Fry means to celebrate Doto's "openness to the tension between flesh and spirit, death and love" (234), and that her sexuality in the play is Fry's wonderfully ironic symbol for the Phoenix-like life that the play affirms:

DOTO. ...life is more big than a bed
And full of miracles and mysteries like
One man made for one woman, etcetera, etcetera.
Lovely. I feel sung, madam, by a baritone
In mixed company with everyone pleased.
And so I had to come with you here, madam,
For the last sad chorus of me. It's all
Fresh to me. Death's a new interest in life (Fry 168)

Tegeus, the soldier, is also faced with multiple moral dilemmas from the moment of his arrival in the tomb. At first, he is faced with the affections of Doto, which he side-lines in order to nurture his feelings for Dynamene. He is then faced with the question of whether he loves the idea of Dynamene, created by her sense of purity and sacrifice, or whether he loves the actual woman in the flesh.

Tegeus is presented with his largest dilemma at the end of the play, where he first must decide between facing dishonour after the court martial, or dying honourably by his own hand before he is found. After he resolves to kill himself, Dynamene creates another dilemma by suggesting that they rid themselves of Tegeus' court martial by replacing the lost body on the tree with the dead Virilius.

It is interesting to note that while Doto as well as Tegeus are both faced with moral dilemmas and life-changing choices of their own, Dynamene makes the final decision, or at least influences it greatly.

She makes the decision of using Virilius' body as a substitute, thereby determining the course of Tegeus' life:

TEGEUS. Hang your husband?

Dynamene, it's terrible, horrible.

DYNAMENE. How little you can understand. I loved

His life not his death. And now we can give his death

The power of life. Not horrible: wonderful!

Isn't it so? That I should be able to feel

He moves again in the world, accomplishing

Our welfare? It's more than my grief could do

(Fry 202)

Further, it is Dynamene's decision to not let Doto die in the tomb, after which she orders Doto out of the tomb:

DYNAMENE. I'm asking you

To leave me, Doto, at once, as quickly as possible,

Now, before-now, Doto, and let me forget

My bad mind which confidently expected you

To companion me to Hades. Now good-bye

Good-bye (Fry 196).

From the perspective of gender roles and expectations, one may question why the onus of the moral dilemma falls squarely on the shoulders of the widow. The dilemma in the play, between the honour of dying for one's love versus the choice of continuing to live on with another can be wielded to vilify Dynamene, while the morals of Virilius and Tegeus remain untouched. Interestingly, Doto, the only other woman in the play, is characterised as a

woman who has taken more lovers than she can count, and is used as a source of humour. The theme of morality in the play, thus, is gendered by the sexual politics of the characters.

10.4 SYMBOLIC LAYERS IN *A PHOENIX TOO FREQUENT*

Christopher Fry's *A Phoenix Too Frequent* operates between the boundaries of a bawdy secularism and a Christian allegory. The metamorphoses of the lives and decisions of the characters also represent several symbolic levels. All the characters in the play, in their own way, come to represent the erotic. Dynamene, Doto, Tegeus, and even Virilius signify the desire for life and for love in its bodily and sexual form, especially when confronted with death. However, Doto and Virilius seem to both embody a more physical desire, as is evidenced through Doto's recollections of the several men she has been with, and Virilius' name evoking the image of sexual prowess. Such a physical desire is counterpointed by the existentially placed love of Dynamene and Tegeus, which is ripe with images of recreation and resurrection. However, any clear symbolic division is problematised by Fry through the use of humour and moral questions directed at Dynamene's renewed affections for Tegeus.

Dynamene and Tegeus both also become symbols of existing outside societal and statutory laws; Dynamene finds that she is no longer expected to be wedded to the societal idea of sacrificing her life in grief over her husband, while Tegeus learns that the Regulations' are nothing more than mere demands that may be fulfilled by an unexpected substitute.

The bowl of wine that is shared by the three characters also becomes an important symbolic reference point in the mythical context of the play. At the outset, the bowl of wine becomes a mean of establishing a friendship between the living inhabitants of the tomb. Further, the intoxication of the wine allows Doto at first, and eventually Dynamene herself to stray from the original decision to starve until death and join Virilius in death. The reduced inhibitions between Dynamene and Tegeus also allow their love to blossom. Further, the design on the bowl becomes significant for its mythological connotations:

DYNAMENE. What an exquisite bowl...

TEGEUS. Yes. Do you see the design?

The corded god, tied also by the rays
Of the sun, and the astonished ship erupting
Into vines and vine-leaves, inverted pyramids
Of grapes, the uplifted hands of the men (the raiders),
And here the headlong sea, itself almost

Venturing into leaves and tendrils, and Proteus
 With his beard braiding the wind, and this
 Held by other hands is a drowned sailor (Fry 179)

From one perspective, the design on the bowl is an allusion to the Ovidian story about the kidnap of the wine-God Bacchus, described here as the corded god. He is kidnapped by sailors or “the raiders” who intend to sell him in Egypt as a slave. However, their venture is thwarted when the ship “erupting/ Into vines and vine-leaves, inverted pyramids” undergoes a metamorphosis caused by the god, and is consequently unable to move through the sea (Vos 231). The overthrow of Dynamene’s journey to the underworld is interrupted in much the same way by the wine bowl and Tegeus, as the tomb transforms from a place of grief and death to a place of love, resurrection, and life.

10.5 CONCLUSION

Through *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, Christopher Fry participates in the revival of verse drama and artfully renders several complex themes through rich, witty lines. The archetypal dialectics of life, death, and resurrection become integral to the movement of the play. Fry’s articulation of the dialogue between life and death reveals that they are complementary to each other, rather than in opposition. It also reveals a phoenix-like philosophy about the celebration of life, further highlighted by the moral dilemmas of the characters, and their comic renditions. A study of Fry’s play, thus, allows an understanding of one of the oldest forms of drama in combination with a variety of secular themes and comedy.

10.6 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the dialectics of life and death in the context of Christopher Fry’s *A Phoenix Too Frequent*.
2. Critically comment on the symbols and the symbolic levels employed in Christopher Fry’s *A Phoenix Too Frequent*. What is the significance of the wine bowl?
3. What are the moral dilemmas that shape the characters in Christopher Fry’s *A Phoenix Too Frequent*?
4. How does Christopher Fry render the theme of resurrection in *A Phoenix Too Frequent*? Discuss in the context of the Christian mythology that informs the course of the play.
5. In your opinion, does Christopher Fry’s *A Phoenix Too Frequent* successfully deliver its philosophy of the celebration of life in spite of the moral dilemmas of the characters? Justify your answer with textual evidence.

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UNIT -11

A STUDY OF BADAL SIRCAR'S PLAY "PROCESSION" / "JULOOS" PART I

Unit Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Origin of Indian Drama and Theatre
- 11.2. Modern Indian Drama
- 11.3 About the Playwright: Badal Sircar
- 11.4. Badal Sircar's Career as a Playwright
- 11.5. Badal Sircar's Contribution to Indian Modern Theatre
- 11.6. Badal Sircar's Concept of "The Third Theatre"
- 11.7. Let's Sum Up
- 11.8. Important Questions
- 11.9 References

11.0. OBJECTIVES

The prime objectives of this unit are to make the students familiar with the glimpses of the origin of Indian drama, modern Indian theatre, Badal Sircar as a prominent name in Indian theatre, his contribution to the third theatre and Indian theatre in general.

11.1 ORIGIN OF INDIAN DRAMA AND THEATRE

It is aptly said, "The stage constitutes a very important chapter in the social and political history of people, and the bend of national genius cannot be fully comprehended without its study. . . . it is no exaggeration to say that a 'nation is known by its theatre'" (Gupta -1). Drama / play projects the real life on stage. It makes aware readers / audiences to their lives when characters performed their roles on stage. We have a long history of drama. It almost traces back to more than two thousand years. The critic A. Berriedale Keith says, "Indian tradition, preserved in The Natyasastra, the oldest of the texts of the theory of the drama, claims for the drama divine origin, and a close connexion with the sacred Vedas themselves" (12). Indian drama, as it is viewed, originates from the ancient Four Vedas. According to the Hindu belief, the knowledge of dramatic art is created by the Lord Brahma- the Creator of the Universe. It is believed that the lord Indra requested Lord Brahma to create *Natya Veda*. This *Fifth*

Veda derives a lot from the ancient Vedas. Lord Brahma, assigned this task of performing art to the Gods, and later it came to Bharatmuni- the sage. Bharatmuni's *Natyashastra* has all the dramatic elements such as – dialogue, plot, theme, characters, plots, subplots, setting, stage decoration, language, music etc. Gradually *Natyashastra* turned into 'Folk Theatre' which is also considered as the 'First Theatre'. The Folk Theatre has its own strengths and limitations.

11.2 MODERN INDIAN DRAMA / THEATRE

The modern Indian drama mostly derives from contemporary Proscenium theatre which basically 'imports' a lot from the colonisers' performative arts. The influence was so prevalent that it supersedes the traditional Indian Folk Theatre. The critic Aparna Dharwadker opines, "The influence of Western textual models produced a body of new "literary" drama and dramatic theory in several Indian languages, led to a large-scale translations and adaptations of European as well as Indian canonical plays, and generated the first nationalist arguments about the cultural importance of a national theatre in India." (3) During the colonial period, Indian theatre borrowed from proscenium theatre but with the indigenous themes and content.

The post-independence period witnessed a vast change in the Indian drama as it developed rapidly in various regional languages with the contemporary context such as afflicting impact of colonialism, traditional vs. modernism, impact of industrialization, issues of independent country and some dramatists made efforts to revive the folk theatre. The plays in the regional languages got worldwide acclaimed and got translated into other languages especially in English. The scenario of Indian theatre, however, got changed during the 1960s, when the contemporary renowned playwrights such as Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh and Badal Sircar came on the stage of Indian theatre. These are the dramatists who broke away with the conventional trends of Indian drama with modern strategies. They brought modern man's concerns, anxiety, issues, feeling of meaningless existence in their scripts. One critic aptly writes ". . . these playwrights have made bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of both thematic concerns and technical virtuosity."

11.3 ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: BADAL SIRCAR

Badal Sarkar was born on 15th July 1925 in an educated middle-class family. Badal Sircar's real name is Sudhindra Sircar. He studied Civil Engineering from a reputed Bengal Engineering College, Shibpur, Howrah, near Kolkata, and completed his Masters

of Arts from Jadavpur University in comparative literature. After completion of Civil Engineering, he became a town planner and started earning his livelihood. But he did not forget his childhood passion for theatre. Later he involved himself in politics for a short period of time. Disillusioned due to the political estrange policies, he concentrated on his job of being a civil engineer at Maithon, near Kolkata. This was a time which allowed him to focus on his childhood passion for theatre. Badal Sircar formed a 'Rehearsal Club' with the help of his friends and started rehearsing the plays. But, he realised the lack of serious and relevant plays, this motivated him to write play scripts. The other reason was that Sircar felt dissatisfaction to see the contemporary Indian society was divided into two classes-the bourgeois and proletariat class. He desperately wanted to bring the balance in the society but was uncertain about the ways to bring the reformation in the society.

Drama, Sircar believed, is one of the important tools to reform the society and make people aware about the need of brining the change in the society. He wrote his plays with certain intension / message to be given to the society. His most of the plays showed his rejection of artificial naturalistic approach of the contemporary playwrights. He reluctantly accepted 'Arts for Arts Sake'. He altered his plays totally to suit his purpose of reformation of the society. Sircar's innovative themes and experiments with the performances led to various social movements in the modern Indian Theatre. Through his plays, Sircar depicted the innate search for the ways to change the society for better. His plays, therefore portrayed the actual reality of commoners' life. The plays captured the exact essence and sensibilities of common people with their real-life pain, problems and sufferings. Most of his dramas focussed on socio-political situation in India, especially Bengal.

Badal Sarkar was awarded India's highest honour in the field of Theatre by the National Academy for the performing arts. "For his eminence in the field of drama and his contribution to its enrichment Sri Badal Sarkar receives the Sangeet Natak Academy Award for play writing". In 1969 he was awarded with the "Padmashree" award the greatest national recognition for artist in India. Badal Sircar dies on 13th May 2011.

11.4 BADAL SIRCAR'S CAREER AS A PLAYWRIGHT

Badal Sircar was the first-generation Bengali playwright of post-independence India. He was popularly known for his anti-establishment plays. Sircar, initially, started his career with the proscenium theatre but soon rejected it for its typical influence of Britishers. Sircar by profession was as a town planner in India, England and Nigeria. Later he entered Theatre and became an

actor. Gradually he started directing dramas and later soon he became the playwright.

Many well-known critics acclaimed his work and compared him with contemporary popular playwrights in India such as Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad and many other. Badal Sircar elevated egalitarian society. He was influenced by several western writers but he believed that influences will always be there, the question is whether one copies it exactly or assimilates it to make something new out of it to fulfil one's own needs. Badal Sircar never charged for his plays' performances. As he intended through his free performances to raise people's awareness to fight for a better life.

He wanted to project an authentic picture of common masses on stage and hence formed his own concept of theatre as the "*Third Theatre*". At the beginning of his career he was writing in the fashion of proscenium theatre but later left it. Though his path breaking play *Ebong Indrajit* (Evam Indrajit, 1963) from the proscenium phase truly set Sircar as a playwright. The other plays like *That Other History*, (1965) and *There is No End* (1970) are the chief plays which Sircar wrote for the proscenium stage. However, he gave the reason of leaving the proscenium theatre. In one of the interviews, he said, the reason of quitting on the proscenium theatre is: "When I came to the proscenium stage, I hadn't realized the strength of the theatre. I wasn't aware of what theatre can do. In other words, there was already deep down an awareness of the limitations of this theatre. It was from that awareness itself that there eventually came the question of communication, utilization of space, redefining the spectator performer relationship, and the gradual realization that the distinctive feature of theatre is that it is a live show and it offers scope for direct communication, man to man communication, and therefore the barriers between the two parties to the process, viz. spectators and performers, should be minimized, and if possible, eliminated. With that realization, I left the proscenium theatre. (Sircar 8-9). Badal Sircar as a playwright through his 'Third theatre' produced the plays in his mother tongue-Bangla only. Later his almost all plays got translated worldwide.

11.5 BADAL SIRCAR'S CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN MODERN THEATRE

In order to understand his huge contribution to Indian Drama and the Theatre one has to understand his prolific contribution as a whole. Sircar, initially, wrote few comedies such as *-Solution X* (1956), *Baropisima (The Elder Aunt)*, 1959), *Sanibar (Saturday)*, 1959), *Ram Shyam Jadu (Tom Dick Harry)*, 1961), *Ballabhpurer Rupkatha (The Fairy Tale of Ballabhpur)* 1963) and many other.

Sircar believed that his roles as playwright, director and actor with precision was of significance. He said, "I wrote plays to perform them. I am a theatre person that's all." His scripts and radical use of theory surpassed the contemporary dramatists. Badal Sircar's Omniscient commitment to the Theatre of social change after independence especially during the 1960s. The decade witnessed formation of art in many parts of the world including India. Plays were performed throughout the country in various regional languages. Indian drama, however, got nationally recognised from one region to another. Badal Sircar, of course, made a major contribution to the Indian Theatre.

At the beginning of his career Badal Sircar wrote pure comedies of local Bengali during 1950s and 1960s. He came into limelight in 1965 with his seminal work *EbongIndrajit*. The play showed Sircar's rebellious beginning in the world of theatre. He never experimented for the sake of experiments. His plays explored the contemporary ruling classes and the exploitation of masses but with the positive remark. At the end of the play, Badal Sircar provided a concrete vision, an optimistic tone for better future. The theme of the play is a writer's search for the subject of his play. The play depicted a story of a man who was torn between his mother and his love Manasi. He looked for inspiration from them but failed he could not get married with Manasi and had to marry the one whom he did not love. When the play was performed for the first time it was a big hit, undoubtedly, accepted as a hallmark in Indian dramatic history. The play highlighted the anxiety, angst, dilemma, complexity and anxiousness of the Indian educated middle-class man. The play can be seen as an existentialist play based on Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett's Theatre of Absurd.

The play *EbongIndrajit* proved significant as Badal Sircar through it did away with contemporary traditional, conservative, naturalist conventions which have tied down the Indian Theatre. Badal Sircar gave up contemporary set conventions, montage of past and present, and introduced fragmentary scenes, with experiments with the language. Sircar also rejected the conventional features of drama such as 'unity of action', 'unity of time' and so on. Another feature of his play is his extensive and absolutely relevant use of poetry and wry humour.

One of the most modern leading Marathi playwrights and a critic G. P. Deshpande wrote about Badal Sircar's innovation in the theatre. The critic said, "Badal Sircar's Bangla is radically different from the pre-Sircar Theatre speech in Bangla that it came close to actual speech is not its only achievement, the economy of words was unknown to several Theatre traditions in India." (Mitra)

The play *EbongIndrajit* was an instant success on stage. The play was translated in many languages including Hindi, English, Marathi, Kannada, Gujarati etc. The play was performed in various parts of India. During 1964 to 1967, Sircar wrote many plays which firmly established him as a leading contemporary playwright in Indian Theatre.

Sircar's plays like *Baakiltihas (The Other History)* published in 1964, and *Pagla Ghoda (Mad Horse)* published in 1969, were the main plays based on the theme of existentialism. The play *Baakiltihas* projected the story of a man who killed himself because of the burden of that 'other history'. In fact, it killed almost all human beings but no one talked about it directly. Sircar's play very relevantly shouldered the responsibility on all the human beings. The play *Pagla Ghoda* centralises on the theme of the four men at graveyard watching the cremation of a girl who has committed suicide. The play unfolded each of their lives through memories and showed how these characters were responsible directly or indirectly for the girl's suicide.

Sircar's plays got widespread publications and high-profile productions. Badal Sircar got widespread popularity and his name became indispensable in the Indian Modern Theatre. In spite of popularity and fame, Badal Sircar was not happy with the kind of experiments he was doing in Indian theatre. Richard Schechner accurately captured this dissatisfaction. The critic wrote, "Badal knew that the modern Theatre of psychology, drama, the spoken words, the proscenium stage, the box set, and the spectator, audience was dead. Worse, it was rotting." (1972)

This quote depicted Sircar's dissatisfaction with the contemporary Theatre. He rejected First Theatre that is Folk Theatre for its conservative ideologies and the rigid, redundant monotonous themes. He criticised the second theatre for its glorification of the rural India. He also denounced Proscenium Theatre which imported European especially Britishers' trends in the Theatre. Sircar did not accept these prominent theatres in India he wanted to bring innovations which will help to project modern man's life on Indian Theatre.

11.6 BADAL SIRCAR'S CONCEPT OF "THE THIRD THEATRE"

Badal Sircar's dissatisfaction with the First theatre i.e. Indian conventional Folk Theatre, Second Theatre (Urban) and the Proscenium Theatre, led him to form his own new Theatre and that he called it as the 'Third Theatre'. Folk Theatre was still busy with only the folk forms and the second theatre was engaged with the projection of an urban life which was a minor population. Therefore,

Badal Sircar believed a true Theatre of the people, therefore, would have to go where the majority of population lives. 'Badal Sircar Theatre' was considered as an experimental and alternative as it took radical departure from these well establish naturalists' theatres.

Sircar wanted to establish such a theatre where he could project his anger against the colonisers' exploitation of Indians and hence in his 'Third Theatre' he reacted and opposed the colonisers' language. He felt that English language cannot convey his objectives to the masses exactly as he wanted. Hence, he adopted his mother tongue- Bangla for his plays. Of course, later his plays got translated in English by others. His popular plays which were translated: *EbongIndrajit* (1963), *Michhil* (1974), *Bhoma* (1976), *Sukhapathya Bharter*, *Bakiltihas* (1976), *Hattamalar Uparey* (1977), *There is No End* (1970) and *Basi Khabar* (1979) were written in Bengali language. These plays emphasise on meaningless existence of commoners, their struggle for the survival, the declining human values. He intended to make aware the down trodden classes of their exploitation by the bourgeois classes.

Sircar, through his new Theatre introduced a novel turn to the Indian Theatre. It was a theatre which had taken its foundation from both the First and the Second Theatre but with his own unique style. He made his dramas/ plays as 'live performance'. His scripts were performative scripts and hence very dynamic, multifaceted, multidimensional, multi-layered instead of rigid or limited and confined. The Third Theatre suited the post-independence environment and the changes that were taking place in and around India.

Badal Sircar realised the Proscenium Theatre was insufficient to bring all the liveliness of modern life and hence tried to enhance the relations between the performers and the spectators. The new theatre, he felt should not create an illusion of reality, but must project reality itself. Sircar intended the performers and the spectators must share the same space and acknowledge each other's presence. The theatre was completely indispensable on the performers' body on the one hand, and the spectators' imagination on the other end.

The three major features of Sircar's Third Theatre were its free of cost, portability, flexibility. Sircar never charged for the performances, only at the end of each performance, the group was requesting for charity and generous contributions by the spectators. The charity used to be the income source for planning of next performance. Badal Sircar never used props or any other costly material for the performances. His plays touched the inner self and emotions of the audience.

11.7. LET'S SUM UP

In this unit we have learned the origin of Indian drama and theatre from earlier times to the modern-day theatre. The later part of the unit made you acquainted with a modern-day theatre luminary, Badal Sircar, the circumstances that shape Sircar as a prominent playwright and his contribution to Indian theatre especially the third theatre. The glimpses of theatre and drama you gained in this unit will, by all means, help you understand and analyse Indian drama prescribed for your course.

11.8. IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Trace the origin and development of Indian drama and theatre.
2. Describe the circumstances that shape Badal Sircar as a prominent Indian theatre personality.
3. Critically evaluate Badal Sircar's contribution to Indian Modern theatre.
4. Write short notes on:
 - I. Indian Modern theatre
 - II. The third theatre
 - III. Badal Sircar as a playwright

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UNIT -12

A STUDY OF BADAL SIRCAR'S PLAY "PROCESSION" / "JULOOS" PART II

Unit Structure :

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction to the Play
- 12.2 The significance of the Title 'Procession'
- 12.3 The Outline of the Play 'Procession'
- 12.4 Characters in the Play 'Procession'
- 12.5 Symbols/Imagery in the Play 'Procession'
- 12.6 The Themes of the Play 'Procession'
- 12.7 Idea of Stage Performance
- 12.8 Conclusion
- 12.9 Let's Sum up
- 12.10 Important Questions
- 12.11 References

12.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to make the students acquainted with the introduction to Badal Sircar's play 'Procession' (originally *Michhil*), the significant use of title, its outline summary, characters, use of symbols and imagery, central themes of the play and Sircar's idea of stage performance. After the study of this unit, you will be able to critically evaluate not only the prescribed play 'Procession' but also entire corpus of Sircar's writing.

12.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY 'PROCESSION'

The prescribed play was originally published in 1972 in Bangla language. It is titled as *Michhil* in its original language which means procession. The play was first performed on 13th April 1974 at the village Ramchandrapur by Satabdi. The peculiar feature of the play that it had no distinct characters, plot or story line. It was circular and open-ended. The play was well written and performed. In most of the parts of Bengal, it was performed in its original language. The play and its performances became so popular in a very short period of time that people demanded it to be translated into various languages. Hence it got translated, later, in many

languages. The play was titled as *Juloosin* Marathi, *Juloosin* Hindi, and *Procession* in English. The play projected multiple themes – such as the consequences of colonisation, its impact on Indians especially commoners, increasing corruptions, unstable governments and its policies, class conflict, exploitation of labour class, underprivileged and downtrodden subalterns by the leading and emerging industrialists, their increasing greed for money etc. *Procession* highlights chaos, meaninglessness in existence, commoners' mental, physical, financial trauma, and widespread anarchy in the civilization and Indian culture.

12.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE 'PROCESSION'

The play's title *Procession* was very apt and relevant as it was based on the dominant imagery for Kolkata's nickname as 'the city of procession'. Sircar remembered: "I have always had a love-hate relationship with Calcutta. In the early 1970s I had this idea of making a play on Calcutta in the form of a collage. As Calcutta is known as a city of processions, *Michhil* seemed to be an appropriate name as well as a suitable way of making the play. In the immediately preceding years, so many young people and adolescents were killed by the police, brutally and cruelly, secretly and openly, that the image of the man who is being killed every day was very strong in my mind, and I had a vague idea of a clownish old man, probably visualising myself in the role" (quote from Sircar; *Voyages in the Theatre, On Theatre*; pages 115-16).

The projection of the mental deformity (procession) is affected and how it was perpetuated is focussed. The play depicted modern man's search for real home. The critics, Brian Crow and Chris Banfield wrote about the significance of title of the play, "*Michhil* (Procession, 1974) has been an immensely successful play using the noisy, chaotic evocation of Calcutta's crowded streets in a theatrical setting that incorporates an audience arranged informally around the acting arena, in a fast-moving, satirical tragi-comedy of police repression, establishment hypocrisy, race riot and personal loss of direction. (129). Lot of processions, in the play, were happening. The character of the old man said, ". . . Michhil, Michhils for food and clothes, Michhils for salvation, Michhils for the revolution, Michhils in military formation, Michhils for refugees, Michhils for flood relief, Michhils mourning, Michhils protesting, Michhil festive, Michhils with stars" (*Procession* 8).

Brian Crow and Chris Banfield added to the suitability of the title "The image of the procession in *Michhil* is employed to present both negative and positive aspects of the joining together of individual and communities under a common banner" (130).

12.3 THE OUTLINE OF THE PLAY 'PROCESSION'

Badal Sircar once said that he wanted to produce it even before the play was written. He wrote, "It is one of the very few plays where I had the idea of the production even before I began writing it, particularly the procession idea" (qtd. in Dutta viii).

The play *Michhil* did not have a definite plot. It depicted the journey of two characters in search of true procession through various processions. The play was the sign of rejection, resistance, protest, rights, responsibilities towards families, society. It depicted the futility of all sorts of processions of refugees, strikes, poverty, politics, oppressed and oppressors, ideologies, festive processions, condolences, etc. The character Khoka projected this challenging and unstable scenario by saying, "I'm lost in the colour of the flags of the procession, in the noise of the footsteps..." Khoka was crossing through all phases but he was not getting his own real hope the road through to the true home real true home was lost. The play reinforces the theme of unresolved connections of existence. The play projects the socio-political upheaval and the city-Kolkata with its storms and processions.

The play was staged with the scenes of Calcutta streets, chatting in teashops, conversations in the coffee houses, different scenes in the offices. These variety of processions aptly captured the meaningless existence and unguided crowd searching for nothing, the exploiters exploiting the poor.

The following dialogue made it clear:

THE MASTER: What is the greatest enemy of civilization?

CHORUS: Communism.

THE MASTER: Who upholds, preserves, and protects civilization?

CHORUS: You, Master!

THE MASTER: Rest assured, my children, I'll keep you civilized. Communism is the religion of the animals. Keep in mind that you are not animals, you are men.

CHORUS: But Master, we're dying.

THE MASTER: There's heaven for you after you die, and heavenly happiness. Animals have no heaven. I bless you, you'd die as men, not animals. (*Procession* 23-4)

The one more scene projected the insignificance of poor people's lives. The play focusses on the disappearance of a character called Khoka. The other characters try to enquire about him but the Officer silenced them. He threatened and kicked them away. Badal Sircar used dead Khoka to capture this cruelty who

gets killed daily, every day, yesterday, in the past, today, in the present, tomorrow, in the future also he will be killed. Khoka says, “. . . the day before the day before. Last week. Last month. Last year. I am killed every day” (*Procession* 7). Repetition of dialogues enforced the seriousness of the theme. Badal Sircar depicted the harsh reality of poverty through the scene of - the Beggar-woman’s desperate cry for bread. She screamed for: “A piece of stale bread please, moth-e-e-e-er. O mother-O moth-e-e-er” (*Procession* 22). Sircar wanted to make the masses aware of their exploitation and hence he reduced the gap between the performers of the plays and the spectators. It was the one significant feature of his Third Theatre. The gap between the two is bridged by the direct communication between the performers and the spectators. For example, the Old Man directly talks to the audience in the play, “Every day in the battlefields thousands die, thousands of I’s like me. (To the audience) You sit on the sidelines watching processions, (shrieking) you are watching murders, murders! You sit in peace watching murders, you are killed yourselves, you kill. Yes, you kill, you have killed. I’m killing, you are killing. We are all killers. We all kill, we all get killed. We kill by sitting quietly and doing nothing at ease, we get killed. Stop it. Stop it. (*Procession* 37)

12.4 CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY ‘PROCESSION’

Badal Sircar’s unique style of characterization is that the characters are not types. They are representative and symbolic. The play *Procession* has characters like Dead Khoka, the Old Man, the Officer and the Chorus- One, Two, Three, Four, Five (men) and Six is a girl and the spectators

The characters appeared on stage from the audience only. When they didn’t have their performance on stage, they will sit among the spectators, so no entry from somewhere outside. The performers did not decorate themselves as characters. They played their roles as the characters but without characters’ costumes, make up, and so on. At maximum to let the audience know who is playing which character, the performers attached labels on their clothes with the names of the characters they are performing. To our surprise, the playwright did not give a specific name to any characters in the play. As they are symbolic of any person in the real world. His characters had names like One, Two, Three, four and so on.

At the end of the play, the characters joined hands with the audience by inviting them to play their roles. They all including the performers and the spectators started singing the positive song with the optimistic tone in the procession. This is how Sircar directly involved and connected the spectators through the play. Sircar

actualised his intension of making spectators aware of his ideology and made them hopeful to change the current situation with a hope. Badal Sircar used human body instead of expensive material to perform. He advocated that human body is the most significant tool in the theatre. The use of human body through movements, use of human voices as the chorus used, wood branches, bamboo sticks for the music to create a very different aura in the play. Sircar rejected the conventional naturalistic theatre's fashion of performance. He viewed that that the naturalistic theatre copies and applies, in short, it is all fake. This was generally known as 'acting'. But the performers in his plays came down, came close, appeared as the human beings as they were, to the human beings that the spectators were. In his play, the characters were no longer fake. The performer had to take on his/ her own mask and be himself / herself.

The Third Theatre focussed on human presence and hence other theatrical elements and requirements became absolutely unessential. Lighting was reduced to minimum level, makeup was natural, props were removed and hence the play was produced with a minimal cost. Of course, all these innovations in performances did not came at once to Satabdi- the performing house. Sircar believed that if he continues doing experiments with the theatre, they would be able to do away with the costing and heavy items of Theatre. Hence, gradually a flexible, portable and inexpensive Theatre is being created.

12.5. SYMBOLS/ IMAGERY IN THE PLAY 'PROCESSION'

Badal Sircar used powerful symbols to convey his ideology / ideologies poignantly to the readers / audiences. Sircar, though, projected all pessimism and cruel realities on the contemporary India, he did not do away with the hope in *Procession*. Look closely at the scene where a character Khoka went on missing, the people tried to lure him with lots of gifts and awards such as chocolates, books, pass, job, land, house, car, gold, happiness, peace and salvation to come back to the old home. But he does not return to the old home. And here Badal Sircar who actually performed the character of the old Khoka said, "Khoka means Little. Khoka means one who hasn't grown up yet. Khoka means Green, Raw, Immature" (*Procession* 10-11). He added, "Khoka'll never come back to the O-o-old house. . . . if he comes back, it'll be to a new home, a real home, a really real ho-o-ome" (11). The powerful images like Khoka and the old and new home had symbolic significance. Khoka seemed to be an innocent child who is not ruined by the contemporary degraded society and its culture. New home symbolised an imaginary new balanced society which will not have the limitations, inequalities of the contemporary society. The

new home / society will be based on humanity, generosity and balanced. The characters of the Officer and the Master symbolised the ruling class in India who exploited people for their profits, completely ignoring the powerless class. The Officer denied the fact of the murder of Khoka as he said, "It's nothing, sir. It's all quiet" (Procession34).

12.6. THE THEMES OF THE PLAY 'PROCESSION'

The play had multiple themes but no story element or plot as such. The play depicted the afflicting influences on the post independent-India communal riots, conflict between political parties, oppressor and oppressed, impact of partition, unemployability etc. These were major themes of the play. Badal Sarkar poignantly highlighted all contemporary burning sensitive issues like strikes, loss of spirituality, increased greed for material aspects, down fall of families, poverty, and many more such problems. The play, however, ends with an optimistic note.

The play *Procession* is deeply rooted in socio political anarchy dissent and its protest to the contemporary trends. The play began with the Chorus- five men – One, Two, Three, Four, Five and the Six – girl on stage talking about the murder, assassination, kidnapping, and disappearance. When the play starts, we can observe the conversation of the Chorus about power (current). 'One' speaks to 'two' about power cut. They discussed about the load-shedding. Everyday darkness engulfs the area. 'Five' warned others to guard their pockets. The chorus hear a piercing death scream. Here Chorus pointed out about the screaming. They conversed with each other about murder. The search for a 'torch'.

One: Does anybody have a torch? A torch?

Two: who would carry a torch in the city?

The play showed that there was a young boy called Khoka, went on being killed every day on the roads and there was an old man who gets lost his way. Michhil of allsorts- protest for revolutions, social-spiritual procession, festive procession, funeral procession, political procession, flood relief procession, military procession, unemployability procession, operation procession, unemployability procession etc. Both the Khoka and the old man are in search of the real home. They tried to search their home but failed to find the road. The young man in search of his home following the procession helplessly in the expectation of getting his own home. Nobody knew anything about their search. They were simply walking on and walking on. They're following all sorts of processions fruitlessly, hoping that particular procession will lead them to the real home. Khoka was lost, killed assassinated,

kidnapped. He tried hard to search his home. He thought that he would find the road leading to his new home but again returned at the same place with frustration. Khoka represents all those who were lost, killed similar to the young kids of Bengali parents during the period of riots. Khokamet the Old Man who himself had lost his way trying to search for his home seeking the true procession with the hope because he believed, “if you’re lost you can get search if you can search then you can find young Khoka believes on the old Man’s opinion and tries to search for the new home.

The play rarely focussed on the urban people. It was very well accepted by poor villagers. The play was performed at various places. *Procession* is very popular and significant for its projections of real image of processions. It closely connects to the audience because the play involves the spectators actively in the performance itself.

The play *Procession* ends with the performers holding hands of each other, inviting spectators to join the procession and hoping for the better future in the gloomy present. The play connects audience emotionally and offers hopes for the better future.

Badal Sircar never advertised or promoted his plays. Satabdi was founded in 1967, most of the plays’ performances were performed under Sircar’s guidance as director but unfortunately his plays are still generally ignored by the Theatre intellectuals.

The major themes like suicide, execution, the dead or disappeared, frequently appearing and explaining the difficulties in living, has accurately captured by the dramatist.

12.7. IDEA OF STAGE PERFORMANCE

Badal Sircar’s plays were the reaction to the proscenium theatre and the first (urban) as it is full of artificiality and hence, he believed Theatre in the urban centres are an elite minority. He often accused the theatre of romanticising the rural landscape. And the second (folk) theatre. Most of his plays were directed by himself. He was, hence, very well acquainted with the kind of performances.

The play *procession* is also directed by him. It posed a challenge to the spectator’s imagination when it was performed. Badal Sircar being the playwright, director and performer gave a thought that his plays should be attended by all the public irrespective of their financial conditions. He did not commercialise his plays. Sircar wanted to make public aware about his ideologies. His main concern was for the ordinary public, poor people which encompassed most of the population of India

The cut-throat competition was brought in by the technological advancement during the era. Public started to prefer cinema instead theatre due to its comparative high cost. And hence cinema was becoming a predominant media to reach to the public with all its luxurious richness. In such circumstances, Badal Sircar pondered over the issues like use of props, elaborate lighting, expensive costumes, stage decoration, and stars etc. It was all very costly affair and difficult to manage with the meagre income. He determined to offer something real which cinema cannot offer and it's the concept of 'live show'. He rejected all these for a noble cause and he started his own Muktmanch (open / free theatre) for all. Sircar firmly believed, there had to be a real close connection between what is happening on the stage and the emotions of the spectators.

Badal Sircar changed the setting of his plays in the Third Theatre. He believed that architecture of proscenium theatre appears to be all wrong. He explained that all spectators on one side pushing the last row far, which affected the last rows' audiences' comprehension of the play. And hence to resolve this issue he put the spectators on all sides of the theatre. He brought the stage performers at the level of the spectators. It made easy for performers to get the spectators feedback immediately. Feedback from both the spectators and the performers played a significant role in Sircar's plays.

He firmly advocated establishing the direct communication between both the parties. There were three types of communication happening in his plays: performer to performer; performer to spectator; and spectator to spectator. Badal Sircar bridged the gap between the two and closely connected with the drama which was going on the stage. Badal Sircar made every aspect of the theatre live by introducing very innovative concepts in his Third Theatre. The special feature of this theatre was it was not at all expensive for spectators. Anyone can watch the plays which were performed in this Theatre. Badal Sircar believed and proved "Theatre is a human event, cinema is not" by bringing the 'live event' on stage.

The play *Procession* was performed throughout India and it charged nothing to the audience. The performance of the play happened on the stage surrounded by audiences. Badal Sircar in his venture, attracted many youngsters during the 1970s. For Sircar tried to project the actual reality on the Indian stage. It was a period of all socio-political upheaval in India. The set trends were rooted out. New concepts were coming into existence during the period. This small group of people led by Badal Sircar shun the proscenium performances. They introduced the concept of Anganmanch. Anganmanch (backyard of house) was used to perform the plays.

So, no requirement of specific theatre locations. Badal Sircar and his group tried to make theatre free for all public.

12.8. CONCLUSION

To conclude, Badal Sircar's plays were basically by the people, of the people and for the people. Sircar firmly believed that the theatre can help in bringing revolution as he said, "Let us be clear that theatre alone will not bring about social change but it can be one of the tools in the movement to bring about the social change". He had a huge contribution in bringing the dynamic change in the Indian theatre as well as the contemporary society.

The critics, however, attribute to him both negative and positive opinions. For example, Sudhanwa Deshpande, a well-known author director wrote, "Badal Sircar is cynical of political processes and has a slightly romantic notion of the villager's". Sircar's 'Third Theatre', relevantly related and exactly projected the modern young generation which seemed to be lost and the complexities of the contemporary Indian society. It established direct communication with the spectators. 'Badal Sircar Theatre' was a direct reaction to the dominant forms of Indian First Theatre and the Second Theatre and the Proscenium Theatre. Of Course, we can't deny the fact that Sircar borrowed a lot from the Folk Theatre such as Jatra, Tamasha, and Nautanki but with its modified forms. Sircar actually revived these forms of the traditional theatres and contributed rigorously to the Indian Modern Drama and the Theatre with his 'Third Theatre.'

12.9 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit we have studied the first appearance of Badal Sircar's *Michhil* or *Procession* on the arena of Indian theatre and how it became an acclaimed play due to the new techniques of theatre, novel way of characterisation, experiments with plot and the whole notion of the Third Theatre and its use for promotion and propagation of thoughts and ideologies to bring social changes in the lives of the common men or masses.

12.10 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Write short notes on the following:
 - a. The significance of the title of the play, *Procession*
 - b. Badal Sircar's art of characterisation
 - c. Badal Sircar's idea of the stage performance
 - d. Comment on the Badal Sircar's use of symbols and imagery in the play *Procession*

2. Discuss Badal Sircar's play *Procession* as a people's play.
3. Explain how Sircar's play *Procession* bears the characteristic features of The Third Theatre.

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UNIT -13

A STUDY OF AMIRI BARAKA'S HOME ON THE RANGE

Unit Structure :

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Amiri Baraka
- 13.2 Afro-American Drama and Baraka as a Dramatist
- 13.3 Different Phases of Barak's Literary Career
- 13.4 About the play, *Home on the Range*
- 13.5 Characters
- 13.6 Themes
- 13.7 Language, Style and Tone of the Play
- 13.8 Significance of the Song and Dance
- 13.9 *Home on the Range* as a representative of Revolutionary Theatre:
- 13.10 Conclusion
- 13.11 Questions
- 13.12 Bibliography
- 13.13 Reference for further study

13.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit discusses the play, *Home on the Range* by an Afro-American playwright, Amiri Baraka. This section begins with a short introduction to the playwright and his contribution to Afro-American Theatre. It also highlights on the different phases of Amiri Baraka's literary career as it helps to understand the events and movements that influenced him as a black writer and his contribution to Afro-American literary world. A short discussion of the play with respect to its content, characters, themes, symbols and language and style has been attempted at to help the readers understand and appreciate Amiri Baraka's *Home on the Range* as an Afro-American play. A list of probable questions and bibliography too has been added to help the readers engage themselves in further study of Afro-American plays, the growth and development of Black Theatre and assess their understanding of the same.

13.1 AMIRI BARAKA (1934 –2014)

LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) was a poet, story-writer, dramatist, political activist, art critic and teacher who devoted his literary career in exploring and depicting the experience and anger of Afro-Americans. His literary work mainly aimed at making the black voice prominent in the land of the whites. Baraka's writings have been his weapon against racism and later in his life to advocate scientific socialism. He entered the American consciousness not merely as a multifarious genius but as an event, a symbolic figure, somehow combining the craft and insights of Euro-American radicalism with the rebellious energies of young Afro-Americans. He was one of the leading representatives of the Black Aesthetic or Black Arts Movement and was regarded in high esteem because he created through his writing a compelling force of consciousness in the minds of the Black Americans. The overall theme of his works of art reflects initiation, renunciation and reformation of Black people in America.

Born in 1934, in Newark, New Jersey, LeRoi Jones attended Rutgers University for two years, then transferred to Howard University, where in 1954 he earned his B.A. in English. He served in the Air Force from 1954 until 1957.

13.2 AFRO-AMERICAN DRAMA AND BARAKA AS A DRAMATIST:

The dramatic world of Baraka is immense. He writes his plays with a strong commitment and tries to bring about a social and cultural consciousness among the Black Americans. He reflects himself as a radical rebel of the 60s through them. He writes plays of great purpose, seeking justice for the Black Americans. Like his poetry, his plays project a brilliant and pragmatic mind of an American Black writer. His plays expose several features related to Black culture, Black society and Black mind with a magical touch of the Black Arts Movement of 1960s. Baraka's plays are strongly affected by the tension between art and activism that he always felt. His career as a playwright was also greatly touched by the philosophy and perspectives of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tsu-Tung, hence most of his plays emphasise on the greater legitimacy of the act over the word (Brown 135). His plays also reflect the influence of Maoists on his mind and work. Therefore, the Maoist insistence on the unity of politics and art, on the fusion of revolutionary political content" and "the highest possible perfection of artistic form mark his writings. The fact that Baraka manages to achieve such difficult goals in his creative work proves his determination to follow and practice the principles that he strongly believes in. The socialist ideal is peculiarly attractive to

Baraka the dramatist, or more specifically, to Baraka the revolutionary dramatist. In this connection Brown comments:

Drama is the means of achieving that unity of political action and literary word, which has always been crucial to Baraka. Hence that interest in the word as act which dominates much of the later poetry culminates in the drama-especially in the later plays. In these plays the dramatic synthesis of language and action is both the symbolic and literal example of Baraka's ideal of the word as action. Indeed in Baraka's drama, even in the earlier works but especially in the more recent revolutionary plays, the very idea of dramatic form is both an aesthetic principle and political concept: the play as action is integral to the revolutionist's idealistic activism; dramatic form as motion through time and space is compatible with the revolutionary view of history as constant change(Brown, 136).

Baraka's theory of dramatic art is so integral to his political principles and practices that Baraka's achievement as a dramatist is decidedly uneven. Indeed, on the basis of those very socialist standards, which he himself invokes, he is "least effective as a dramatist in the revolutionary plays of his Black Nationalist and socialist periods." However, it is known that all his plays of the 60s exclusively befit the purpose of the Black Arts Movement. William J. Harris writes, Baraka's "abilities as a playwright transcend particular artistic milieus is suggested by the fact that although the Black Arts Movement is moribund, Baraka's influence and creativity is persevere" (Harris xvii). The spirit of Baraka's plays is the spirit of the Black Arts Movement.

13.3 DIFFERENT PHASES OF BARAK'S LITERARY CAREER

Baraka's works have shown many stages of self-revelation and they are nothing but the outcome of his self conscious sensibility. Baraka's plays are written chronologically in four periods. They are:

The 'Beat Period' (1957-1962),
 The 'Transitional Period' (1963-1965),
 The 'Black Nationalist Period' (1965-1974) and
 The 'Third World Marxist Period' (1974 - 2014).

During the **Beat Period**, he was greatly influenced by the white *avant-garde* like Charles Olson, O' Hara, and Ginsberg. He wrote poems, which were full of imagery and spontaneous humour. Historical events like The Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black political upsurge of the late 1960s also influenced him. These events or incidents changed attitude toward

race and art. He developed the consciousness of his identity as a Black, rather a Negro, and gradually rejected his earlier perception of life and his existence. The early plays of Baraka include *Dutchman*, *The Slave*, *The Baptism* and *The Toilet*. Each play is a highly effective analysis of American society with immense radical value from the point of view of Black Americans' social and cultural consciousness. *Dutchman* and *The Baptism* are symbolic and allegorical plays whereas *The Slave* and *The Toilet* are quite realistic and reactionary. These plays enact tensions or conflicts prevailing among the Black Americans.

In the **Transitional period**, his writings became expressions of his racial and political consciousness. They expressed the theme of Blackness and politicization of art by Baraka. During this phase he started showing interest in Black Nationalism and gradually became a Black Nationalist. His sense of hatred for the whites knew no bound. The assassination of Malcolm X hurt him so intensely that he wanted the death of the white race. Also in this period, he tried to formulate the Black aesthetics in which he tried to express his American experience in forms that spring from his own unique culture and that his art must be evaluated by standards that grow out of his own culture.

In the **Third World Marxist Period**, Baraka rejected Black Nationalism as racist and became a Third World Socialist. Having struggled as a Nationalist, he came to the state of a Marxist. His socialist art is addressed to the Black community, which he believes as the greatest revolutionary potential in America. Thus Baraka quickly earned the respect of artists of all mediums, particularly the writers of the so called Beatnik movement. He could emerge as a personality and leader and transformed himself from a Beat poet to "father of the Black Arts Movement".

The essence of Amiri Baraka's writings in these various phases can be summed up in his own words as he has put in the Preface to *The Le Roi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader* edited by William J. Harris, Baraka writes-

My writing reflects my own growth and expansion, and at the same time the society in which I have existed throughout this longish confrontation. Whether it is politics, music, literature, or the origins of language, there is a historical and time/place/condition reference that will always try to explain exactly why I was saying both how and for what (Harris, xvii).

13.4 ABOUT THE PLAY, *HOME ON THE RANGE*

A small one act play, *Home on the Range*, which was read as a part of the 1967 Black Communications Project was produced

at Spirit House in Spring 1968. It has much of music, suspense and absurdity. It takes place in an American family whose members are found "seated in a room watching television, eating popcorn, chattering" (43). The language that the family members like Father, Mother, Son and Daughter use are quite symbolic which the Black Criminal can't understand. However, the Black Criminal wants to command them variously. It seems as if he is sadistic and revengeful in mood. But the family members do not take him seriously and watch TV. When laughter comes from the television set, "they all begin to imitate the laughter... are wiggling" and shaking, slapping each other and grabbing themselves in a frenzy of wicked merriment" (107-108). The Black criminal fails to understand this kind of strange behaviours and asks them to shut up: "What the hell's wrong with you folks? Godamit, shutup, shutup" (108). But the families members do not pay any heed to his words and howl even louder. The criminal becomes very angry and shoots at the television set. As a result, "the Family stops laughing as suddenly as the bullet shattering the set's tubes" (P 108). However, at the very next moment the family members start dancing and singing in response to the criminal's confession that he has come to commit a crime. Looking at the absurdity of the actions of the family members, the criminal guesses that probably they are panic-stricken. Therefore, he tries to convince them that "it is not the reign of terror" (108) and tries to bring them to reality. When vague sounds come from a concealed loudspeaker, the Criminal gets angry again and he shoots at it. Immediately after it as the lights on the stage become dim, and go down and finally off, the criminal sleeps for a while and again "comes awake with a start" (110). He listens to "the FAMILY singing: first a version of 'America the Beautiful/ then a soupy stupid version of the Negro National Anthem, lift Every Voice and Sing' and brings the action to a super-dramatic climax by "having been moved to tears, finally giving a super-military salute"(110). The stage direction continues to describe the following situation:

As they reach the highest point of the song, suddenly a whole CROWD OF BLACK PEOPLE pushes through the door. The criminal wheels around, at first, started, then he lets out a yell of recognition, and there is a general yowl from all the Black People, and they proceed to run around and once they take in the family, with second takes, over the shoulder Jibes, and stage whispered insult - inquiries, they race around and begin getting ready for a party (110).

The party, dance and movement go on and everybody get absorbed in it. The criminal is absorbed in the party too. However, the Criminal then targets the audience. Gradually shifting his attention from the party to the audience, he continues showing his boldness and confidence:

Criminal. This is the tone of America. My country, 'tis of thee. *Heshoots out over the audience.* This is the scene of the Fall. The demise of the ungodly. *He shoots once. Then quickly twice.* This is the cool take over in the midst of strong rhythms, and grace. Wild procession, Jelly Beans. French Poodles. Razor Cuts. Filth. Assassinations of Gods. This is the end, He shoots. Run. Bastards. Run. You grimy mother fuckers who have no place in the new the beautiful the black change of the earth. Who don't belong in the mother fucking world....*He shoots again three times.* The world ! (110 - 111)

The same night brings another turn in the play as the Criminal keeps awake when others are fast asleep and listens to the father murmuring in his sleep, "I was born in Kansas city in 1920. My father was the Vice-President of Fertilizer Company. Before that we were phantoms ... *waving at his family.* Evil ghosts without substance" (111) and repeats it again. In the mean time the criminal shouts "Come on, Come on" which Black girl compliments with "Good Morning" as morning arrives; symbolically suggesting the dawn of a new starting for the Black people.

13.5 CHARACTERS

The play, *Home on the Range*, consists of two sets of characters: a white family consisting of four members and the other set consisting of a Black Criminal and a crowd of Black people. The members of the white family are without any names. They are basically identified with the relation that they share amongst each other. Hence, the family members are identified as father, mother, son and daughter. The other set of characters consists of Black people. The leading character amongst them is the Black Criminal. He is also without any specific name. He is identified as the Black Criminal throughout the play. The Crowd of Black people is also anonymous. None of them has a name nor are they identified on the basis of their work or role as the Black Criminal is identified.

The absence of name for the characters is very significant and befits the theme and structure of the play. The Black Criminal tries to reveal the psychological reality of a Black man as well as that of a white. In this play, the Black Criminal shows self-assertion, a freedom of mind, daringness, protest and anger against the white family who is affected by mania, a sadist and the representative of careless white people. The boldness with which the Criminal tries to dictate on the white family and throws his weight in the domain of the Whites indicates that the Criminal has escaped the hideous past of the "slave mentality" and entered a history of slave rebellion. He is trying to subvert the hierarchies and trying to take the role of a white dictator with Black skin in a white household.

However, the Criminal is without a name. He is known by his actions, that is his crime. His lack of a name in a way reflects his identity crisis. However, by taking control over the white family he tries to gain one. His identity as a Criminal that is used as his name can also be interpreted as he is seen in the eyes of a White man; a Black criminal and how the Negroes are made to conceive of themselves and their identities; as the white wanted to see or perceive of them.

Other characters in the play besides the White family consisting of four members are also known as Black Man 1, Black Man 2, Black Man 3, Black Woman 1 and Black Girl. The irony of the existence of these characters is that none of them has an individual existence. They are collectively identified as Black and hence to be recognised individually, they are attributed with a number. Amiri Baraka by not naming any of his characters like many other plays of his once more reiterates the fact that an individual's name is only a superficial creation of one's identity. According to Amiri Baraka, plays are the most suitable vehicle to raise Black consciousness in the Negroes and fight for their due respect. Hence, he might have deliberately kept his characters nameless in order to convey how the Black people in America are perceived. Their names are not the signifiers of their individual identity. Through their nameless existence, Amiri Baraka attempts to convey the fact that a Black individual is actually known by the baggage of his ancestral history, the place of his origin, his race and his skin colour.

13.6 THEMES

One of the major themes that can be discerned from the short but complex storyline of *Home on the Range* is the Black Criminal's desire to take revenge on the White family by plundering the White's household. Associated with it is a sense of fear that the Black Criminal manages to create in the members of the White family by commanding on them, shouting and screaming at them as and when they falter and eventually keeping them under gunpoint. Since the plot is loosely woven it creates a sense of mystery and not much is understood about the objectives of the Black Criminal's visit to the White household unless and until the Crowd consisting of the Black people actually ask him and makes it apparent to the readers/ audience. The revenge that he intends to take is not an individual one but a collective one. More than looting the material possession of the family, he attempts at robbing the whites of their complacency and egoistic attitude. The White family initially tries to ignore his presence and keep themselves calm and composed. However, gradually their sense of all time power and authority start crumpling down in the presence of the Black Criminal and they become the subjects of his commands. The White family is

eventually silenced by the Black Criminal and soon one by one all the family members fall flat on the floor while dancing. Their falling down flat on the floor and getting into a long sleep can be regarded as their waning power control and gradual acceptance of the overbearing power and authority of the Black criminal. The father's coming back to normal state and attempting to utter, though very faintly audible, "I was born in Kansas city in 1920. My father was the vice-president of a fertilizer company..." (111) indicate his last attempt to claim his position and status as a White. The whole scene where the White father, fallen flat on the floor endeavours to claim his lost glory in the presence of the Black criminal and other Negroes also symbolically depict the fall of the Whites and the rise of the Blacks.

Another major theme that the play deals with is identity crisis. The Blacks in the American land had lost their identity as humans. They were verbally, physically and psychologically abused and were treated as things. They were even refused basic needs of human beings and in order to inflict psychological pain and force them to internalise their condition as no better than inanimate things they were most often addressed as 'it'. There was a deliberate effort on the whites to keep the Black people nameless and call them as niggers. The Black people in Amiri Baraka's plays continuously fight against identity crisis and hence they are identified in his plays either through their actions or their relation with the others in the play. The Whites too in this play, quite surprisingly, are depicted as nameless people. This might be read as an artistic attempt of Amiri Baraka to hint at the subversion of roles that is depicted in the later part of the play.

The play also deals with another significant theme of power struggle. The Black Criminal who takes control on the White family wants to establish his power over the White family, sort of dream come true for him. Whereas, there are indications made by the White family that speak about their attempt to resist it, they ultimately fail. The nonsensical language, the Father's utterance about his past in his sleep amply speaks about their attempts to give up and resist the dominance that the Black Criminal was trying to build over them. However, the involvement of the white family in the nigger dance ultimately establishes the dominance of the Black over the white, a future that the playwright tries to visualise.

The play also deals, though very subtly, with the theme of despair, loss and shame on one hand and an overwhelming sense of contentment and satisfaction on accomplishing the desired objectives on the other hand. *Home on the Range* was written by Amiri Baraka in the late 1960s, when he had already achieved a heightened sense of Black consciousness and was almost successful in achieving a nationalistic spirit. The play through the

presence of the White family and the Black Criminal and later the crowd of black people depict the despair and sense of loss of control, position and respect of the White as they encounter the Black Criminal.

The play also subverts the theme of assimilation. The Afro-American literature always focussed on the Black's conscious efforts to assimilate the White culture. However, in *Home on the Range*, Amiri Baraka interrogates the concept of assimilation as understood by the Blacks and subverts it by showing the White family trying to assimilate the Black culture in their endeavour to become a part of the Black Nigger Party and dance with them. It also symbolically indicates the end of White sophisticated culture and reign and the rise of the Blacks into power where they will be dictating on the Whites as happened in the White household.

13.7 LANGUAGE, STYLE AND TONE OF THE PLAY

The play, *Home on the Range*, is a unique play of Amiri Baraka that is for the most of the part consists of dialogue that is beyond comprehension. In this play though the Black Criminal and the crowd consisting of Black people utter words that are clear and make sense the language of the White family is completely beyond comprehension. The words that they speak are meaningless and do not help in forming a sentence. Most of the time whatever they utter is monosyllabic and repetitive. Hence, the conversation that they engage into is also meaningless and leaves no clue of any kind of interpretation. The given conversation is one such example of an ambiguous, almost meaningless conversation that altogether defeats the idea of a conversation:

Daughter: Deedee, dodo! Laredgrepe and stooble.

Son: Noik. Dissreal grump!

Father: Yak. Yak. (laughs).

Mother: Dirigible (33)

and again, similar type of gibberish exchange of dialogues continue:

Father: Terring. Gollygolly.

Daughter: Ahhhhhhk. Bretzel. Mamarama.

Father: Crackywacky. Riprip. Dullongdulux cracks. Dirigible.

Son: Bahl-grepe. Ramona...(33).

The conversation that the White family engages into is so very meaningless that the Black Criminal is left absolutely clueless. His sense of irritation with their meaningless conversation is the most vocal when he screams,

Criminal: What the hell's wrong with you? Goddamn idiot, back up. and when the father replies saying, "Yiip, Vachtung. Credool. Conchmack. Vouty", the Criminal cries out, "What kind of shit is this? What the fuck's wrong with you people?" (33).

Though the words leave no clue of any kind of emotions that the White family possesses, Amiri Baraka's direction in parenthesis does the needful. The action words depicting their emotions and feelings leave sufficient clue to interpret the condition of the White family in the presence of the Black Criminal. It is only through the playwright's direction in parenthesis like (Rest of the family now up and moving concerned toward door. Are frozen when they see father and daughter under the Black criminal's gun) (33) that the readers/audience come to know about the fear that the White family is experiencing under the gunpoint of the Black Criminal.

Through the exchange of some incongruous monosyllabic sounds and words the play sets various types of tones. *Home on the Range* is a one act play, the action of which spans from one evening to next day early morning. However, in such a short span of time the play switches between that of authority and command to that of shock and surprise and again from that of helplessness and despair to a tone of accomplishment and satisfaction. If the utterances of the father, "Vataloop, Lurch, Crench. Crench" and Baraka's stage direction indicate his fear and anger, his utterances, "I was born in Kansas City in 1920. My father was the vice-president of a fertilizer company..." (33) in the latter part of the play as he lies on the floor evoke a sense of satisfaction and contentment in the Black Criminal.

13. 8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SONG AND DANCE

Amiri Baraka in *Home on the Range* had introduced a song and a dance that play a very significant role in reinforcing the theme of the play. Like his many other plays, song and dance has become an integral part of the play and indicates at a vital turn that is exclusive of this particular play. Dance in Amiri Baraka's plays has a ritualistic significance. Like the play, *Slaveship*, dance in *Home on the Range* highlights the roots of African culture and its significance in the lives of the Negros.

The Black Criminal who has entered the White family with the objective of looting, while taking control on the White family members, starts humming the beautiful and melodious song, "America the Beautiful", written and composed by Katherine Lee Bates. This beautifully American patriotic song not only depicts the great beauty of America but also the spirit attached with the land. The Black Criminal, though started with it, quickly switches over to another very powerful song, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" composed

and sung by the Blacks. It was embraced as the Black National anthem. The song is a prayer of thanksgiving of fruitfulness and freedom. The Black Criminal probably sings this inspirational song to draw inspiration from its powerful lyric and organise his objectives of gaining prominence in White culture by overturning the power struggle. The song also embodies Afro-Americans' desire to break free from the slavery that they had been conditioned to think and internalise as encrypted on their fate. Therefore, when the Black Criminal sings this song, he not only tries to motivate himself to achieve his objective with which he has visited this place but also indicates a remarkable twist that he is about to bring. The Black criminal by insisting and almost forcing all the members of the White family to sing this Black National Anthem, actually tries to highlight on the role reversal of the Whites that he is trying to achieve. The Whites' singing of this song can be symbolically treated as their acceptance and assimilation of the African culture; a move that actually brings their culture and power related with it towards a fading end.

The Black Nigger Dance too emphasises on the slow but subtle acceptance of the Black culture by the White family. Dance is an essential part of Afro-American culture. It signifies the inversion of the normative trend where the Blacks tried to assimilate the culture of the Whites to make some space for themselves in the society. The fact that the Head of the family and his daughter is so absorbed and possessed by the charm of the dance that they get lost dancing it for hours signify their gradual loss of power. The dance in a way is symbolic of the fall of the whites and the rise of The Blacks. Thus, the dance serves two vital functions. First, it invites the members of the audience to act out the aggression and violence. Secondly, with its unifying force, it also celebrates the spiritual restoration of the Black criminal and the Black crowd. The final scene suggests that the primal energy of the Afro-American Black people is in the process of being reasserted. The song, 'Lift every Voice and Sing' and the Nigger dance actually help the readers to identify Amiri Baraka as a rebel writer with revolutionary aims and objectives and his play, *Home on the Range* as one of his revolutionary plays.

Hence, the music and dance in the Nigger party can be interpreted as a form of protest as it subverts the normative notion of assimilation of American culture and celebrates Black Nationalism.

13.9 HOME ON THE RANGE AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF REVOLUTIONARY THEATRE

The play, *Home on the Range*, depicts the attitude of a Black burglar towards members of a White family. Baraka demonstrates his continuing awareness of the newest theatrical modes in this play. In this play the objectives of “the revolutionary theatre” are fully realized. There is no definite plot in the play. The playwright uses very little of moving speech and there is total absence of steady dialogue. All the theatrical elements are set towards creating an “atmosphere of feeling”. The gibberish communication, the song and nigger dance party symbolize the future of the Blacks. It also symbolizes a step towards a more liberated soul and independence that the Blacks crave for. The ultimate scene with the head of the White family lying flat on the ground trying to recollect his glorious past and the Black girl announcing the dawn of a new day is not only symbolic of the new future but also speaks a lot about the mind of the playwright, Amiri Baraka. The play through its short but evocative use of words, characters, setting and scene set the tone of a revolutionary play.

13.10 CONCLUSION

The play, *Home on the Range*, is an excellent study of Afro-American play and the revolutionary types of plays that Amiri Baraka excelled in. It also gives a glimpse of the socio-cultural and political background of the Afro-American existence amongst the Whites. The play while focussing on the feelings of a Black burglar about a white family actually attempts to depict, though very subtly, the attitude of the Blacks towards the White. Through the interaction of the Black Criminal with the White, the playwright endeavours towards opening a new window to the future of the Black community.

13.11 QUESTIONS

- i. Assess Amiri Baraka’s *Home on the Range* as a strong statement in African American protest.
- ii. Examine Amiri Baraka’s *Home on the Range* as a representative of the Revolutionary Theatre.
- iii. Critically discuss the themes of the play, *Home on the Range*.
- iv. Discuss the symbolic significance of the song and dance in the play, *Home on the Range*.

- v. Consider Amiri Baraka's play *Home on the Range* as an exploration and a critique of absurd theatre.

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