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**VASANTA COLLEGE FOR WOMEN**

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# **VASANT SAHASTRADHARA :**

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**(Pedagogy and Performance: From Text to Stage)**

**Editor**

**Prof. Alka Singh**

**Principal**



अप्य दीपो भव

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## EDITORIAL

In the Western tradition, the distinction between drama and theatre is a comparatively recent phenomenon. While the word ‘play’ is used in the sense of literary composition, ‘drama’ is generally associated with ‘theatre’, their differing emphases evident from the different root words from which they originate. Also, in the Western tradition, drama, especially tragedy, is the imitation of action which is basically external. This is quite different from the Indian tradition where the imitation is internal (*bhavas*). In the Indian tradition, there is no clear-cut distinction between drama, theatre and performance. In the *Natyashastra* too, performance and drama are inseparable because the body movements/ dances/enactments become the medium for the expression of the *bhavas*. There is thus a disconnect to be addressed when dealing with Western and Indian understandings of the terms.

There is also a tussle regarding authority. Due to its commercial aspect, theatre, for some, is a vacuous and trivial enterprise while drama has a transcendental element giving the dramatist a God like status. For example, in colonial India, Shakespeare’s projection as a colonial icon existed side by side with theatre in practice, which was mostly a copy of cheap melodramas, drawing room comedies etc., performed with an amateurish cast. For many others though, ‘drama’ becomes one of the several components of the composite art form called ‘theatre.’

Drama can be in the form of a prose or verse composition delineating a story full of human emotions and conflicts. But when it is performed on stage with actors donning the roles of the characters in the text, the text becomes more than just mere words on a page. A production involves sound, lights, design and performance and, crucially, an audience responding to all this. The two-dimensional structure, which can also be subjective or abstract at times, thus transforms into a concrete, three-dimensional one as the performers bring the literary text to life. This shift from the hierarchical model, where the dramatist is at the apex with the director interpreting his/her intention on stage, is aptly pointed out by theatre critic Hans-Thies Lehmann through his term “post-dramatic theatre”. He proposes to shift the gaze from the writer to other theatre-makers – like collaborators, directors, acting cast members, technical crews which may consist of lighting, sound, set and costume designers – whose contributions are equally important.

Spectators are an integral part of the theatre, but in most cases, they do not directly participate or play an active role in it. However, there are certain forms of theatres both in the East the West where spectators become a part of the performance, like Brecht’s “epic theatre” or performance of the traditional *jatra* or *palagaan*. In an attempt to redress the minimized role of audiences in the traditional theatre, Augusto Boal developed a theatrical method which attempted at transforming audiences into active participants in the theatrical experience. For him, this method of turning spectators into “spect-actors” would not only allow spectators to perform



actions that are socially liberating but also lead to a reflective and evaluative discussion of various socio-political issues.

While many critics are of the opinion that performance is one of the many aspects of theatre, performance studies theorists look at the issue differently. Richard Schechner is of the view that theatre is just a genre of performance, similar to a sport like baseball or football, which are narratives of performance containing certain elements like mythical journey or class consciousness, or wrestling, which too is characterized by theatricality. “All the world’s a stage, [a]nd all the men and women merely players”, as Shakespeare put it. This all-encompassing nature of performative theory brings the aspect of performativity out of realms of theatre and connects it to the everyday life – from issues of gender politics to the analysis of various strategies of resistance.

The present theatre issue-2 of the Journal is an outcome of the seven day workshop organised by Department of English, Vasanta College for Women, Rajghat on “*Pedagogy and Performance: From Text to Stage*” from 12 to 18 November 2018. The Workshop was an attempt to initiate participants into the writing, reading and staging of drama, both theoretically and practically. In this second issue of theatre volume, a diverse range of topics are covered from contemporary drama, women dramatists, classical and modern dramatical texts to theatre practices in ancient folk performances and incorporation of yakshagana in modern plays in India to the current theatrical discourses.

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# Re-Drawing Boundaries of the Canon: Indian English Women Dramatists

Anita Singh\*

Theatre being a public space and given the understanding of the way women have been isolated from many domains that fall into public space, the lack of presence of women in Indian English drama does not come as a surprise. Writing in English has its own snags for not being the language of masses but that of the urban elite, for being the language of the colonizers hence the concomitant reservations and also not being a commercially viable medium. And writing as women for stage is also attended with a host of troubling issues. Even as actors/performers, women have not been a part of theatrical performances till around nineteenth century. This paper would be a partial documentation of the female dramatists writing in English in India. It proposes to examine the complex interplay of writing as women and the impetuses behind choosing to write in a language not ones own. The dearth of adequate numbers of plays by women impedes their standing in the canon. A fraction of plays by them have been certified as 'standard' works that are published, anthologized, taught and produced.

The pedagogical interest in theatre practiced by women has not been well documented or intentionally overlooked. An attempt at understanding this absence has been made by Sue-Ellen Case in her book *Feminism and Theatre* (1988) that explores women's exclusion from theatre history as the chief cause for the unavailability of plays by women. Undoubtedly the undercurrents of Indian English plays written by female dramatist are attentive to gender issues, they interrogate the relationship of women to nationalism, myths, sexuality and modernity in the dramatic sphere. These dramatists in their own ways represent a variety of positions and perspectives. Helen Keyssar views that in 'women theatre' womanist scripts and productions are characterized by the projection of the 'consciousness' and the 'condition' of women as women.

Micheline Wandor finds that women have been more in evidence as playwrights at moments of social and cultural change. The preponderance of work on theatre were "written and produced by women with some degree of political intent, in the wake of the modern women's liberation movement" (Goodman 22). The arrival of feminism in India in the late 1960s fortuitously combined with a liberalization of theatre practice to pave the way for challenge and experiment.

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**Doesn't my narrative have just as much right to truth as yours?**

**Myth and Innovation in Post independence Drama**

For women dramatists to write for theatre has in some ways been to protest against the establishment and all conventional thinking. They have long recognized and exploited the fact that classical myths constantly reappear in different forms, shaping the discourse of literature in highly distinctive way. To face myth as a woman writer is to rehearse one's own colonization or "iconization" through the materials one's culture considers powerful and primary. The refiguring of myth in this century by Snehalata Reddy, Uma Parameswaran, Mallika Sarabhai and Gowri Ramnaryan represents their participation in a historical process of identity formation as well as their struggle to transform the asymmetry of gender hierarchy.

Snehalata Reddy (1932- 1977), the Kannada actress-activist was the co- founders of the amateur theatre group the Madras Players in 1960. She aimed to create a "counter culture" by renegotiating the boundary between the genders. In her play "Sita" she focuses on the heroine of the *Ramayana*. Unlike the epical Sita, this Sita rejects Rama, his *dharma* and his order for the test of her chastity through trial by fire. Reddy's Sita does not let this incident remain at a personal level rather she gives it a universal significance, "History has never recorded the whole truth - it has always projected those in power – never the downtrodden - always the powerful" (Reddy 8). And finally Reddy transforms her to a representative figure "fighting for her self respect" (8). Rama wants her to perform this demeaning fire ordeal to save his kingship. Sita overpowered with anger indicted Rama,

It's your pride that hurts you  
to take me back. Even if it's true that Ravana  
violated me, if you truly love me, don't I  
deserve your love and comfort now more than  
ever? If you loved me, wouldn't your love be  
great enough to wipe away my humiliation and  
pain? (4 – 5)

In a different vein she even pleads with him,  
Come away, Rama! Give up this kingship.  
Give up these narcissistic dreams of greatness.



This vanity. Let's go back to the forest. I'll  
teach you to love again. I'll show you the  
wonders of love. (6)

Sita draws attention to the power politics inherent in every rung of life. Posterity  
will ignore the movements, which questions the pillars of injustice. And at times  
injustices are meted out in mask of justice:

But will they talk about my humiliation  
and suffering? No, they won't.

Because you scribes and  
Valmiki's will rewrite history as you like it!

The rest will be expunged! (7)

And Reddy's Sita in her final decree castoffs Rama,

It's I who reject  
you! I reject you as husband, as lover – and I  
reject you above all as the father of my unborn  
children – and I go to my doom – gladly! –  
with glory in my heart ! – but not for you! –  
but for Ravana! (8)

This Sita goes beyond social conventions and focuses on her life – her needs,  
necessities, wishes, fancies, desires and her identity above all.

Uma Parameswaran a poet, playwright, and short-story writer was born in Madras. She  
studied American Literature at Indiana University completing her Masters in Creative  
Writing. She did her Ph.D. in English at Michigan State University in 1972 and was a  
Professor of English at The University of Winnipeg. She is also the recipient of the  
Smith-Mundt Fulbright Scholarship. She is conversant with the experiences of South  
Asian Women in Canada as she has been the two-time chair of the Status of Women  
Writers Committee of the Writers' Union of Canada, member of the Margaret Laurence  
Chair of Women's Studies, and has sat on board of Immigrant Women's Association of  
Manitoba.

Her play “Sons Must Die” centers on the experiences of three women in the Partition of  
1947. The play is inflected by her interest in Greek tragedies, containing a chorus and

stylized language of the verse. Other plays: “Meera” in 1971, “Sita's Promise” in 1981, “Dear Deedi, My Sister” in 1989 (first prize in the Caribe play writing contest, 1989) and “Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees” in 1998. They were collected into *Sons Must Die and Other Plays* and published in 1998 as a part of the South Asian Canadian Literature Series (SACLIT), of which Parameswaran is the general editor. Her volume of poetry, *Trishanku and Other Writings* (1987) is also included in the SACLIT series. She published a collection of essays written between 1982-1992 titled *SACLIT An introduction to South-Asian-Canadian Literature* in 1996 centering on the South Asian diaspora in Canada. She founded PALI (Performing Arts and Literatures of India) for the purpose of introducing various aspects of Indian culture to not only the Indo-Canadian youth of Winnipeg but also to the community at large.

Her two dance dramas, “Meera” and “Sita’s Promise” performed in Winnipeg, are sourced from the *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. At the same time, both these plays blend in a sense of modernity and the Canadian experience through myth and dance and uses modern English prose. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, the main characters in the *Ramayana*, during their forest exile find an injured Arctic tern that has gone adrift in its northern migration. They decide to take it back to its home; they travel northwards through India to the Himalayas, where Jatayu, the holy eagle, brings them to the tern's home. The native children dance for Sita and ask her to stay with them. Sita says she must go but promises them that she will come again, "to this lovely land of lakes, blue skies and snow. I, through my people, shall surely come again, and we shall build our temple and sing our songs with the children of all the different lands who make this their home."(Parameswaran) In "Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees," her subject matter is the new generation of Indo-Canadians, children of immigrants raised in Canada. By her writings we are not only constantly conscious of the South Asian experience, but also of the melees in life that make us all human.

Gowri Ramnarayan is a playwright and theatre director in Chennai. She has a PhD in comparative aesthetics by researching the role of emotion in art. She worked as Deputy Editor with the national daily newspaper The Hindu (1989-2010), and served for over a decade as vocal accompanist to legendary Carnatic classical vocalist MS Subbulakshmi. In 2005 Ramnarayan founded JustUs Theatre Repertory. JustUs Repertory includes “Dark Horse” (2005), “Rural Phantasy” (2006), “Flame of the Forest” (2007), “Water Lilies” (2008), “SivanaiPatri/Speaking of Siva” (2008), “Peacock Blue” (2009), “One Day in Ashadha” (2009), “Mathemagician” (2010), “Avalum Nokkinal/Through Sita’s Eyes” (2010), “Sarpa Sutra” (2010, 2011), and “Land of the Free”(2011).

Both “Dark Horse” and her other play “Rural Phantasy” have won critical acclaim. Her play “Dark Horse” won two national awards (Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards)

in 2007 for Best Innovative Music and Special Commendation, Best Play. “Mathemagician” was nominated for the Edinburgh Evening News Award when staged at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2010. Her two new productions are “Yashodhara” and “Night's End”, both produced in 2012.

Gowri’s “Yashodhara” was first staged for The Epic Women Conference curated by Anita Ratnam for the Kartik Fine Arts and Arangham Trust. In “Yashodhara”, Gowri explores the nature of relationships. Prince Siddharta leaves behind his wife Yashodhara and son and embarks on a spiritual quest. Bharata Natyam dancer Mythili Prakash offers a stirring portrayal of a grief stricken Yashodhara abandoned by her husband and searching for answers within the palace ramparts. “Dark Horse”, is based on ten poems of Arun Kolatkar, here the poet is in conversation with the journalist, and the poems are animated in performance to unravel several questions about the role of art as protest, prophecy, transcendence and solace (Ramnarayan). “Sarpa Sutra” is a retelling of a lesser known legend from the *Mahabharata* it can be understood in several contexts and issues that plague us now: genocide, wars, social inequalities, gender issues, human greed, afforestation and environmental questions of the survival of indigenous races.

“Night’s End”, a play written, designed and directed by Gowri, starts and ends with *asloka* from the *Mahabharata*. The story, woven around the protection of tigers, is also that of Krishnan Nair, born in a family of Kathakali artists in Kerala, now working as a forest guard in a tiger sanctuary in Rajasthan. Apart from Krishnan Nair, there is only one other character on stage, tribal girl Chandni. Soliloquies unfold as Nair speaks his mind to the injured bird he is nursing, and Chandni to the idol of her family goddess, and later to an ant. The playwright knits the trials faced by the forest department and life’s sorrows seamlessly into this storyline.

Mallika Sarabhai (1954) is an activist and performer from Gujarat. She is the daughter of classical danseuse Mrinalini Sarabhai and renowned space scientist Vikram Sarabhai. An accomplished Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam dancer, she is also known for her contributions in the fields of theatre, television, film, writing and publishing. Mallika’s role of Draupadi in Peter Brook’s play *The Mahabharata* won her many accolades. Along with her mother, she manages the *Darpana Academy of Performing Arts* located at Ahmedabad. In 1989 she performed the solo theatrical work, *Shakti: The Power of Women*.

“In Search of the Goddess” rewrites the myth of Draupadi and Savitri. The play looks at how women are stereotyped into Goddesses or minions and pigeonholed in society. It combines classical dance, storytelling and mime to explore the perception of Shakti. Draupadi in the *Mahabharata* is looked up as a prototype of sacrifice. Sarabhai attempted to see Draupadi with a ‘non-male prism’. In Sarabhai’s text this modern

Draupadi finds expression for her anger. Her anger starts with the decision of her marriage taken by father and brother who arranged for a tournament:

Not mine the decision, whom to

Marry

My heart was pledged to a bow and

Arrow

My life an offering to the shooter of

The fish. (2).

The winner gets Draupadi as the prize. Thus she is handed over to Arjuna as a prize and enters into polyandrous relationship of marriage. Besides giving a raw deal to Draupadi, mythologies deface the lives of other goddesses. A glaring example of such imaging is that of Sati Savitri. Savitri, the daughter of the king Asvapati tied her wedding knot with her self-arranged bridegroom, Satyavan, devoid of the warnings of Naradmuni that Satyavan's life would end on the completion of one year of their marriage. With the arrival of Yama on that ill-fated day, Savitri defies him and wins back her husband's life. Sarabhai's play reconsidered Savitri's long-accepted representation and redefines the notion of 'sati'. Her Savitri calls those men who worship her—and burn widows at their dead husband's funeral pyres—liars and manipulators. Goddesses were created to suit the necessity of the patriarchal politics. For women, Sarabhai advocates fostering the power of *Shakti* within them to thwart this dominant androcentric milieu, and thereby create a democratic world.

Mallika Sarabhai's one-woman dance-drama called "Sita's Daughters" is a feminist reconstruction of the medieval Sita into a modern Sita. She incorporates the Brechtian-feminist outlook to connote herself not "to-be-looked-at-ness" rather to "looking-at-being-looked-at-ness" or more commonly "lookingness". In introducing her performances she sets her aim, "I'm here to talk to you about women" (Sarabhai 1). In this play, Sita describes Rama as: "the delicate prince who needed my support in coping with life in the forest; the weak man who had to gather an army to fight his battles; a chauvinist who needed proof of his wife's virtue; a king who fails in his duty as a husband" (2). Sarabhai's text makes use of feminist *gestus* during her performance, tracing the moments which "explain the play, but... also exceeds the play" (Diamond 53) to show how the text creates counter-histories in which the past and the present coexists side by side. In her reading Rama's suspicion and seeking of proof of Sita's fidelity becomes a "paradigmatic instance of injustice" meted out to women. The play begins with a sharp injunction:

Who was she, who was Sita?’ (1)

To be followed by another embargo:

‘Was she the one burnt by Rama, was she the one rejected by Rama? (1)

The feminist politics and counter-historical poetics rampant in these play-texts lend themselves to complicated analysis. These plays can further be read as instructive, analytical theatre; inviting the participatory play of the spectator, and the possibility for which Brecht most devoutly wished, that significance (the production of meaning) continue beyond play's end, congealing into choice and action after the spectator leaves the theatre. Situating these plays beyond the proscenium arch on to the social cultural space acknowledges and works to make explicit the feminist politics implicit in such playwrights' work, as well as offering a means for feminist critics to engage with these plays' complicated use and re-writing of history, memory and the politics of gendered/inscribed body.

### **Body Blows: Social Plays of the 1990's**

By the '90s, urban English theatre staged social plays, experimental plays, physical theatre and the women dramatists' intervention in the scene enriched our understanding for reassessing patriarchal ideology and culture and for articulating and defining an equitable gender relations. To do theatre for these modern dramatists like Manjula Padmanabhan, Dina Mehta and Poile Sengupta has been to protest against violence, injustice, and ignorance, to assert values that help survive on the terrestrial plane and concomitantly to transcend to higher levels of being.

Manjula Padmanabhan (1953) is an artist, illustrator, cartoonist, playwright, novelist, journalist and children's book author. She has illustrated twenty-four books for children including her own novels for children, *Mouse Attack* and *Mouse Invaders* (Macmillan Children's Books, UK, 2003, 2004). Apart from writing newspaper columns she also created comic strips and has had a long running cartoon strip, *Suki*, an Indian female comic character, which was serialized as a strip in the *Sunday Observer* (Bombay, 1982-86) and later the *Pioneers* (New Delhi, 1991-97). Her books include *Hot Death, Cold Soup* (Kali for Women, 1996), *Getting There* (Picador UK, 1999) is a semi-autobiographical novel about a young woman illustrator in Bombay. *This is Suki!* (Duckfoot Press, 2000), and She has authored a collection of short stories, called *Kleptomania* (Penguin Books India, 2004). Her most recent book, published in 2008, is titled *Escape*.

Her much acclaimed play "Lights Out! (1984) was first performed in 1986 by Sol Theatre Company at Prithvi Theatre, Bombay. Lights Out! displays the savagery of



gang rape of a slum woman while the upper middle class people savor a voyeuristic pleasure from it and to their utter inhumanity, they even forget to make an attempt to stop it, instead they make a tea-table discussion of it. The entire play passes through an ongoing debate, which bares the urban apathy towards rape and ensuing dehumanization. The play makes no mention of the word 'rape', it is only expressed through clues and some bizarre sounds like 'screaming', 'high-pitched', hysterical', 'horrid and gurgly', 'rasping'. Throughout the first two scenes, the characters Leela, Bhaskar, and Mohan all avoid the direct conversation of a gang rape and hence, their indecisiveness impedes them from taking any action. The conflicting dialogues and the rising anxiety builds the crisis. The playwright succeeds in creating an ambience of tension and dilemma that underlines the fear and the communal apathy upon which gang rape and violence thrive.

Her next plays "Hidden Fires" (2003), a series of monologues engage with the issue of communal violence and the ensuing loss of human lives. Other plays are "The Artist's Model" (1995) and *Sextet* (1996) consisting of six short skits. Her play, "Harvest" (2003), was selected from 1470 entries in 76 countries for the Onassis Prize for Theatre in 1997. "Harvest" is a futuristic play based on the contractual business of body-organs from third world donor to that of an American customer Ginni. It deals with a plethora of issues facing the un-developed world such as poverty and disease. In her article, Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest: Global technoscapes and the international trade in human body organs*, Gilbert asserts that the play focuses on "the global spread of late capitalist technology [and it's] significant risks...Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*, locates these risks as intensely intimate and yet thoroughly social through a chilling drama about transnational flows in two distinct but related areas; biomedical technology and digital technology including virtual reality." (Gilbert 123-30). The play is about a young man, Om who enters in a contract with the organ selling company Interplanta in order to make money for his impoverished family, only to discover that his and his families lives would change forever, being ruled and watched over by an all American blonde called Ginni. The play follows Om and his family and their struggle to keep their identity and sanity. In the Futuristic techno setting of the play there is much evidence of dehumanization, orientalism, capitalism, post-colonialism and globalization creating a dystopia in which human live in constant threat of robotic panopticism.

Dina Mehta (born 1961) is a Parsi novelist and an award-winning dramatist, her play "Brides are not for Burning" received an international award from the BBC in 1979, "Getting away with Murder" (2000) and "Brides Are Not for Burning" (1993) are full of complexities of modern life. Both these plays consist of a well organized plot in

which characters have convoluted lives due to abusive childhood, gender hierarchy at workplace, infertility, amniocentesis, female feticide, dowry deaths and so on.

“Getting away with Murder” explores the tension and experiences of three women lives. Central of the play is the looking back to personal hazards of three friends: of which the most shocking one is the unspoken trauma of juvenile sexual abuse of Sonali. Play begins with Sonali’s pregnancy and her insistence for amniocentesis to check the sex of embryo. The play’s denouement is revelation and resolution of the conflict in the lives of the women. “Brides are not For Burning” begins with the news of the death of Laxmi. The play showcases how women passively bear the tortures and humiliation in the name of protecting the ‘izzat’ or ‘samman’ of the family and after marriage the sneers and insults of in-laws for not being able to gratify their demands. However both these plays employ *deus ex machina* in the form of human intervention to find easy solutions by offering a happy ending to its female protagonists with their inequalities and troubles ironed out.

Poile Sengupta was born in 1948 as Ambika Gopalakrishnan. She is one of the promising English playwrights in India today also known as writer for children. She completed her undergraduate studies and MA in English Literature from Delhi University and later did a course in Children’s Literature at Carleton University, Ottawa. She has taught at school and college levels; served as an educational, communications, market research, and language skills consultant; and is a well-known theatre person. She has her own group, Theatre Club, in Bangalore, and has acted in plays and in the award winning film *The Outhouse*. She has written columns for children in *Deccan Herald*, Bangalore, *The Times of India*, Bangalore, and in *Midday*, Mumbai. Work from the *Deccan Herald*, was published in two volumes *Role Call* (New Delhi: Rupa and Co. 2003) which has been translated into Indonesian, and *Role Call Again* (New Delhi: Rupa and Co. 2003). In 1968, she began “A Letter to You”; a humor column for the children’s magazine *Children’s* that ran for nearly three decades. Her children’s stories have been included in important anthologies published by Puffin, Tulika, and Target. In 1991 a collection of her poetry, Writers Workshop, Calcutta, published *A Woman Speaks*. *Keats was a Tuber* (1996), *Collages* (1998), *Samara’s Song* (1999), *Alipha* (2001), and *Thus Spake Shoorpanakha, So Said Shakuni* (2001). Her husband Abhijit Sengupta has directed most of her plays. Some of her plays like *Mangalam*, *Thus Spoke Shoorpuakha, So Said Shakuni*, and *Alipha* have been directed by Joy Michael for Yatrik on the Delhi stage. In 2008, *Samara’s Song* was short listed for the Hindu Metro Plus Playwright Award.

As a playwright, her first full-length play, “Mangalam”, won the award for the most socially relevant theme in The Hindu-Madras Players play scripts competition in 1993

and was later published by Seagull in *Body Blows* (Kolkata: 2000). Special mention was made for *Keats was a Tuber* at the 1996 British Council International New Playwriting Competition. She received a Senior Fellowship of the Department of Culture, Government of India, in 1999-2000 to write plays for children. Her anthology of one act plays for children, *Good Heavens!* was published by Puffin in (2006). She has also written a full-length children's musical *Yavamajakka!* (*Yavamajakka* is the name of an imaginary village, in a four-line *Jataka* story) (Puffin 2000). She believes that children should be introduced to theatre early, drama teaches and is therapeutic. Her plays include: *Mangalam* (1993), *Inner Laws* (1994), *A Pretty Business* (1995).

“Mangalam” was first performed by Playpen at Guru Nanak Bhavan, Bangalore. Issues dealt with were domestic violence and girlhood sexual abuse. Act I with three scenes is a play within a play and the audience of the play becomes the characters we meet in Act II. The situation of the watchers of the play appears not to be very different from the play they were previously viewing. *Mangalam*, the character in Act I, was a victim of rape, and Sumati the viewer [in the first act] in Act II, is, in turn, the victim of molestation. The play showcases that violence against women cuts across economic, cultural, age, and class groups. The two modern, educated families in the play as the play within the play are touched by abuse. Play within a play technique is used to underscore a standpoint. Also the idea of using the same characters in both the ‘plays’ is to show how from 1960 to the present modern cosmopolitan family nothing seems to have changed. Structures of oppression are replicated.

Sengupta's next work, “Inner Laws”, explore, lightheartedly the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law (A relationship that in the Indian context is often perceived as being fraught with hostility on both sides). The play is rife with symbolism of nomenclature, with its allusions to mythical characters from great Indian epics like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Bhaagavatam*. The reference to the mythical characters may not be pivotal to the drama that is played out but it does add certain pungency to the situations when connections are forged unconsciously.

“Keats Was a Tuber” was directed by Bhaskar Ghose and presented by Yatrik premiered at the India International Centre. The play is a tirade against the present anglophilic system of teaching English in India. “Thus Spoke Shoorpanakha, So Said Shakuni” [hereafter, *Thus Spake*] is an ambitious play that treats characters from two different epics—the *Ramayana* (the demoness Shoorpanakha who falls in love with and is rejected by Rama) and the *Mahabharata* (Shakuni the uncle of the Pandhava heroes who fights against them). The play elicits sympathy for the “devils” of the epics that are here humanized in depth and detail. The two characters from the different epics meet as travelers at an airport and are named simply Woman and Man. The woman identifies

herself as modern day Shoorpanakha. Narrating the events to the Man in modern idiom:

WOMAN: Anyway there they are in the forest living in a pretty little cottage when this absolutely stunning woman comes along. The two brothers, especially the older one is bowled over. Totally bowled over.

MAN: That's not what I've heard.

WOMAN: Were you there?

She goes on to reveal her desire for Lakshman:

WOMAN: He was alone, standing at the door of his cottage. He....how do I describe him? He was the most desirable man I had ever seen and yet it was not his eyes or lips, or his fingers or his wide shoulders that took away...took away the breath in my throat. It was what happened to me in that instant.

She narrates the ill treatment she suffers at the hands of both brothers:

WOMAN: You know what they did to me...the two brothers...they laughed. Laughed at me. They teased me. Mocked me. The older one said, ask my brother...he might want you...the younger one said...I can't marry without my brother's consent...ask him...They tossed me this way and that, as if...as if I did not deserve any more respect. As if I was a ...a broken plaything (Thus Spake 261).

Woman such as Shoorpanakha are often shown to threaten the male world so they are described as dangerous *rakshasis*, who must be controlled /contained/punished before they can upset the patriarchal set up. When the two characters meet in a contemporary situation another crisis begins to threaten the world. Finally, it is Shoorpanakha who dissuades Shakuni from provoking another blood bath.

Her play "Samara's Song", directed by Ashish Sen and produced and performed by Theatre Club, is as a reviewer in *The Hindu* writes: "powerful play on politics that addresses a gamut of contemporary issues. Above all, it explores the dangerous double face of politics and the biased and prejudiced recording of history. The politics of language, that further accentuates the difference between the powerful and the powerless, is interwoven within the narrative. The names of the principle characters are of cities and towns in different parts of the world, such as Arrah, Mati, Samara, Ashti and so on, that are torn apart by the politics of the coloniser-colonised, State and Stateless and home and homeless". Sengupta's plays are all distinctive, yet one can discern the overarching concern for women's issues—in family, society, political systems, and culture—that informs her plays. Poile Sengupta as an actor understands the requirements of the stage and thereby creates very stage worthy plays.

## **New Generation of Young Female Playwrights**

Coming to twenty-first century we witness the trend of a growing number of young dramatists who are trying to make theatre their full-time profession and who are trying to bring immediacy and relevance to the kind of theatre they aspire for. In 2003, Rage productions collaborated with Paul Smith the then Director West India at British Council with a proposal to build capacity for playwriting in India. They later banded with Royal Court Theatre; this has occasioned a drastic change on the playwriting front in India. This unique theatre program discovers, trains, and presents exciting new playwrights by putting the script at the center of the theatre-making process. Since 2002, the project has uncovered 32 new playwrights to produce 32 contemporary plays. The sourcing and training of the playwrights, and the theatre festivals that follows, is a collaborative effort between the British Council, Royal Court Theatre, UK and Rage Productions. An outcome of such and many more collaborative efforts, training programs and individual spark of the playwrights has been that the playwriting platform has flourished with a host of mushrooming talents.

Ninaz Khodajeea prospective Parsi dramatist has written three plays, which have been produced, and has directed eight professional ventures and also acted in 18 productions. She has a passion for theatre with a graduate degree in English Literature from St Xavier's College, Mumbai and Masters in Theatre Directing from Middlesex University and qualified as an actor at the Herbert Bergh of Studio and Lee Strasberg Institute, New York. Ninaz worked in advertising for over 8 years and was Associate Creative Director, Public is India. She is the founder of 'Unknown Waters,' a London-based arts company dedicated to the creation of international work. Brought up in Mumbai, she received her training with Pandit Satyadev Dubey and Pearl Padamsee, among others. "Insomania" (first produced in Oval House Theatre, London 2004) her first play, was developed by her through the Royal Court Theatre and has been published by Samuel French. This play was not only performed in India, in Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore, but also in London at the Nehru Centre in April 2004, and at the Oval in November 2005. The Arts Council England and the Peggy Ramsay Foundation have supported her work. "Insomania" developed through the Royal court Theatre has four monologues from young theatre actors and a director. The play has as its backdrop the communal riots of Mumbai in 1993 when the city was ravaged by religious riots and bombings. It documents the loss and damage in terms of emotional and physical loss suffered by people at the riots. It attempts to capture the intangible loss these events brought to the emotional lives of the four individuals. "Strangers", developed through a writing residency at Oval House Theatre, London where she was Writer in Residence from July 2005 to March 2006. Khodaiji's intention in this play was of creating a sense of a



journey, which really goes nowhere and attempting to push the boundaries of form. ACE, Peggy Ramsay Foundation, Richmix and Visiting Arts supported her third play “Damage” (April 2013). “Damage” is a performance piece based on a true story. It focuses around an incident of a woman attacked on her doorstep in London. It raises questions as to how can we handle such violence? And what does this show about who we are as humans in contemporary society? And further who is to be imputed the system or the society?

Annie Zaidie (1978) writes poetry, essays, fiction, and scripts for the stage and the screen. She writes in both English and Hindi. Before her foray into theatre, Zaidie worked as a journalist for over a decade, reporting from both urban and rural areas, and continues to freelance for a range of magazines and newspapers including Hindu, Femina, Forbes, and Deccan Herald, Caravan, Mid-Day, Frontline, Elle, Marie Claire, Verve, and Tehelka, aside from a weekly column for the DNA. Her essays, nonfiction, fiction, poems and short stories have appeared in several anthologies, including Dharavi: The City Within (Harper Collins India) Mumbai Noir (Harper Collins India), Women Changing India (Zubaan); Journeys Through Rajasthan (Rupa) First Proof: 2 (Penguin India), 21 Under 40 (Zubaan), India Shining, India Changing (Tranquebar). More of her works have appeared in literary journals like The Little Magazine, Desilit, Pratilipi, The Raleigh Review, Mint Lounge, Indian Literature (Sahitya Akademi) and Asian Cha. She won the first prize for poetry at the 2011 Prakriti festival.

Her first full-length script in English “Name, Place, Animal, Thing” was short-listed for The Hindu Metroplus Playwright Award, 2009. The story is situated in a typical middle-class household, Zaidie sensitively lifts the veil on the strange dynamic between domestic help and the families they work for. Nancy, the girl at the center of the story, has spent all her life working for the Maliks, but never truly belongs. “Name, Place, Animal, Thing” asks those hard questions often ignored in middle-class homes; its very relevance may make many squirm. “I feel very strongly about the way we treat domestic workers in India,” Zaidie says. “We do not think of them as people who perform such vital functions for us. There are a lot of people who prevent their domestic help from getting an education and prefer to keep them in their situations.” Zaidie says Nancy’s character is derived from three different women she knows, while the characters of her employers “have shades of people I know all over the country.”

Her first Hindi play “Jaal” opened at Prithvi Theatre in 2012 as part of the Writers Bloc 3.a drama festival in Mumbai. It is about a policeman on a quest for a missing engineer. “Jaal” touches on political gain and moral responsibility. A radio play, ‘Jam’ was the regional (South Asia) winner for the BBC’s International Playwriting Competition 2011.

Another play 'So Many Socks' (English) opened at Prithvi Theatre in September 2012. It was nominated in several categories including best script, for the prestigious META awards. 'So Many Socks' tells the story of three generations of a Tibetan family in exile and the difficulties faced by families forced to move from their homeland. The play is inspired from a book of poems, *Kora*, written by Tibetan author-activist Tenzin Tsundue, which highlights the problems of Tibetans in exile and offers perspective on the problem of rootlessness faced by Tibetans.

Ayeesha Menon is a frequent playwright for BBC Radio 4 she is twice the recipient of the Sony Radio Academy Awards, UK. Ayeesha is originally from Mumbai but has recently moved to the UK. She has won Sony Radio Awards for best drama for her adaptations of *Q & A* and *The Cairo Trilogy*. Her other adaptations for Radio 4 include *The Mumbai Chuzzlewits*, *My Name Is Red* and *Six Suspects*. Her original feature film *The White Elephant* premiered in the UK at the London Indian Film Festival in 2011.

"Pereira's Bakery at 76 Chapel Road" debuted at the Writers' Bloc festival as part of the Royal Court/Rage Theatre workshops in India from 2010-2011. The script talks about the demise of a bakery in Bandra. It was inspired by a newspaper article about the tenants of a 100-year-old chawl in Bandra that housed a bakery being threatened by land sharks. A story about ordinary people trying to preserve their heritage while the world around them is changing too fast. The bakeries in Bandra are perhaps the last vestiges of an age gone by before it transformed into an upscale suburb visited by people from across the city. The demise of one such establishment led playwright to write a play about the defining landmarks of Bandra.

Irawati Karnik a playwright, theatre director and actor is a fine art graduate from the J J School of Arts. She provoked moralistic debate with her research project titled *Sex, Morality and Sensorship*. Today she is one of the four Marathi playwrights to have been invited to be a part of the Writer's Bloc workshops, co-organized by the Royal Court Theatre, UK. Her current concern is her engagement with examining how the quality of life has transformed with the spurt of different media. She was the recipient of the 2008 Sangeet Natak Akademi youth award. Her first English play "Satellite City" is about a de-addiction group for television junkies. With the Writers' Bloc she got the initial platform she also helped with translation of Marathi plays into English in the Writers' Bloc. She presented her play *Mangutivar Mayasabha* at the Vinod Doshi Memorial Theater Festival. "The play depicts aspects of contemporary life in different layers. The play represents inter generational conflict. She has acted in about eight plays, directed around five odd plays and has written four plays. She has also served as an assistant director to Chetan Datar as well as to theatre veteran, Satyadev Dubey. Her latest stint in the theatre as an actor-director has been with Vijay Tendulkar's one-act play titled

“Goshta”.

Deepika Arwind (1987) Writer and theatre person has acted in many English plays, and made her directorial debut with the play “Nobody Sleeps Alone”.

Like so many other young playwrights, she has chosen to direct her work herself. “Nobody Sleeps Alone” has a small canvas. The play is about three gangsters -- Godfrey, Sarayu and Wazir -- who run a small company together; two small time hoods and a woman who helps them pull off their appropriately small-time 'operations'. The characters move through love, ambition and failure, betrayal and resolution. The play pays attention to lighting and sound design as well as properties. She even has a live musician on stage, which responds improvisationally, sometimes leading, sometimes following the events and the emotions being played out before him. There is an attempt to give voice to as many theatrical languages as possible in this production. "With this play, I wanted to create something inspired by the Hindi cinema of '80s and '90s for the stage," says Deepika. However, a unique element in the play is the incorporation of live music.

The playwright Anupama Chandrashekar is born and based in Chennai. She is a trained playwright, with three masters degrees one from the States as well as an undergraduate degree from Stella Maris, Chennai. Her plays have been staged in India, Europe, Canada and the US. She has also worked as a journalist with the Hindu Business Line.

Her play “Free Outgoing”, directed by Indhu Rubasingham was premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 2007. It was revived at the Royal Court’s main theatre in Summer 2008 and travelled to the Traverse Theatre for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival the same year. “Free Outgoing” was a finalist for the Whiting Award in the U.K. and the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize in the U.S., the first play written by an Indian to be nominated for these awards. “Free Outgoing” raises questions about India's media-crazy society. In a series of compact scenes, a widowed, middle-class mother, Malini, learns that her 15-year-old daughter, Deepa, has allowed herself to be photographed on a cell phone having sex with a boy at her school. The pictures are forwarded on the Internet throughout the nation. Almost overnight, Malini, Deepa and her brother become the focus of frenzied media attention and victims of mob fury outside their modest Chennai flat. Some of the play's characters blame modern Western influences for the rapid changes in morality. In one of the more amusing scenes, a character quotes a psychologist who declares “Indian teenagers are getting...active at a very young age...because they're switching over from *thayirsaadam* (curd rice) to pizza.”

Her next play “Disconnect” directed by Indhu Rubasingham, also premiered at the

Royal Court Theatre. “Disconnect” has been translated and staged in German and Czech languages and had its American and West Coast premieres in 2013 at Chicago’s Victory Gardens Theatre and the San Jose Repertory Theatre respectively. “Disconnect” is about a bunch of young call center workers who work nights, sleep days, put on different personas and accents. It’s about identity in a new India, globalization and our interconnected lives and economies. It is a savage comedy about Indians mimicking Americans at a call-center where they’re driven to persecute credit-card debtors.

Her play for children, “The Snow Queen”, an Indian adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen story, written under commission to the Unicorn Theatre in London, opened for Christmas in December 2011. The play, directed by Rosamunde Hutt, was a tremendous box office success. A remount of the production, produced by the Trestle Theatre, UK, opened the Chennai Metroplus Theatre Festival in 2012 and has toured several cities in India and the UK. Her other plays include “Acid,” originally produced by QTP, Mumbai and later by the Madras Players in 2007 (which she directed), and Closer Apart, produced by Theatre Nisha, Chennai.

Her next play was called “Bay-Sea-Ocean”. Set in the southern-most tip of the country, where a bay, a sea and an ocean meet, it deals with the abandonment of the elderly. The question she raises is that: What happens when a culture that has historically elevated the status of parents to higher than that of god is fast-tracked into a consumerist economy and the old family system crumbles? Whose responsibility is the care of the elderly then?

At present, she is working on a new theatre piece and adapting “Free Outgoing” for a film with Indhu Rubsingham, a director who hopes to develop it for the British Council.

Kalki Koechlin is a graduate in Drama and Theatre Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London, she worked with a theatre company called Theatre of Relativity for two years, where she performed in David Hare’s ‘The Blue Room,’ Marivaux’s ‘The Dispute’ and a devised play ‘The Rise of the Wild Hunt.’ She has acted in Anurag Kashyap’s film *Dev D*. she co-authored the play “Skeleton Woman” with Prashant Prakash and this play won the Metro Plus Playwright Award 2009 instituted by The Hindu for the best original, unpublished and unperformed English script was chosen out of 74 valid entries received from around the country for the Metro Plus Playwright Award.

It is based on an Inuit folktale, an allegorical story about death and love, in a citation; the panel described ‘Skeleton Woman’ as “an imaginatively crafted piece of theatre that intertwines stories in a resonant tale of loss and longing, anxiety and desire.” It added: “Its strongly visual and simple yet oblique performance grammar is not over-determined, providing sufficient room for directors and actors to animate the text with

their own creative impulses.” Commending the “deceptively simple ease” with which the play was written, the citation says: “For its skill in fashioning a complex tale at once common and extraordinary, in a manner that is vitally theatrical, ‘Skeleton Woman’ richly deserves to be the winner of this year’s MetroPlus Playwright Award.”

This quick survey of 21<sup>st</sup> century growing trend of writer-directors clearly shows that theatre is an art form in the present tense, a medium tailor-made to explore the world we live in now. Another very distinct characteristic of this playwriting trend is that added to playwrights’ strong theatrical sensibility there is this prompting from dramaturg, who are well versed in the theatrical arts, who dissect, pull apart, fill out, polish and refuel the plays before they are sent out into the world to find their destiny. These behind-the-scenes machinations extends to re-writing characters, re-structuring timelines, moving scenes around and providing a cultural context.

The flip side could be that there is hardly any state funding for staging plays and fringe groups’ playwrights have to scout for sponsors. There are a few subsidized theatres like Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai, which ensures that small groups can put up their plays at regular intervals at a small cost. Theatre continues to be in the twenty first century still mostly amateur in India. And in this emerging scheme of things a woman playwright’s job and skill-set are the same as a male playwright’s. It is still a fact that fewer female playwrights are staged as compared to men in India, and perhaps across the world. There are fewer women directors in India than men, and hardly any governmental support to theatre. Both contribute to this unhealthy gender imbalance. But, at least in the major metro cities of India, there are signs of some change and things are definitely changing across the nation. In the last five years, we have seen astonishing debuts by women than ever before. Their plays can be seen to symbolize the moment when young female writers recognize that the stages of Indian theatres were theirs for the taking.

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# World Drama is the Way

**Gautam Chatterjee\***

This is the right time. This is the time to have an integral approach, to explore the right perspective towards the world drama in order to understand all kinds and various styles of drama of the world - nation wise, language wise. We already have the eastern vision for drama art, we already practiced the western view to perform on the stage, for almost two and half thousand years, and now, we must develop an integral or single vision for this composite art that can serve everything to the humanity in one single artistic language, for everything is in everything, for human emotion is ubiquitous.

The second half of the last century shows that we have lost mysteries in all arts, especially in performing art. Avant Garde movement couldn't help artistes, on the contrary, as Russian filmmaker Andrey Tarkovsky writes, it destructed the touch of spirituality.

Here we can recapitulate the eastern vision, an insightful way of looking at this art. In Indian or Asiatic dramaturgy, we find twin beginnings. The world of lives and the world of drama, both begin in the same grace simultaneously. To grasp this vision, one must mature oneself to go with the mind of a seer. A seer mind is a universal mind, timelessly functions in all periods, in all genres, in multiple consciousnesses. Like all foundational texts for the evolution of human consciousness, the text of artistic consciousness i.e. Natyaveda by seer Bharata, speaks eternally though in a particular period, formlessly though through forms, and hermeneutically. It invites us to deconstruct the very text in all respects in order to create one's own genre.

Towards the end of Vedic period a new prose style of composition appeared in India. This style is called Sutra style and is characterised by extreme brevity of expressions. Kalpa, one of the six Vedangas, includes four types of Sutras works, namely, Sruta, Grihya, Dharma and Shulba. As we understand the nature of Sutra, we understand the nature of acting, detailed at length in Natyashastra by monk Bharat in 5th century B.C. A sutra has the profound capacity to encapsulate all that is to be in the world. Natyaveda begins with this saying of deities, 'only he is able to understand and assimilate the mystery of Natyashastra or dramatics who is having a monk-like mind (muni maanas).' The deities suggest Brahma to handover the essence encapsulated in formulae to Bharat, the monk. Even they consider themselves as unable to grasp this

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\* Theatre scholar and a recipient of *Nad Vachaspati*

great mystery of art. According to Indian etymology, a monk is one who has deeply practiced silence in the sense of tranquillity, maun in Hindi, and who can have the threefold path of learning viz. shruti, smriti and dhriti (the art of listening, memorising and assimilating respectively) with the thorough understanding of mystic principles (guhya tattva) of Veda. So at first breath, in order to interpret any verse from Natyashastra, one must develop a mind like a monk.

The introducing chapter encapsulates the meaning of the term Natya, saying, this is improvisation of the threefold world of human consciousness in terms of emotion. The entire treatise includes all arts and skills, the artistry to present a beautiful drama. Its parliamentary philosophy flows through text, action and effect, unlike the principal theory of Aristotle i.e. time, place and action. Bharat says in the following chapters that the effect, the aesthetic rapture named Rasa, is intrinsically present in the text. An actor is there to taste it and to improvise it on the stage to offer before the audience. Finally the rasa remains in the heart of the audience, the aesthete, rasika or sahridaya. He says, only a sahridaya can appreciate the rasa of the text, an artistic presentation. He emphasises on actors. Text is in the background and the effect is in the foreground. He does not have any sense of modern day term 'director', but the presenter, prayokta, for there is no need of having a director in a drama group. For Bharat, for Indian dramaturgy, rasa or effect is important to communicate that is sadharanikaran, or mass communication. Here the emotion of tranquillity is the substratum of all eight rasas viz. love, laughter, grief, heroic, wonder, fear, anger and hatred. He explains rasa among rasas, for each includes all other rasas or emotions. Its particular name is Love or wonder because its chief constituent is love or wonder. That is why when the actor laughs or cries on the stage, audience not necessarily laugh or cry at those moments but when the actor shifts his personality mood from laughter to cry, audience engrosses. Here lies the rasa, in-between two established moods, or different emotions. This is not conflict, but the poetic rapture came out of timely impulse as timeless Anand. This is alaukik chatmatkar, or chakit mudra of the audience, the homunculus.

Bharat says, only the artistic genius of a man i.e. pratibha, can improvise an emotion, is actor. All knowledge is remembrance. The mnemonic quality of actor helps him to improvise in the present moment. All other chapters follow the wide dimension of acting incorporate with dance and music. Here acting means to carry towards, is fourfold-acting through limbs and face expressions, through speech, through involuntary emotions and through available properties and paraphernalia. Vachik or Speech links the outer angik and inner satvik. In the initial verses, monk Bharat states myth logically that the first pure dance (nritya) by Shiva is named tandava, the dance

with emotion (nritya) by his power Parvati is named lasya and the coupling state of Shiva and his power is ardhanarishvar that is drama.

Historically, the history of drama art is the history of mankind. The drama art is as old as human civilization. The story of this art, i.e. theatre or drama art begins with the origin of language. Etymologically, the term 'Theatre' is derived from its Greek root 'Theaomai', meaning 'to see', and also from its another Greek verb 'Theoria', meaning 'to be spectacle of'. Similarly the term 'Drama' is derived from its Greek root 'Dran', meaning 'to do', 'to act', 'and to perform'. And interestingly at the same breath, the Sanskrit term 'Karan' is derived from its root 'Kriyn', this is a dhaatu roop, means the same-to do, to act, to perform. That means, the origin of both terms 'drama' (and 'theatre') and 'natya' is same, i.e. to do, to act, to perform. Pre-historic cave paintings of hunting dance and war dance are the evidences of their existence. There are so many cave paintings received by the great art historian and artist Asit Kumar Haldar from several caves like from Kalibanga, from Jogimara. There are so many cave paintings which depict the activities of theatre art, specially focused on dance. So cave paintings are our rich asset to establish the root of Indian folk art, we can go through it. War dance i.e. before the Stone Age or in the Stone Age there we find some evidences of war dances people used to perform as the celebration of victory. In the primary stage of Indian civilization, there was no such distinction as folk and elite art in the field of Indian arts, and that is very interesting, very significant. Because nowadays we divide as the classical art or the refined art, and the folk art or the tribal art. This distinction came with the beginning of class division. Before that, there was no class division, and there was no such distinction between folk art or tribal art and refined or classical art. So no written record of ancient Indian folk theatre has come down to us. Early Sanskrit plays and the first compendium of drama art help a lot to understand. Primarily the term 'Natya' denotes the representation of any emotion or incident through gesture and posture, i.e. dance with the accompaniment of music, both vocal and instrumental. In music, or in the origin of music, we find so many things begin with instrumental music and not with vocal music. We go further in our Vedic studies; we will see that the instruments are very much active in Vedic hymns, Vedic mantra-s, in the sacred syllables, but before that just understand how our folk art or the tribal art exists in our ancient Indian drama art form. So linguistically the words Nritta, Nritya, Natya, Nata and Natak are correlated. We have five technical terms-Nritta and Nritya-that means, if we have only the basic grammar of dance, pure dance, without any emotion, or without acting, that is called Nritta. And then comes Nritya, that means the grammar, the pure dance plus emotion, or the emotional representation. That is called Nritya. And then

Natya, that means dance plus acting. In India we get evidences of dance from pre-historic times what is known as Indus Valley Civilization. We can go through so many sites like Harappan site where we found so many figures and figurines in Bronze and in other metals. We have not yet casted the actual meaning or the intended meaning of the figurine as with the inscriptions, but we can see there the form and the gesture of the figurine.

Bharat says, if we wish to understand music or acting, we must think of abstraction, resonance and improvisation of emotional microtones, i.e. amoortan, anuraran and anukirtan of bhavatmak shruti. In one term, it is bhavanukirtanam, meaning, improvisation of abstraction in terms of serene emotion, musically. This is abhinay. Bharat, for the actor who possesses serene emotion, coins a term 'dheer' and categorises four kinds of actors as dheer lalit, dheer prashaant, dheer uddhat and dheer udaatta. For Bharat, Shiva is the pure dance, the cosmic dance-Nritta, Shakti is lasya, dance with bhav or emotion-Nritya, and the state of Ardhnarishvara, twin sense of Nritta and Nritya is drama-Natya. This is the wisdom of Natyashastra. Now in Tantrik terms (explanation is like that), the pure dance is abstract, formless. It takes form by dint of emotion. This dramatic form is constituted with text, paathya, shabda, and that text itself is Ras. Abhinavagupta states in his Natya Veda Vritti (here commentary does not imply Tika or Bhasya, but vritti), that, text is Rasa, poetry is Rasa. For Bharat and Abhinava both, the essence of abstraction is Rasa. Bharat gives emphasis on the resonance of different shrutis saying, there can be a resonance between the form and the formless. For this, avoiding off-the-cuff kind of statement, he offers an interesting musical experiment named Chatuh Shruti Saarana, or popularly known as Saarana Chatustayi, by using two Vina-s, one is fixed and another is flexible with certain musical notes. In his commentary, Abhinavagupta calls it 'anuvyavasaya'.

Using space means using space as property on the stage. Space on the stage is limited whereas space as imagination is boundless. When an actor does not speak word but emotion, what do the listeners in the auditorium listen to? Naturally emotion. Listening emotion is more effective than watching emotion, as non-verbal gesture speaks more louder than verbal gesture, similarly, sound gesture is effective than word gesture, for a man begins with sound gesture in his childhood. Thus word simply confirms an emotion, because, emotion depends on words, as is stated in the third verse of the chapter fifteen, in the Natyashastra.

Here begins the sense of grasping the essence of abhinay in accordance with Natyashastra, in association with space and music. This is interestingly essential.

Etymologically ‘history’ means ‘this is what happened’ and ‘itihaas’ (iti+ha+as) means ‘this is how it happens’ i.e. the pattern or, the paradigm. That’s why Ramayan and Mahabharat are regarded as itihaas. These are also known as Pancham Veda, or the fifth Veda. Natya Shastra by sage Bharat is also Pancham Veda where we find the essential nature of itihaas and pancham Veda. In the first chapter, sage Bharat states that he has created on behalf of Brahma, the creator, the Pancham Veda with itihaas - sarvashastrarthsampannam sarvashilpapravartakam natyakhyam panchamam vedam setihaasam (sa itihaasam means with itihaas) karomyaham (versa 15). After that, sage Bharat explains the essential characteristics of Pancham Veda on the basis of the characteristics of itihaas, as it bestows upon dharma, artha, kaama, moksha and other important things, as we find the same in Suttanipaata, Chhandogya upanishad and Arthashastra while explaining itihaas. And this is equally interesting to know that, our linguistic activity is immanent in our cognitive faculty. We verbalize as we cognize. This shows the way we can taste the transcendental consciousness with this fact within us. The immanent face of Pure Consciousness is in our reach as is already available in the form of our cognitive faculty to re-cognize the Absolute Consciousness. And that is why we need hermeneutics to understand all these with clarity. To understand the very essence of any ancient text, to find our history and itihaas in accuracy, this is the time to apply this refined vision called hermeneutics.

Eastern vision to introduce a play and to perform it poetically, includes all thoughts developed in modern periods, such as interdisciplinary and anthological. The interesting essence of this discourse is we need not to join eastern thought with the western, but to be aware of this fact that we already have a vision, initiated and introduced in Asia that comprises all thoughts, prevailing in the different minds of different countries on this same beautiful earth. Eastern vision is world drama. There is no way to world drama. World drama is the way. This is the right time to ponder.

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# Theatre and Shakespeare: A Timeless Romance

Sunita Arya\*

When the First Folio of Shakespeare's work was published in 1623, seven years after his death, Ben Jonson, who was a fellow writer, and noted friend of Shakespeare said that the bard was not of an age, but for all time. That statement still remains true today in contemporary times. More than 400 years after his death the works of Shakespeare show little sign of losing their popularity. Rather the reverse, perhaps, in a year when he is repeatedly both re-written and performed in his original state for television and radio, and produced in his entirety by the RSC (Royal Shakespeare Company) at Stratford, with a variety of movies in a variety of costumes and periods. The writings of this country boy from Stratford are legendary. Thoughts and images came so easily from his pen that other writers have found his talent almost like a magician. English had never sounded so beautiful and has rarely sounded that way since. But will this always be the case? Is the status of his writing settled for all time? That is a very tricky question.

Looking back, the past four centuries have been good to Shakespeare. It seems that Shakespeare is as relevant today as ever he was. While the times he lived in might seem very alien to us if we could travel back to them, and his language has a richness that has not survived into the present day, yet human nature does not change and for many that is where the plays appeal lies. Academia has helped fuel Shakespeare's mystique by thoroughly incorporating his works into the standard curriculum for high school and college students. High school students typically read one play each year. At least one class in Shakespeare is required for college English degree. Outside of the classroom, there are movies, ballets, live theater and Shakespearean festivals. Even popular music and television commercials have been built around notable Shakespearean characters like Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet etc. why does Shakespeare's work continue to resonate with each generation? Shakespeare reveals a different face to different cultures and different people at different times. Shakespeare's influence on the English language runs deep. For instance, if you search the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) — the definitive record of the English language — Shakespeare is often identified as the sole

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user or first user of a word or phrase, according to Charlotte Brewer. Shakespearean playhouses have been reconstructed around the world, making it easy to see his dramas performed in complementary settings. For those wishing to access his writings in other ways, there are not only countless printed editions, but also versions available on smartphones and tablets. Read, watch or listen. Your choice. In his 55th sonnet, Shakespeare suggested that his writings could last when other things wouldn't. His "powerful rhyme" would be eternal. But he also realizes, in this poem, that everything changes. Things like "marble," "the gilded monuments of princes" and "statues" will all go away, ruined by history's indifferent hand. Everything decays, and only the "living record" of writing would have the chance to cheat time.

As Renaissance led to Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution to the Digital Age, computers have changed our lives in ways that Shakespeare could not have imagined. What he did imagine was time changing everything, something that has come true for his writing. Since that time, his works have declined in relative popularity, not leveled by the hand of time, but increasingly subject to it. People know his reputation more than his words. Shakespeare will always be with us, of course, but eventually he will be what Geoffrey Chaucer has become: a brilliant author whose works can be read intelligently in the original by few people.

Shakespeare's 454th birthday comes in a brave new world. May his writings live to see his 500th? Characters like Romeo, Hamlet, or Lady Macbeth have become cultural types, instantly recognizable when their names are invoked. As will become clear, the modern versions of these figures often differ significantly from their Shakespearean "originals": a "Romeo" is a persistent romancer and philanderer rather than a lover faithful unto death, a "Hamlet" is an indecisive overthinker, and a "Lady Macbeth," in the public press, is an ambitious female politician who will stop at nothing to gain her own ends. But the very changes marked by these appropriations tell a revealing story about modern culture and modern life. Shakespeare has scripted many of the ideas that we think of as "naturally" our own and even as "naturally" true: ideas about human character, about individuality and selfhood, about government, about men and women, youth and age, about the qualities that make a strong leader. Such ideas are not necessarily first encountered today in the realm of literature - or even of drama and

theater. Psychology, sociology, political theory, business, medicine, and law have all welcomed and recognized Shakespeare as the founder, authorizer, and forerunner of important categories and practices in their fields. Case studies based on Shakespearean characters and events form an important part of education and theory in leadership institutes and business schools as well as in the history of psychoanalysis.

The word "Shakespearean" today has taken on its own set of connotations, often quite distinct from any reference to Shakespeare or his plays. The frequency with which practitioners and theorists of many of the "new" modern sciences and social sciences - anthropology, psychology, sociology - have turned to Shakespeare for inspiration is striking, but not surprising. Ernest Jones, Freud's friend and biographer, the first English language practitioner of psychoanalysis, declared straightforwardly in an essay he began in 1910, revised in 1923, and expanded in the 1940s that Shakespeare was the first modern. Why? Because he understood so well the issues of psychology. "The essential difference between prehistoric and civilized man," Jones argued, was that "the difficulties with which the former had to contend came from without," while "those with which the latter have to contend really come from within," This inner conflict modern psychologists know as neurosis, and it is only by study of neurosis that one can learn the fundamental motives and instincts that move men. Here, as in so many other respects, Shakespeare was the first modern. Thus, for Jones, Shakespeare's use of the soliloquy, the onstage, interior questioning of a character's conflicted thoughts and motives, anticipated the new science of psychoanalysis and Freud's "talking cure."

William Shakespeare has become an important landmark in English literature. In much the same way, one must be familiar with the early days of English literature in order to comprehend the foundation beneath much of more modern literature's basis. Shakespeare's modern influence is still seen clearly in many ways. For example, the success of Shakespeare's works helped to set the precedent for the evolution of modern dramas and plays. He is also credited with being one of the first writers to use any modern prose in his writings; in fact, the growth of the popularity of prose in Shakespeare's time is clearly shown as he used prose progressively more throughout his career. Furthermore, there can be no doubt that Shakespeare was a master of the artistry of the English language. He wrote with such fluidity of thought, word, rhythm, and sound that the work is presented in a complex manner, but is not unintelligible, even for

the inexperienced reader. Often a single line would have several different meanings, each providing us with insight into a character or plot.

Another sign of a truly paramount writer is one who finds even the entire existing vocabulary of his language limiting to his creative consciousness; Shakespeare often did, and so on occasion created his own form of grammar and vocabulary, much of which has since become common use. (A few examples of these would be the words "amazement", "dislocate", "premeditated", "dexterously", "windle", "lackluster," using the masculine singular pronoun—"his" for "its" —now used for poetic effect, and using some nouns as verbs, such as "he chided as I fathered."). Few modern writers have such skill as to create new words which "stick" in our language, or to write in such a way that their words become common usage centuries later. By using just, the right combination of words, or by conjuring just the right image, Shakespeare authored countless passages and entire plays so powerful, poignant, comedic, tragic, and romantic that many are still being routinely memorized and performed today, nearly four centuries later. Yet the beauty of Shakespeare's talent lies not so much in the basic themes of his works as in the ingenuity with which he painted these portraits of love, power, greed, discrimination, hatred, and despair. Queen Elizabeth in the movie *Shakespeare in Love* (1999) decreed that William Shakespeare was the first author to successfully put the very essence and truth of love into words; although only a movie, the decree is nonetheless accurate. It was this truth that he wrote which allowed his plays to attract both courtiers and peasants to the theatres, for the truths of humanity are not specific according to wealth or status. Everyone dreams of having love like Romeo and Juliet; it is for this reason that one of the most famous Shakespearean scenes is the balcony scene.

There can, therefore, be no doubt that substantial knowledge of the works of William Shakespeare is necessary for any education of English literature to be considered complete and well rounded. The extraordinary writing skills with which Shakespeare created his accurate portrayals of human truth have not been rivalled or replicated since his death, nearly four hundred years ago, to simply "skim over" such an integral part of literary history would be to take the innards out of a living, breathing creature. A creature cannot survive incomplete, and literature cannot survive without William

Shakespeare. Shakespeare not only rule the earth but the whole universe. The Bard's reach is cosmic. Shakespeare's reach is universal and cosmic. The planet Uranus has 27 moons, the majority of which are named for Shakespearean characters: Titania, Oberon, Puck (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*); Ariel, Miranda, Caliban, Sycorax, Prospero, Setebos, Stephano, Trinculo, Francisco, Ferdinand (*The Tempest*); Cordelia (*King Lear*); Ophelia (*Hamlet*); Bianca (*The Taming of the Shrew*); Cressida (*Troilus and Cressida*); Desdemona (*Othello*); Juliet, Mab (*Romeo and Juliet*); Portia (*The Merchant of Venice*); Rosalind (*As You Like It*); Margaret (*Much Ado About Nothing*); Perdita (*The Winter's Tale*); and Cupid (*Timon of Athens*). (The two remaining moons, Umbriel and Belinda, are named for characters in Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. Shakespeare's works are emotional, hilarious, pithy. But above all, he was masterful at imbuing his stories and his characters with qualities that audiences and readers identify with — Hamlet's anguish, Ophelia's distress, the enduring love between Romeo and Juliet. In Samuel Johnson's preface to *The Plays of Shakespeare* (1765), he wrote, "His characters ... are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find." Humans still experience love, loss, betrayal, war, humour and tragedy, which gives Shakespeare a foothold in modern times. But above all, he was masterful at imbuing his stories and his characters with qualities that audiences and readers identify with — Hamlet's anguish, Ophelia's distress, the enduring love between Romeo and Juliet. I would approximately say that the themes that Shakespeare's works portray are definitely timeless.

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## Conflict With(in) and With(out): Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* in Context

Manjari Shukla\*

“We do not know very much of the future  
Except that from generation to generation  
The same things happen again and again.  
Men learn little from others' experience.  
The same time returns. Sever  
The cord, shed the scale. Only  
The fool, fixed in his folly, may think  
He can turn the wheel on which he turns.”

- Thomas Becket (Part I, MITC)

T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* is a play in verse about the dangers of temptations on the way to sainthood or to political power. Thomas Becket resisted several temptations coupled with cajolery and threat. He is offered a return to political power alongside King Henry while at the same time he is accused of disloyalty to the nation and his ecclesiastical office and threatened physically. He is tempted with a return to his halcyon youth with his friend Henry, and the concomitant danger of being forgotten by history. As a play based on the actual historical conflict between the Archbishop Thomas Becket of Canterbury and the English King Henry II, *Murder in the Cathedral* explores the relationship between two forms of power: worldly and spiritual. Worldly power is open to change, and the effectiveness of its laws is never guaranteed. In contrast, spiritual power in the play refers to a code of law(s) that spring from God, are eternal, and to a significant degree are beyond human comprehension. *Murder in the Cathedral* explores how people should navigate between these two powers, through Becket's interactions with: (a) The Four Tempters (b) The Four Knights, and (c) In Becket's own evolving understanding of his Martyrdom—his willingness to die for God.

The play is based on the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket by four knights under King Henry II in Canterbury, England, 1170. At the time, the Catholic Church was experiencing significant growth in power in comparison to the English crown, and

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Becket rigorously defended its rights as a political institution, refusing to budge under Henry II's authority. A substantial feud began between the two, almost immediately after Becket was (warily, since he knew his policies as Archbishop would clash with Henry's views about the relation between church and state) appointed to the position of Chancellor by Henry. The feud started when Becket tried to take back land that Henry had possessed from the public of Canterbury—and evolved to disputes over whether the Church or the Crown had the power to punish clergymen found guilty of committing crimes, and over money that Becket refused to hand over to the King. Eventually, Beckett left England discreetly and headed to France, only to return seven years later, when the play begins. Becket and Henry had reached an agreement, and they were to resume a peaceful relationship—however, Becket and the Pope disagreed with the King's decision to have his son coroneted by a church other than Canterbury Cathedral (which was the traditional venue for coronation). The Pope therefore suspended the bishops responsible for the coronation.

At the core of *Murder in the Cathedral* is a contrast between a higher power beyond human comprehension and the earthly realm of everyday human affairs. This realm of human thought is fraught with opposites—with oppositional thinking that pits good against evil, holy against unholy, high against low—while the divine realm of spiritual thinking is concerned with oneness and wholeness that transcends the partial nature of human categories. Becket observes:

“I see nothing quite conclusive in the art of temporal government,  
But violence, duplicity and frequent malversation.”

— **Part I, MITC**

Eternity—the everlasting, indivisible dimension of spiritual unity—therefore, is put into a complex, unfolding relationship with human understanding in the play. Becket explores this dynamic relationship in a few ways. He describes the relationship between acting and suffering as one that humans understand as oppositional, but which, from a higher perspective, is an interdependent whole. He says:

“They know and do not know, that acting is suffering  
And suffering is action. Neither does the actor suffer  
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed  
To an eternal action, an eternal patience  
To which all must consent that it may be willed  
And which all must suffer that they may will it,  
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action  
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still

Be forever still.”

— **Part II, MITC**

Early in the play, he compares the relationship to a wheel that can turn and be still at the same time, with the moving aspect of the wheel representing human conception of the wheel and the unmoving aspect representing the eternal view. Yet, though Becket retains this theological view about the division between eternity and human understanding throughout the play, he nonetheless seems to believe that, by submitting completely to fate through his martyrdom, he can in some sense bypass the partial nature of human understanding and be an instrument of God’s will in the world.

Further, Becket, in the sermon he delivers in the interlude of the play, encourages his audience to understand the quality of saintliness from a divine, and not a human, perspective. He wants the congregation to understand that Jesus’s disciples by no means became saints through any peace they achieved or experienced on earth. Becket says that the peace which Jesus left to his disciples did not “mean peace as we think of it: the kingdom of England at peace with its neighbours, the barons at peace with the king,” for his disciples never encountered this kind of worldly, political peace. Instead, they suffered arduous journeys, torture, imprisonment—very little, if any, earthly comfort or peace. He asks his congregation to consider that the peace which Jesus promised had nothing to do with the everyday realm of human satisfaction, but referred rather to peace from a divine, eternal perspective. He says:

“A martyrdom is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr.”

— **Interlude, Murder in the Cathedral**

The Chorus also demonstrates an appreciation of the radical division between human understanding and eternity. In the beginning of the play, when the Chorus begs Becket to leave and return to France, they say they are facing a fear which they cannot understand, and which is ultimately unknowable; they say that this fear has torn their hearts away, and unskinned their brains as if they were onions—the symptoms of a “final fear which none understands.”(Part I MITC) The play as a whole, therefore, displays an appreciation of some fundamental split between human knowledge and the realm of something higher than the Chorus—a higher realm whose intervention in their lives threatens to split them from and destroy their sense of self.



The Chorus's sense of a difference between human understanding and the higher, more eternal powers of fate persists throughout the play. However, the chorus does undergo a changing relationship with the eternal dimension: whereas they begin the play merely speculating about it—warning that it, “the doom on the world,” will be unleashed upon them if Becket stays—they end the play no longer possessing the comfort of a speculative distance from their fear. The fear has come to fruition – Becket has been killed – and they must truly face it.

Thus, just as Becket appreciates a division between human understanding and eternity, so does the Chorus. The way they deal with that division, however, differs. While Becket is “secure and assured of [his] fate, unaffrayed from the shades”(Part I, MITC)—while he deals with the split between eternity and human understanding through spiritual self-sacrifice to fate—the Chorus is unwilling or unable to adopt a more spiritually nuanced, selfless understanding of the eternal.

The first tempter treats spirituality as a kind of decoration on worldly power—as something that can inspire joy and merriment by bringing happiness to the state and, in the process, fix Becket's conflicted relationship with the king. The second tempter, however, sees spiritual power as utterly ineffectual, and argues that to truly effect change Becket should focus less on religion and return to his former political role as Chancellor. The third tempter sees spiritual power as basically just another form of worldly power—or something that can be put to work to achieve worldly ends that have no spiritual grounding. He argues that Becket should use his role as Archbishop to help empower the lower class of country lords to overthrow the king. The fourth tempter has the opposite opinion of the second: he argues that Becket should devote himself solely to the realm of spiritual power, and shirk the temporal, through martyrdom. Thus, the four tempters all argue for certain ways of how the two forms of power should be thought together or apart.

In the second part of the play, the four knights—representatives of the king and therefore of the king's worldly power—confront Becket. The knights' conception of the relationship between worldly and temporal power leads them to call Becket a traitor: they think he's betrayed the worldly authority of the English crown through an overzealous loyalty to the spiritual authority of the Pope (who has condemned the king). The knights therefore see worldly and temporal power as separate entities that exist in a kind of natural opposition, an opposition where both powers to some extent restrict one another. The knights (and, by extension, the king) believe that Becket has pushed too far in supporting the Pope's condemnation of the English king; they thus believe he has become a traitor.

Both political and religious loyalty (loyalty to God) are examined in the play, as well as the way those loyalties do or don't inspire guilt. When Becket found himself caught between serving his king as chancellor or serving the Church, he chose the Church. He also refused to acknowledge the prince's coronation. In the play, Becket defends his actions towards the king by claiming that it was not he but the Pope (and therefore God, since the Pope was believed to be infallibly speaking for God) who has made these decisions, but the furious king does not accept this reasoning. By extension, it's clear that the king does not see Becket's loyalty to God as being able to coexist with his political loyalty to the king. The king thinks solely in terms of political loyalty, and can only view Becket as a traitor. The king does not, for example, see Becket's political refusal to obey as something that might help the king to better align himself with the Church or with God—he's focused solely on his own political power.

The king's knights, meanwhile, also describe their actions in terms of loyalty. When they turn to the audience to justify their murder of Becket, the knights say that they were simply following the orders of the king. They did not want to murder him, but were politically obligated to—it was an act of loyalty to the king. They justify the murder by offering political arguments about Becket's renunciation of the chancellorship, as well as his abandonment of the political policies he formerly held (Becket had begun espousing the belief that there was a spiritual order higher than the king's rule).

It's therefore tempting to see the knights' loyalty and Becket's loyalty as similar. After all, the knights simply followed the order of their king (seemingly, though this is never explicitly stated), while Becket simply followed the dictates of his Pope and his religion. The distinction between Becket's loyalty and the knights' loyalty blurs in this sense: both are loyal to a power that demands total submission. However, the play does present a different, and very clear, distinction between Becket's loyalty and that of the knights: the degree to which both parties feel guilt over their actions. Becket is confident in his loyalty to God – and dissension from his king – and feels no moral qualms over it. The knights, on the other hand, do feel such qualms. They even admit that, to ease their conscience, they had to drink alcohol before acting. They feel guilty, and offer justifications and explanations to the audience in order to assuage their own sense of guilt, and, perhaps, to try to save themselves from being seen as villains.

Through these very different responses – the guiltlessness of Becket and guiltiness of the knights – the play suggests that loyalty is only as worthy as the thing to which it is given, and, perhaps, that one can only find peace by giving one's loyalty, one's self, to something that does not sting one's conscience. The play ultimately seems to suggest

that Becket's loyalty is the most worthwhile—and that only God can honor the radical submission involved in both his and the knights' loyalty.

Becket's own view about the relationship between the two powers is revealed by his reply to the knights. He responds by declaring that there is a higher order responsible for the king's condemnation: "It is not Becket who pronounces doom, / But the Law of Christ's Church, the judgment of Rome." (Part II MITC) This Law, applied by the Pope, is believed by Becket to stem wholly from God (the Pope was believed to be God's mouthpiece). Becket therefore appeals to the realm of spiritual power as if it had absolute priority over the dimension of worldly authority. To Becket, worldly power is a puny, false conception of power; real power stems from a higher source, beyond human comprehension, and based in God.

*Murder in the Cathedral* shows the struggle of 'one man's obligation to religion and defying the many temptations of a political leader'. The whole play has an economy of scenes and action. It has the effect of unity of action on a single theme of how martyrdom takes place. Play ends in tragedy with the murder of Becket, thus portraying how protagonist is overcome by antagonist. Conflict with(in) and with(out) shows how the play is not only outwardly performed but inwardly too.

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# Narratives of Body in Shanta Gokhale's *One Foot on the Ground*

Rachana Pandey\*

The present research explores how autobiographical narratives play a significant role in the creation of self and identity. The paper is a study of an autobiography titled *One Foot on the Ground: A Life Told through the Body* (2019) written by a well-known writer, translator and theatre scholar Shanta Gokhale. *One Foot* is an experimental work in the field of life narratives in India. As in life narratives, memory plays the role of an agent to bring the personal repertoire to the public knowledge, Shanta Gokhale's life experiences and memories get reflected in association with her inevitable bodily experiences. In the book, the name of each chapter is based on the role played by different body parts in her eight decades of life and titled body parts, skin color, disease and so on. She believes that body and mind should be equally valued and respected and moving much ahead of traditional mind-body duality and debate, she spoke in her interview with Gowri Ramnarayan that, "A tangible body helps grasp intangible mind" (*DNA*). She does not negate body to value and emancipate soul. Gokhale, in this life narrative, speaks honestly through her body, "with effortless humour and candour" about the challenging journey she covers; a body from being tangible to intangible, a body which keeps reminding her of its presence and keeps the author always attentive. The study of the subject is based on textual analysis and the applied theoretical approaches are Life Narratives studies, Performance and Gender studies.

Shanta Gokhale, based in Mumbai, is an established theatre scholar, art critic, historian, translator and novelist who has masterly translated number of autobiographies and memoirs in Marathi and English including Durga Khote's autobiography *I, Durga Khote* (2006) and Lakshmibai Tilak's *Smritichitre: The Memoirs of a Spirited Wife* (2017) and enriched the field of Indian literature by translating texts for readers at a large scale. Her significant works are, the novels *Rita Welinkar* (1995), *Tya Varshi* (*Crowfall*, pub. in 2013), books titled *Playwrights at the Centre: Marathi Drama from 1843 to the Present* (2000), *Satyadev Dubey: A Fifty-Year Journey Through Theatre* (2011), *The Theatre of Veenapani Chawla: Theory, Practice and Performance* (2014), *The Scenes We Made: An Oral History of Experimental Theatre in Mumbai* (2015), *The Engaged Observer: The Selected Writings of Shanta Gokhale* (2016, Speaking Tiger). Shanta Gokhale is known for her translations from Marathi into English but she is

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fluently bilingual in English and Marathi. She was motivated to write her autobiography by her friend Jerry Pinto. Her autobiography *One Foot on the Ground: A Life Told through the Body* covers over eight decades (1939-2019) of her life through the progress of her body.

Autobiography or life-narratives cannot be taken simply as an account of factual details. Life narratives locate self in culture and use memory as a tool to narrate it. Historically, women's life narratives form a recent genre and field of study. Female writer-autobiographers or artist-autobiographers also addresses the absence of narratives about the everyday life of female artists and how life, work, family responsibilities are balanced by them. Ratna Raman writes in her review of *One Foot* that "India's first female autobiography was probably *Amar Jiban* (1876) written by Bengal's Rashosundari Devi. This recent narrative form owes greatly to the traditions of prose writing and memoirs. Echoing the title of Gokhale's autobiography, one can say that while writing autobiographies women are now putting one foot on the ground and after balancing themselves, managing to propel themselves forward in order to ride out towards glorious sunsets" (*The Tribune*). The act of writing is an act of self-expression. To Shanta Gokhale, writing is joy and it gives her ultimate pleasure. Her book *One Foot* opens with the question by Gokhale in the first chapter titled 'Why?', "Why am I writing this?" (1) as she had a happy childhood which is not worthy for a memoir or writing. She quotes Leo Tolstoy who wrote that happy families are all alike. 'Every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.' She corrected the statement and wrote that even one happy story is different from another. In one of her interviews, she said why the idea of a memoir never appealed to her. "I came from a privileged family and there was no struggle that I had to overcome. However, Jerry has been nagging me to write a memoir" (Sahani).

Shanta Gokhale's autobiography *One Foot on the Ground* is a courageous account of her life in which she faced sexual abuse in childhood, confronted failed marriage twice, raised her two children, actor Renuka Shahane and act critic Girish Shahane as a single mother and finally cancer. She does not have any regret about her failed relationships and past experiences; rather she calls singlehood as a blissful state. She finds that it is rare to have own space, work table, bookshelves and a bed not shared with anyone. She reveals her joy of having her own space, her own bed where she could stretch out and read and work and ultimately recognising her own identity and self. In the book *One Foot*, Gokhale talks about the need to have "a room of my own to be the person I was" echoing Virginia Woolf. In fact, the home page of her website [shantagokhale.com](http://shantagokhale.com), a gift from her son Girish, has Woolf's famous lines from *A Room of One's Own* (1929): "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." And

Shanta Gokhale further adds to this, a healthy body in support would be a privilege although she never considered as cancer as an interruption. She wrote, “I know writers who have had much less space and fewer privileges than me and done large amounts of writings of amazing quality. But there are inadequacies of the spirit as there are of the body” (Gokhale 227).

Gowri Ramnarayan calls her ‘unassuming woman’ who is outspoken and having a great sense of humour. There are multiple moments in her life in assertions of her identity and her self as narrated in her autobiography, like filing an affidavit in the court to use her maiden name while still married. While sharing her experience of getting legally aware and conscious of her rights, Gokhale writes, “The first Status of Women report, *Towards Equality*, had been released in 1974, and had become a turning point in the women’s movement. Dina Vakil, the assistant editor at *Femina*, had brought to the magazine a political consciousness it had lacked before” (154). She further narrates,

“Those were the years of awakening for Urban women all over India.... it was *Femina* that had informed me women were allowed legally to retain their maiden names. I had made a dash for the court on one of my visits to Bombay, with an affidavit which said I wanted to return to being Gokhale. The men in the office were deeply doubtful. It could mean losing out my husband’s property they warned. What property, I thought.... I still have a copy of the Gazette in which I was declared to have changed my name from Shahane to Gokhale” (154).

Shanta Gokhale’s dedication towards her family, work and writing is reflected when she mentioned that, “The children were well-behaved and agreed to let me write when I wanted to. Our understanding was that when I said I was not Aai but Shanta Gokhale, they were to entertain themselves and not bother me” (141). Throughout her life struggled to maintain a fine and gentle balance between her responsibilities towards her family and children and her work and despite having troubles, she never stopped writing. Even Cancer could break her spirit and she continued writing during her treatment as well. However, she acknowledges the body as the ultimate reality and its constant presence she has experienced throughout her life. Gokhale emphasized that the body is the ultimate truth as “you can falsify your thoughts, your feelings, your knowledge. But your body, however surgically falsified its appearance may be today, is still prone to disease” (6).

Interestingly, she recalls her journey as a feminist and liberal individual and shares an incident of 1970 when Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* was published which is considered as a landmark text in the history of feminist movements. As she always been a passionate reader, she grabbed the copy of the book to read. She writes,

It was 1970... That was the year *The Female Eunuch* was published. I had grabbed a copy as soon as it was out and was reading it every spare moment I got. When Dada read the title, his eyes widened in horror. 'Why are reading this vulgar book?' He looked disgustingly at the cover image of a naked female torso hung up on a clothesline with handles on the sides. I said, not at all, confrontationally, 'It's an important book about feminism.' To him, the word feminism was like an ugly toad that had hopped into the pretty garden people had spent centuries creating. If he had been younger I would have needled him with Greer's thesis that women were castrating themselves in the service of their femininity. But he was not young. So I covered the book in a newspaper jacket... I was becoming a feminist, in theory at least if not always in practice" (Gokhale 140-141).

She covered the book in a newspaper jacket but did not stop reading it as she finds feminist ideas as necessary and relevant to the time. Gokhale is truly liberal in thinking and she follows her instinct. She allowed her ex-husband to share her apartment until he had found a place for himself which reflects her compassionate self. She does not hesitate to discuss the bald patch in the middle of her hair or talking about her first experience of menstruation or the sexual assault she faced when she was a child. Gokhale breaks all the conservative boundaries that control women to give voice to her inner self and truly represents an urban educated woman of the independent country who makes conscious choices and decision for herself and her family. Her mother was a progressive woman who influenced Shanta's life to a great extent as Gokhale said that after her graduation, her mother asked, "Now what will you do to make your study of English useful? You must translate our best literature into English" and she shares further, "She also had a very clear definition of independence. You have to be able to look after yourself even in the worst circumstances, cook your food, make your clothes, eat whatever comes your way, sleep on hard floors with blazing lights or blaring noise. Finally, never let yourself down by submitting to what you think is not right" (Ganesh).

The calm tenor and poise with which Shanta Gokhale discusses her life, her body, her responsibilities and her ambitions is delightful. *One Foot on the Ground* is like reading the testimony of a woman who lives her feminism and does so contentedly. She has dedicated more than six decades of her life in the service of art and culture with passion to work and honesty and her autobiography *One Foot on the Ground* certainly inspires and encourages to the readers. She calls it as "It is a story of acceptance all the way" (Sahai). Shanta Gokhale writes in *One Foot*,

"Whatever stage my body was going through, it posed a few questions, the answer was always – acceptance. When I was dealing with Glaucoma, I was, in fact, preparing myself to go blind. I would grope my way about the house with my eyes closed, so that

I become familiar with the space and know how to move through it. Well, these are some of the funny and often stupid things you do, that also help you to look ahead and come to terms with the body, the way it is. Once you accept your own body, acceptance of everything follows, the acceptance of what is, and whatever will be.”

Her keen observation and excellent manner to describe minute details of life with zeal and touch of humour are praiseworthy. Shanbag appreciates her works and says, “Shanta has been watching theatre and writing about it for the last 50-odd years, and that gives her a vantage position to be able to see patterns in the way the experimental theatre in the city evolved. She has engaged with so many of the key people who were part of this history. She has clarity as a writer. This kind of combination is rare and valuable” (Sahani). Undoubtedly, Shanta Gokhale’s autobiography *One Foot on the Ground: A Life Told through the Body* paves the way for writers to experiment in the field of life narratives and storytelling and further promotes researches in the same.

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# The Concept of Wall in Theatre

**K. V. Raghupathi\***

A play in the classroom is an unalterably unconditional text. It is raw in form, it may not gain life howsoever it is explained and demonstrated in the class room. It is unlike other literary texts, poetry or a short story or a novel. In this way, a play as a text in the classroom is different from a play as a play in the theatre. It undergoes a deep transformation when it is taken to a theatre for an enactment. It becomes a soft copy. The elements gain liveliness; on the whole it gains its true existence with exuberance.

The concept of wall in a theater though crucial is an illusory concept. Wall literally stands for separation. But in the theatre context, it is an imagined wall that separates from one element to another element of a play. In theatre, what separates from what? Is it a reality or a mere illusion or a dream? The concept of wall comes into effect only in the theatre, and not in the class room. Five walls have been identified in relation to the enactment of a play in the theatre. The first wall is character, the second is plot and the third is dialogue/action. Let us first take the first wall, that is, character. The actor who dons the role is only an actor. He/she is not real in real life situations. But on the stage, the person has to assume the role as if in real life situation. This is breaking the wall. That is, the person is transforming himself/herself into a different role. Sometimes that comes close to S. T. Coleridge's idea, "willing suspension of disbelief". The play is a play and the character's fictionality is assumed for a time on the stage.

Similarly, plot involving series of situations should be assumed as if real by the actors. The dialogue/action goes in the same way. No doubt, the dialogue and action are real in their own way. They are not different from the actor's real life situation. There are two realities – actor's real life and the character's life. What happens on the stage is that the actor moves from his real life situation and enters into the character's real life situation. The fact is that the actor should live in the character's real life situation. Hence the illusory wall is created between the two.

Actually, the concept of fourth wall has been conceived by the French philosopher, critic and dramatist Denis Diderot (Cuddon 288) who wrote in 1758: "When you write

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or act, think no more of the audience than if it had never existed. Imagine a huge wall across the front of the stage, separating you from the audience, and behave exactly as if the curtain had never risen.” It is an invisible wall dividing a theatre audience from a performance, especially that taking place in a three-walled box set of a proscenium theatre. Diderot says that theatrical performance and dramatic content should be attuned to real life. This should, according to him, ensure that the performance should be more faithful to everyday reality. The term is closely associated with the movements of Realism and Naturalism in European theatre in the Nineteenth century. While the audience can see through this imagined wall, the convention assumes, the actors act as if they cannot.

From this discussion, we now move on to the “fifth wall”, which is often used by analogy with the fourth wall. It may be referred to as metaphorical wall, an invisible wall between critics or readers and theatre practitioners. In media, television is seen as a fifth wall which allows images on the screen that go beyond the traditional four walls of a room. In shadow theatre<sup>1</sup>, the screen is described as “fifth wall” on which images are projected.

People watching the play in the theatre play dual role: audience and critics. Audience are mere spectators who may tend to involve deeply and emotionally with the play. In their deep involvement they may tend to identify themselves with the characters and the situations, they may pity the characters. This will lead to, to use Aristotle’s term, ‘catharsis’, comparing the effects of tragedy on the mind of spectator to the effect of a catharsis on the body. Although, Aristotle does not explain the meaning of it in *Poetics*, it is widely interpreted as “purification” or “purgation”, besides the term itself has become complex with several nuances and shades of meanings. Nevertheless, in Catharsis, there is a deep involvement and identification which temporarily suspends reasoning. Therefore, the audience may tend to become emotional and rational beings. They may not critically examine the play, read the characters and assess the situations, dialogues and actions.

This sort of criticism against the term Catharsis has been rendered by the German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht in the twentieth century. Thus, Epic theatre has emerged. Epic theatre refers to the form that it takes. Brecht emphasizes the audience’s perspective and reaction to the play not by emotional involvement but its purpose is to suspend their disbelief, rather to force them to think introspectively about the particular moments that are occurring on stage and why they are happening a certain way

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic\\_theatre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_theatre)). According to him Catharsis makes the spectator complacent. Instead, he wanted the spectators/audience to adopt a critical perspective in order to recognize social injustice and exploitation. After all, the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself. Seen as a reaction against popular forms of theatre, particularly the naturalistic approach pioneered by Constantine Stanilavski, like him Brecht disliked shallow spectacle, manipulative plots and heightened emotions of melodrama.

So, the fifth wall is the audience as critics. They would not give themselves to emotions, on the other they would be as rational and critical as they would like to be. The audience, in this way, as suggested by Brecht, are transformed into critics. There is a shift from being emotional to being rational. Brecht expects the theatre goers as intellectuals. Leaving aside the argument that all theatre goers may/cannot be intellectuals, it may tend to raise question: How can one rationally or critically think without getting deeply involved in the play that they watch. For this the answer could be involvement need not be emotional but intellectual/rational.

Thus, the fifth wall makes the play significant in truest sense. It transforms the audience from being not merely emotional to being critical. It is here the play gains its life, and true to the spirit of art, the dramatist succeeds both artistically and didactically.

One might ask, does the dramatist not succeed in the classroom with the play as a text? He might succeed, but not to the extent when it is presented on the stage. Similarly, the readers may also be affected, but not to the degree when it is enacted in the theatre. The play as a text in the class room, thus, is a hard copy and it becomes soft copy when it is taken to the theatre. The real success of the play does not lie in the class room but on the stage.

#### **Notes:**

1. Shadow play, also known as shadow puppetry, is an ancient form of storytelling and entertainment which uses flat articulated cut-out figures (shadow puppets) which are held between a source of light and a translucent screen or scrim. The cut-out shapes of the puppets sometimes include translucent color or other types of detailing. Various effects can be achieved by moving both the puppets and the light source. A talented puppeteer can make the figures appear to walk, dance, fight, nod and laugh. Shadow play is popular in various cultures, among both children and adults in many countries around the world.

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# **Dhruvaswamini, Mallika and Savitri:**

## **A Study of Three Iconic Female Characters in Hindi Drama**

**Attrayee Adhya Chatterjee\***

Great protagonists make for a great play. Shakespeare's great tragedies are all woven around his larger than life tragic heroes: Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear and Othello. One could say the same for the famous Greek tragedies of Homer, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, etc. People may forget the names of their creators, but the heroes will always stay alive in living memory – Ulysses, Antigone, Oedipus Rex, Hercules, Prometheus, etc.

In fairly recent times, Hindi drama has given us a few strong female characters who have taken the Indian stage by storm. The present paper will discuss three of these iconic characters: Dhruvaswamini, Mallika and Savitri. All the three female protagonists are powerful and unique in their own ways: Dhruvaswamini is extremely beautiful and intelligent. She appreciates strength, power and uprightness. She is one of the earliest Feminists who question the Hindu religious scriptures, age-old rituals and long held beliefs that had curbed her freedom and had made her subservient to the male in society. Spurned by a nincompoop of a husband, she has the courage and conviction to marry the man of her heart. Mallika stands for Perfection in Art and the Artist who nurtures Art even at the expense of her own life and happiness. She is the Feminist who holds her own ground in a hostile world. Savitri is an ultra modern and beautiful woman with over-arching ambitions. She belongs to the middle class, is smart and capable, but her expectations are unrealistic and unlimited, which alienate her from society. In search of the perfect man, she ends up losing more than she gains. The three characters Dhruvaswamini, Mallika and Savitri appear in the plays *Dhruvaswamini* by Jaishankar Prasad, *Ashadh ka ek din (One day in the Season of Rains)* by Mohan Rakesh and *Adhe Adhure (Half Way House)*, also by Mohan Rakesh, respectively. Each of the three plays is a landmark from the point of view of giving a voice to women characters in Hindi drama.

### ***Dhruvaswamini***

Written by Jaishankar Prasad, *Dhruvaswamini* was published in 1933. It is a historical play in three acts and revolves around the lives of three main characters: Dhruvaswamini, Ramagupta and Chandragupta. The other supporting characters are: Shakaraj, Koma, Acharya Mihirdev, Mandakini, the Samanta Kumars and Shikharaswami. Although the characters are based in Indian history and recount events of the Gupta period, the story of their lives also finds a resonance in modern times. The play essentially deals with a particular event in the life of the great king Chandragupta.

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Samudragupta had two sons: Ramagupta and Chandragupta. Ramagupta, the elder son was wicked, corrupt, selfish and alcoholic; whereas Chandragupta, his younger brother was his opposite: wise, courageous, loyal and large hearted.

Samudragupta had chosen his younger son Chandragupta as his rightful heir, and had also arranged his marriage with Dhruvaswamini, but unfortunately, he died before he could solemnise it. As soon as he died, Ramagupta not only usurped his throne with the help of his wicked minister Shikharaswami, but also married Dhruvaswamini, who was extremely beautiful and intelligent, thus depriving his younger brother from his rights. Still, Chandragupta did not protest or raise any rebellion, for the sake of peace and harmony in the kingdom. After declaring himself king, Ramagupta started off on war expeditions, just as Samudragupta had done earlier. However, judging the incompetence of Ramagupta, Shakaraj, the king of the neighbouring Shaka kingdom perceived it as a golden opportunity and immediately invaded the Gupta kingdom.

The play opens on the Gupta army camp, as Dhruvaswamini enters the stage with two of her waiting women. From the very first dialogue we can see that she appreciates strength, power and uprightness, when she exclaims upon the Himalayas standing upright, unbending and how the soft, tender creepers are bowing at its feet, as if paying homage to it. She is bored and tired with all the battles and meaningless bloodshed. Since her marriage she has been very unhappy, because her husband treats her more as a trophy won in war rather than a real woman, much less as a wife. He is always busy with warfare and his scheming ministers whom she cannot stand at all, so she feels neglected and lonely.

The real nature of Ramagupta has also been revealed to her and she can see that he is a weakling who is involved with wine and women all the time. He is incapable of giving love to Dhruvaswamini and his suspecting nature leads him to doubt her fidelity. He has planted spies around her to find out whether she secretly loves Chandragupta, or is cheating upon him behind his back. Dhruvaswamini's heart yearns for the touch of a good man and her sight for any normal, able bodied human being, not these dwarfs, eunuchs and half humans milling around in the camp. And the only complete man that she finds in this place is her brother- in-law Chandragupta.

Ramagupta gets the news that his kingdom is in danger of falling into enemy hands, as Shakaraj has captured it. Therefore they must turn back immediately; but, to their shock, they find that they have been surrounded on both sides by the Shaka army. The Guptas have only two options available: either to die fighting or to agree to their terms. The Shaka King meanwhile offers a mean and ignoble compromise: he will withdraw his troops if Ramagupta hands over the beautiful queen Dhruvaswamini to Shakaraj. Any self-respecting man would have cringed in shame at such an offer, but the coward Ramagupta finds this to be the easiest solution. When Dhruvaswamini rightly protests at this shameless order, he tells her remorselessly that she is an 'object' to be 'offered' as a 'gift' to others.

Dhruvaswamini is shellshocked and pleads that if not as his wife, then at least as a woman under the king's shelter, he must protect her honour, but her pleas fall on deaf ears and she realizes that Ramagupta has never seen her as his better half. Feeling dejected and utterly helpless, she takes out her dagger to end her life there and then.

Chandragupta prevents Dhruvaswamini from ending her life and comes out with a very smart plan: he himself volunteers to go to Shakaraj disguised as Dhruvaswamini, because it is unthinkable to meekly hand over the Gupta queen to the enemy. But Dhruvaswamini will have none of it. She declares that if Chandragupta is trying to protect her honour which is of no value to the king, then she too will accompany him as his hand-maiden, and if they are found out, they will both die defending their name and honour.

Ramagupta is overjoyed to hear this. He feels that it is like killing two birds with one stone: it will not only reveal whether there is anything between Dhruvaswamini and Chandragupta, but also if there was some truth in his suspicions, he will permanently get rid of them at one go, as Chandragupta will surely get killed inside the enemy camp. And if at all they were victorious, then Ramagupta will get all credits for this clever strategy. But he had thoroughly underestimated the valour of his younger brother and the Samanta Kumars who had accompanied him, disguised as maids. Chandragupta killed Shakaraj, but allowed safe passage to Koma, his beloved and Acharya Mihirdev, her father. But as soon as news of this victory reached Ramagupta, he entered with his army and wreaked a bloodbath on the Shaka camp, in which both Koma and Acharya Mihirdev get killed.

Dhruvaswamini cannot take this anymore and questions the very basis of our moral and social values. Why should a king abet murder and massacre? Her real nature shines through in this scene, where she questions the Hindu religious scriptures, age-old rituals and long held beliefs. Why is a woman bound to a man without her consent only by the strength of a few Sanskrit shlokas? She questions the institution of marriage and refuses to stay married to Ramagupta any longer. Dhruvaswamini tells Mandakini that women have somehow internalized their servile position in society.

The royal Purohit's observation that Dhruvaswamini and Ramagupta's marriage was a mistake or wrongdoing is an equally loaded statement. He cites those very scriptures to state that a woman or a man is free to walk out of such an unhappy or unfulfilling relationship. This was a very dynamic reading of the Hindu scriptures, and one which shows that the question of divorce had also been included into the institution of a Hindu marriage. Finally, Dhruvaswamini abandons Ramagupta and marries Chandragupta. In retaliation when Ramagupta tries to stab Chandragupta, he is prevented by a Samanta Kumar and gets killed in the process. Chandragupta is crowned the new king. The playwright was obviously making a very interesting statement regarding the institution of marriage and divorce – one which would open a can of worms, and this is one of the reasons why *Dhruvaswamini* became both hugely popular and equally controversial.



### ***Ashadh Ka Ek Din***

Mohan Rakesh was one of the pioneers of the Nai Kahani or ‘New Story’ literary movement of Hindi literature in the 1950s. His *Ashadh ka Ek Din* which was published in 1958 was his debut play and considered as one of the first modern Hindi plays. It won the award of best play of the year from Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1959. After Bharatendu Harishchandra and Jaishankar Prasad, the name that shines most brightly on the firmament of Hindi theatre is that of Mohan Rakesh, and *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* is considered as one of his greatest achievements in drama.

The play is loosely based on the life of legendary Sanskrit poet Kalidasa who is supposed to have lived between 100 B.C and 500 A.D. It is a fictional take on certain historical events that took place at that time. The play takes its name from the first *shloka* or couplet of his epic poem *Meghadutam* which begins with the words “*Ashadhasya Prathama Diwase...*” or “On the first day of Ashadh...” On that particular day of Ashadh when the mountain ranges were all covered with clouds, Kalidasa – a young, undiscovered and unrecognised poet and his beloved Mallika are enjoying the first rain of the season, standing atop a hill near the village temple. The actual, physical rain has symbolic significance: it is the rain of love, creativity, positivity that drenches and energizes both Mallika and Kalidasa. It inspires the poet to capture this beauty in his poetry.

The play is divided into three Acts, and basically deals with the challenges faced by Kalidasa and Mallika, where they have to choose between personal happiness and professional success. On the one hand there is Kalidasa who must leave Mallika behind and go away to the king’s court in Ujjaini to be honoured as the court poet, if he wishes for any further development and recognition for his works, (which he does on the insistence of Mallika,) and on the other hand we have Mallika who keeps the flame of her love intact, even though the strain of doing so completely ravages her life. Where Kalidasa chooses perfection in Art, Mallika chooses perfection in Life, and each is juxtaposed with the other. Although the play is based on Kalidasa’s life, one can easily see that this is an eternal question and dilemma faced by all artists, creative writers, poets or painters in all ages, and this is what makes this play great, because it transcends from the personal to the universal.

Mallika is one of the strongest female characters that Hindi drama has ever produced. Structurally, the play is very well balanced. At the end of each of the three Acts, Kalidasa leaves Mallika behind. In the first Act when he goes away to Ujjaini to get his due recognition at the king’s court, in the second Act when Kalidasa again visits his village after a few years on his way to Kashmir to attend to his administrative duties as king of Kashmir, and lastly at the end of the play when he suddenly leaves Mallika whom he had come to meet after several years. Kalidasa realizes that youth and love wait for none, and neither he nor Mallika are the same any more – their lives have moved apart and they cannot go back to pick up the lost threads again.

Unfortunately, though Kalidasa received honour, recognition and fame after he left his homestead, his creativity deserted him as soon as he disconnected himself from his roots that had nourished his poetry. Priyangumanjari, the king's daughter whom he marries, tries her best to recreate the ambiance of his village, but fails to infuse the old enthusiasm that could reanimate his soul because she herself is not Mallika.

The mother-daughter duo Ambika and Mallika represent the two opposite poles of life. Ambika the older woman represents the practical aspect, where one thinks with the head and Mallika represents the aesthetic and artistic aspect of life, where she feels with the heart and responds to life impulsively, spontaneously. So the practical world is juxtaposed with the emotional, imaginative and creative world of the artist.

When Kalidasa brings an injured fawn to Mallika who nurses it back to life, it is also a symbolic image. The wounded baby deer symbolizes aesthetics, love and compassion; the carefree life of Mallika and Kalidasa, of poetry and sensitivity, which gets wounded and stung by the aggressive entry of the world of politics and practicality into these sylvan settings, this beautiful village in the lap of nature. Ironically Kalidasa, who tries his best to save the wounded deer and thus symbolically his own soul and creative spirit from an onslaught of the harsh life of practical realities that have started encroaching upon him, is unfortunately unable to save his own soul. But Mallika, just as she saves the baby deer from dying, is also able to protect her own spirit from this annihilation. The baby deer is mentioned again in retrospect at the end of the play, where Kalidasa meets Mallika's baby daughter whom his detractor Vilom sarcastically refers to as another baby deer that probably has a very close resemblance with the poet himself, an intended derision that she may be a product of their past union.

The characters of this play can be seen as both individuals and as representing different types of humanity. Besides Ambika and Mallika who balance each other, the characters of Kalidasa and Vilom are also to be seen as a foil to each other. 'Vilom' literally means 'the opposite of' and in the play this character typifies and illustrates all that Kalidasa is not. He is the diametric opposite of the poet, the anti-hero. Vilom is a failed poet who could not make a name for himself in the world on his own merit. Matul, Kalidasa's uncle, who taught him the rudimentary of the Sanskrit language represents the poet as a mercenary: greedy and ambitious, but without the requisite merit, and who suffers due to his overarching greed.

Vilom wants to possess Mallika for her beauty and youth, but has no qualities to attract her. Therefore, he must assert himself aggressively and being an evil opportunist, he forces his entry into her life at a moment when she is vulnerable. Vilom's very existence rests upon his ability to oppose and defeat Kalidasa. He always enters stealthily, at just the moment when he could deliver maximum damage to Kalidasa's credibility and his personal life. Hence he unscrupulously takes advantage of Kalidasa's absence when the latter goes away to Ujjaini and is appointed as Poet Laureate by the king.

### ***Adhe Adhure***

Mohan Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure* or *Halfway House* was first published in the January-February 1969 issues of the Hindi magazine *Dharmayug*. It was first staged by a Delhi-based theatre group 'Dishantar' in February 1969, directed by film actor Om Shivpuri, who also played the male lead roles. It is one of the first plays in contemporary Hindi literature that very successfully captures the tensions, problems and psychological crises of modern day life. Its strength lies in its powerful language, through which it displays the love-hate relationships that exist between man and woman. On one level this play deals with social issues and on another, it deals with the total psychological break-up of the home and hearth. The scene of action is a middle-class household which has a tragic, melancholic air about it, where each member of the family is cut-off from the other and they are all in a state of perpetual turmoil. It is just a house and not a home, and the family can hardly be called a family – it is a heterogeneous group of people living under the same roof, but totally disconnected from each other. Their aspirations, dreams and wants are pulling them apart and there is very little love or sympathy to hold them all together. The play very successfully captures the angst and ennui of the modern, urban milieu, and the inter-personal relationships of each of its characters on multiple levels.

The characters of this play are: the Man in the black suit, around 50 years of age, with a cigar. He is the *Sutradhaar*. Later, the same actor reappears in the role of all other men. The First Man or Mahendranath: Savitri's husband, nearly 50 years of age but already exhausted with the challenges of life, lacks self confidence and is self-effacing and evasive. The Second Man or Singhania: Savitri's boss – a rich, successful professional who often goes on foreign tours, with a seen all, done that air, but still a little unconfident and anxious. The Third Man or Jagmohan: suave, successful, fashionable and impeccably dressed, large-hearted about partying and spending money on friends; very soft-spoken, gentlemanly and a chain-smoker. The Fourth Man or Juneja: he is quite a few years older than Mahendranath and a close friend of his. A businessman and Mahendranath's former business partner. He knows Mahendranath since even before Savitri came into his life. That all the five men are actually the same man in different garbs reinforces the playwright's main argument that all men are basically the same, with a different mask for a different character, setting and occasion, as Savitri sadly realises near the end of the play.

Then, there is Savitri: the most important female character. She is almost 40, no longer in the blush of youth, but still retains her beauty and smartness in spite of all the tribulations she has had to face in life. She is the sole breadwinner of the family. The older daughter Binni: almost 20, but far mature than her age; she ran away from home to marry to Mohan and the only one close to Savitri. But even she keeps wondering as to what is so tragic about this family that clings to her even now and comes in the way of her happiness. The younger daughter Kinni: around 13-14 years old, but tries to act much older. She is very bitter and rebellious, and feels irritated with all her family

members, a typical teenager. The son, Ashok: older than Binni and a failed undergraduate. He cuts photos of Hollywood heroines from magazines. An angry, frustrated, unemployed young man, who has a girlfriend.

*Half-Way House* underlines the inherent incompleteness of human lives. It shows that we are living half lives or *Adhe Adhure*, where even the desire for fulfilment is futile, that those who expect their lives or relationships to be perfect never end up happy or satisfied, for they keep hankering for more and more.

Savitri is a woman with over-arching ambitions, ultra modern and her expectations are unlimited. Inadvertently, she pushes her family into her own vortex of desire, which drives her husband crazy and alienates her from the others. Savitri is frustrated and has become thoroughly bitter against her husband because he is a failure. She is unable to accept him as he is and expects him to be an epitome of perfection. In her desperation she calls Jagmohan and decides to run away with him, but is finally unable to do so, because the situation would hardly have been fundamentally different if she had married either Jagmohan or Juneja, or anyone else. Then she would have done the same with them too. Thus she has got herself into a vicious circle of psychological emptiness.

There is so much anger and depression in the family that the very atmosphere is charged with negativity, and the ennui, angst and acrimony is choking the life out of them.

The younger daughter Kinni has grown completely bitter at a very tender age, and hates her family. She is a neglected child and has to face the ire of neighbours regarding her mother's male friends; sometimes her most basic needs like a pair of new socks or a new exercise book remain unfulfilled and she has started taking voyeuristic pleasure in subjects far beyond her age, for example in matters related to sex.

The factor which Binni is unable to pinpoint – the reason behind her dissatisfaction, something about this atmosphere that clings to her – is exactly the sort of alienation each character in the play experiences in his or her own unique way; an alienation and isolation that is a part and parcel of modern man's life in the city.

Mahendranath has failed in each of his business ventures, and now, at 50, he is a completely broken man who has totally lost his self-confidence. Neither does anyone in his family have any respect for him. In an intense moment of overflowing emotions he exclaims that he has become just a rubber stamp. When his wife rebukes him by saying that a 'rubber stamp' means power, position and respect, and pray when, if at all, their family has ever got any of this from him, he recants and says that perhaps he is worse than a rubber stamp – he is just a piece of rubber that everyone uses for omitting their mistakes and throws away after using.

The man in the black suit or the *Sutradhaar* may be termed as 'Everyman or Anyman'. The fact that the same man re-enters each time as a different character reinforces the dramatist's contention that all men are basically the same and so the characters are types rather than individuals. The play progresses in such a way that it is extremely difficult

to say who the main character of the play is. Is it the *Sutradhaar*, or Savitri, or the typical circumstances of this family, or the questions arising out of all these factors put together? The play ends without any definite answers, just as several questions remain unanswered in life.

### **Conclusion**

Through the plays studied above we can see that all the three female characters are strong and unique individuals. Each of them exemplifies a complex and powerful personality. In *Dhruvaswamini*, Jaishankar Prasad shows how a woman can only be won through respect, love and affection, not through wilful subjugation. Also, how they should drop their shackles and realize their true, independent natures. In this way, this play became a landmark and its namesake a pioneer of all times. Dhruvaswamini is one of the most powerfully drawn feminist characters in Hindi drama. The issues explored by Prasad remain equally relevant even today. In *Ashadh ka Ek Din*, Mohan Rakesh tries to show how amidst the tumultuous forces that completely ravage Mallika physically her spirit remains undaunted and intact. She represents the creative force that nurtures Kalidasa's poetry and keeps him rooted, and thus symbolises the Artist who must keep Art alive even at the cost of her own life and happiness. Perhaps *Adhe Adhure* is even more relevant today than when it was first published, and hence is a true classic of the modern age. It captures in very hard-hitting language the aspirations and ambitions of a modern day woman who wants a complete man in her life. She yearns for success both in her personal and professional lives, and ends up losing both, like quicksand out of her hands. It is the tragedy of this woman who depends more on the men in her life rather than delve into her own strengths.

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# Performing Human-Animal Relationship in *The Great Animal Orchestra* By Bernie Krause

Neha Dubey\*

I want to commence my paper by asking some questions pertaining to performance studies and performance theory. What is performance?-- Richard Schechner asked himself while he shifted his interest from theatre to performance and from aesthetics to social drama in 60's and mind, by that time the first department of performance studies had not been opened at NYU (by Schechner). For him it was more than what was appearing on the stages of New York, London, Paris. From the advent of Happenings in the early 1960's (Civil rights, Anti-Vietnam War, students uprising etc.) to the vibrant enactment on American streets of what Victor Turner termed "social drama"-- freedom movement led by thousands of ordinary people, so the performance by this virtue can take place anywhere, under a wide variety of circumstances and in the service of 'an incredibly diverse panoply of objectives' (Schechner). And for this Schechner argued that social and cultural anthropology are extremely useful because in ethnographies and theoretical treatises anthropologists treated the actual lived behaviour of people performatively.

Erving Goffman's 1959 book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, he offered a new insight by arguing that performances in the broad sense of that word were coexistent with human condition. It does not mean that 'all the world's a stage', but people are always involved in role playing, in constructing and staging their multiple identities. Victor Turner adds as these performances often take the form of rituals and social drama. Therefore, Schechner thinks that Palaeolithic "cave art" of Africa, America, and Asia are not illustrative art, or the galleries for the exhibition of visual arts but theatres, sites of ritual enactments. One cannot listen to the music or witness the dances or storytelling enactments but still these sites could only be understood performatively though these have been silenced century ago. Even shamans of Siberia, Korea or Native America and utopianism of Youth culture are performances.

Thus, performance is a term that includes every possible activity of everyday life--greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles and so on; theatre is only a node on a continuum that reaches from the ritualizations of animals including humans, from play to sports, theatre, dance, ceremonies, rites and performance of great magnitude. And now this definition has been a bit complicated too in the study of theatre since it has more in common to games and sports than with ritual or play. Now we apply game theory to the Elizabethan theatre and Lear Game is a good example of this application. Martin Shubik in the introductory part of the collection of essays,

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*Game Theory and Related Approaches to Social Behaviour* (1964), defines game theory in general terms,

“Game theory is a method for the study of decision making in situations of conflict....The essence of a ‘game’ in this context is that it involves decision makers with different goals or objectives whose fates are intertwined.”

Another question is -- Who performs? Humans and/or non humans. And what are the performed/performance time ( event time, set time, and symbolic time) and performance spaces (from orthodox physical spaces to virtual space that could be multiplied by millions of viewing simultaneously).

Pertaining to theatre, animals are understood in terms of human religions consist of ritualized gestures and sound, customs, arts extensions, elaborations and transformations of animal cultures. And if there is animal performances, the question arises of the crafted performance places and tools-- in theatre, not in sports and games and not for fun and rehearsals but where animals are performers and humans assist them.

The possible answer could be found in Bernie Krause’s work *The Great Animal Orchestra*, who is a bioacoustician, musician, and an expert in natural sound. He began his career recording the sound of wheat growing in a Kansas field; he has spent 40 years recording ecological soundscapes (focuses on the totality of sounds that are present within an environment urban, rural and natural, which aims to highlight the importance of the sonic dimensions of the environment. Bernie Krause examines particularly the “wild” soundscapes, such as non-anthropoc soundscapes. He has recorded sounds of over 15,000 species. He divides natural sounds into three categories\_ (1) Biophony is the sound made by animals and plants, (2) Geophony is the natural sound made by wind, water and rain-- which led different tribes to have different musical scales. (3) Anthrophony is human-generated sound, which as it has rapidly increased, has affected animals for instance- causing disoriented whales to become beached.

In *The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding the Origins of Music in the World’s Wild Places*, speaks to us of an ancient music to which so many of us are deaf. He reveals wondrous stories of the meaning of music and sounds of our natural environment, allowing even the smallest living things to sing love songs in many diverse ways bragging that they are the fittest and will survive above the cacophony of the modern world.

Krause is a polymathic musician who performed with the folk groups the Weavers and helped introduce the Moog synthesisers to pop music including songs by the Doors and Van Morrison and film scores. He hears natural sounds with a studio producer’s ear and is dismissive of scientists who focus on only one species at a time. His recordings have become part of an immersive new exhibition at the Cartier Foundation (that is sponsoring his project) with the same name, “ The Great Animal Orchestra” (can be

found on his personal website [www.wildsanctuary.com](http://www.wildsanctuary.com)), London based Collective United Visual Artists have transformed Krause's recordings of the natural world into 3-D renderings. The analysis of his recordings, translated in visual scores through spectrogram technique, Krause finds out that different animal species of the same habitat vocalise following precise rules, that is according to the so-called niches theory-- each parting the frequency fields in which to communicate in the very same way musical instruments carve out at their specific "acoustic territory" inside the orchestral arrangements. The soundscapes is not based on chance but it follows its own internal organisations, elevating the whole range of animal vocalization to the level of music-- the art of organised sound- opposing them to the ever more invasive and disorganised cacophony of the modern humankind.

Emiliano Battistini calls this book a musical metaphor that calls into question the human-animal relationship, reversing the common meaning-- this discovered animal culture stands opposite to contemporary human barbarity and approaching multi-naturalistic positions (Descola 2005), proposing a new politics of nature (Latour 1999). This became possible because he changed his point of view on animals listening to them, generating a new approach to the relationship human-animals as well as showing new characteristics of the animals themselves (209).

Each recording is introduced by a short description of the place in which it has been recorded with information about the geographic position, the weather, the date and hour. Scientific and aesthetic discourse mix together on the basis of a general pedagogic discourse that aims to make the public aware about acoustic ecology. Audio-visual narration is first introduced by a video where we see Bernie Krause in a black and white, medium close-up shoot, looking at the public through the central screen and speaking about his work and its usefulness. He tries to make us understood how animals compose altogether as well as within the environment, harmonising silences, rhythms, frequencies etc. on the basis of an active regime of differentiation. Due to this sharing of speech turns and this distribution in acoustic niches, the animal songs rarely overlap one another, it is as the animals are saying one another --" it is up to you, now", a very political gesture, that we humans lack now-- non-possessive attitude. According to Bruno Latour, these songs coexist on the basis of temporal metaphor, specific to the orchestra situation in which it is necessary to make a common action, coordinating our own part with the other, inside a general relationship of interdependence. On the definition of possession it is not a break with a natural state but rather re-creation of it and it is also a limit of the human political composition--when human compose excluding non-human beings. This natural orchestra not only leads to reconsider the way through which humans speak about and represent animal society but also opens the imaginary to unexpected forms and modalities that broke with the models of possession as property and of hierarchic power. In Battistini's words, this orchestra is "a vacant place...filled at one's own turn, it enables the continuous play of the meaning and discursive redefinition of the human-animal and culture-nature relationship as well as of



their overcoming towards a higher human collective order. As the listening to Bernie Krause's wild soundscapes aims to suggest" (220).

I conclude my paper again asking that may not sound apposite, if two performers one from the East and one from the West could win Noble prize for their songs and music, i.e. Tagore and Bob Dylan then why cannot these works, after all, they too can claim what i would say in W. H. Auden's poem: " All I have is a voice."

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# Birth of Feminism in Ancient Greek Theatre

Sumnima Parajuli\*

Reacting to the concerns expressed by Sue-Ellen Case and others that Greek tragedies were written by men and for men in a patriarchal society and that the plays are misogynistic and should be ignored by feminists, this article considers how feminism took its birth in ancient Greek theatre and how female directors and writers have continued to exploit characters such as Antigone, Medea, Clytemnestra and Electra to make a powerful statement about contemporary society.

In the 1970s and 1980s feminist scholars launched an important critique of the patriarchal values embedded in Western culture. Amongst other targets, they questioned the canonization of ancient Greek tragedy, labelling the plays misogynistic. Nevertheless, many female directors and playwrights continue to stage ancient Greek tragedy today. The representation of women in Athenian tragedy was performed exclusively by men and it is likely that it was performed solely for men as well. In a society that valued women's silence, their predominance in the most public of Athenian art-forms constitutes a paradox. Edith Hall has commented on the sheer number of females in Greek tragedy.

*'In the second century AD the satirist Lucian remarked that "there are more females than males" in these plays . . . Only one extant tragedy, Sophocles' Philoctetes, contains no women, and female tragic choruses in the surviving plays outnumber male by twenty-one to ten'<sup>1</sup>*

The role of women in ancient Greek life was considered to be insignificant compared to that of Greek men. But as we observe now the root of feminism was already established in the heart of ancient Greek theatre. Feminism is the belief that women and men are, and have been, treated differently by society, and that women have frequently and systematically been unable to participate fully in all social arenas and institutions. But in ancient Greek tragedies, women were often written as major characters, revealing insights on how women were treated and thought of in society. Many well-known Greek plays contain several well-written, complex, female characters. Each female character takes upon herself, the role of villain, the role of victim, and the role of heroine. Thus we can see in some of ancient Greek plays although in minute sense the seed of the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes. Helene Foley, in discussing a variety of new approaches to ancient Greek drama,

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observed recently that '*contemporary actresses and female playwrights favour Greek tragedy because of the extraordinary repertoire of powerful and subtle female roles*'<sup>2</sup>

Katie Mitchell, who directed the *Oresteia* at the National Theatre in London in 1999, referring to Peter Hall's all-male production of the trilogy in the National Theatre twenty years earlier, asked,

*"Should you do The Oresteia with an all-male cast? I would only do that if the audience was also all male. But you couldn't get that situation today. It would also be very hard to justify to the female acting profession, the fact that in this wonderful trilogy that has some of the best roles ever written for women, they should all be given to men. I think that would be indefensible."*<sup>3</sup>

In addition to ancient Greek drama offering plenty of roles for women, many of which are extremely challenging, one can also argue that these plays provide a thorough critique of male as well as female behaviour. In fact the men usually appear in a worse light. One aspect that seems relevant is that the Greek heroines are often positioned as occupying a different moral stance from their male counterparts and appealing to values that, regardless of how they were viewed in ancient times, we might consider today as preferable to those of the male characters. For example, Hecuba in *The Trojan Women* (415 BC) by Euripides (480-406 BC) assumes a superior moral position in pleading that the women in her court be treated with respect and dignity rather than being distributed like chattel amongst the victorious warriors. In the middle of the play, the callous murder of Hector's infant son Astyanax by throwing him from the castle walls confirms the level of inhumanity of the Greek warriors.

Medea in Euripides's *Medea* (431 BC) claims the sanctity of her marriage against the wishes of Jason to abandon her. The play can be acted as an evenly matched conflict between two people who by the end of the play have both suffered and have mortally wounded each other. But recent productions by women have tended to diminish the character of Jason and have shown Medea, in spite of her monstrous actions, to be someone with whom they can identify. Euripides's play, *Medea*, is ideologically conflicted, meaning that there are some feminist ideas present while also reinforcing patriarchal ideology in parts of the play. But it has been seen by some as one of the first works of feminism, with Medea as a feminist heroine. Euripides' treatment of gender is the most sophisticated one to be found in the works of any ancient Greek writer, and Medea's opening speech to the Chorus is perhaps classical Greek literature's most eloquent statement about the injustices that befall women.

To give an example of Medea's heroic stand for herself against patriarchal Greek society, some dialogues of Medea which hints towards the birth of feminism in as early as the ancient Greek theatre.

*"Of all creatures that can feel and think,  
we women are the worst treated things alive"*<sup>4</sup>

*"Woman quails at every peril,  
Faint-hearted to face the fray and look on steel;  
But when in wedlock-rights she suffers wrong,  
No spirit more bloodthirsty shall be found."*<sup>5</sup>

*"we [women] bid the highest price in dowries  
just to buy some man  
to be dictator of our bodies [...]  
How that compounds the wrong!"*<sup>6</sup>

The relationship between the Chorus and Medea is one of the most interesting in all of Greek drama. The women are alternately horrified and enthralled by Medea, living vicariously through her. They both condemn her and pity her for her horrible acts, but they do nothing to interfere. Powerful and fearless, Medea refuses to be wronged by men, and the Chorus cannot help but admire her as, in taking her revenge, she avenges all the crimes committed against all of womankind. We are not, as in Aeschylus' "Oresteia", allowed to comfort ourselves with the restoration of male-dominated order: "Medea" exposes that order as hypocritical and spineless. In the character of Medea, we see a woman whose suffering, instead of ennobling her, has made her into a monster. She is fiercely proud, cunning and coldly efficient, unwilling to allow her enemies any kind of victory. She sees through the false pieties and hypocritical values of her enemies, and uses their own moral bankruptcy against them. Her revenge is total, but it comes at the cost of everything she holds dear. She murders her own children in part because she cannot bear the thought of seeing them hurt by an enemy.

The characters of Clytemnestra, Medea, Antigone and Hecuba can be represented as women who have been victimized but fight back, who empower themselves and are empowered, by the support of other women, to take action to overturn their oppression. Although the transgressive nature of their deeds causes some difficulty, the women are often provoked by male abuse, and their actions can be shown to be justified on those grounds. These are proud, noble women who have been mistreated and the audience's sympathies are engaged because they can identify with that abuse and feeling of

outrage. Their actions, although unacceptable as social behaviour, can seem appropriate within the context of the drama. These women all express values that oppose the patriarchal order and their viewpoints resonate in today's more sexually liberated, divorce-prone society where women have gained unprecedented power in government and the workforce but continue to strive for equality, respect and control over their own bodies. Medea's rage is fully understandable to a modern audience because she has sacrificed so much to help her husband.

Another dimension that offers a potentially feminist slant in Greek tragedy is the relationship between the female characters. The expression of solidarity amongst women to overcome oppression is a common motif of Greek tragedy. In her hour of need Medea calls on the complicity of the women around her to help in her campaign of revenge against the husband who has betrayed her. Although Medea does not gain explicit sympathy for her actions, there is amongst the women a sense of female solidarity against male oppression. The nurse and the chorus of women do not agree with the nature of Medea's actions but by their decision to keep silent and not interfere with her, they tacitly support her and become accessories to the crime. The representation of 'feminine excess' in plays like *Medea* and *The Trojan Women* seems to strike a chord with modern audiences, possibly because of the issues they expose about gender identity and marital relations. According to Helene Foley,

*'It is by and large the outrageous, courageous, untraditional, and often androgynous female figures...who have been most performed and reworked to heighten the gender issues in these plays on the late twentieth-century stage.'*<sup>7</sup>

Edith Hall has also commented on the treatment of gender roles and marriage in Greek tragedy:

*"The single most important reason why Greek tragedy was rediscovered by women in the 1970s and 1980s was because it gave an appearance of honesty concerning the opportunities life afforded their ancient counterparts, and especially concerning the relatively greater importance of affective ties with children, siblings and parents compared to those with lovers and husbands. Greek tragic narratives are strong on marital breakdown and stepfamilies, but weak on what we call 'romantic' liaisons."*<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, many female contemporary theatre directors and dramatists have turned to Greek drama in the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first, having discovered that while Greek drama was written by men for a mainly (if not exclusively) male audience, female characters in fifth-century drama often possess a strength of purpose, an ability to challenge male oppression and a sense of female solidarity that are often lacking in theatrical figures from later centuries. While scholars such as Sue-

Ellen Case have emphasized the misogynist features underlying these plays, and classicists such as Froma Zeitlin have argued that in their original social context the female characters, actions and reactions are all used finally to serve masculine ends, modern productions have often employed these dramas to serve female ends, sometimes by creating sympathy for the female protagonist in a relatively faithful rendition of the original and sometimes by changing parts of the play or ironizing the patriarchal aspects to make a more feminist statement. In the complex art of theatre, actors, directors, designers and writers (including translators) all have had a role in the way that these plays are performed and perceived. For women who challenge and rebel against patriarchal structures in modern times, the Greek tragic heroines, and especially Antigone, who enters the political arena and challenges the political status quo, can provide alternative models in the power relations between men and women and have been used to question conventional notions of civic authority as well as family and marriage.

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# Elements of Yakshagana incorporated in Girish Karnad's Play *Hayavadana*

Priyanshi Agrawal\*

Yakshagana is a very popular traditional theatre art in Karnataka that amalgamates dance, music, dialogue, costume, make-up, and stage techniques with a unique style and form. It is traditionally presented from dusk to dawn. Its stories are drawn from Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata and other epics from both Hindu and Jain traditions. *Sugriva Vijaya* by Kandukuru Rudrakavi is one of the earliest examples of Yakshagana play.

Yakshagana literally means the song (gana) of the yaksha (nature spirits). In Indian mythology, yaksha are a kind of nature-spirits, who are generally benevolent but sometimes mischievous, capricious, sexually rapacious, or even murderous nature spirits who are the custodians or guardians of natural treasures that are hidden inside the earth and in the root of trees. In general terms, it can be said that yaksha means a representative of God or a type of demi God.

Rising out of the Bhakti movement in South India, which was a movement between 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries patronizing the Gods Vishnu and Shiva, as juxtaposition of the classical dance forms and folk art Yakshgana was first introduced in Udupi by Madhvacharya's disciple Naraharitirtha. It has existed under different names at least since 16<sup>th</sup> century, Yakshagana is the scholastic name (used for the last 200 years) for art forms formerly known as *kelike*, *ata*, *bayalata*, and *dasavatara*.

Yakshagana is performed in dance-drama style, blending an amalgamation of folk dance with dialogue seamlessly. The performance begins at twilight, typically in the open air, and lasts through the night. The performers are divided into the "himmela" (Kannada for 'the group at the back') – a background group comprising of the musicians and a "bhagvatha", and the "munmela" (Kannada for 'the group in the front') – the performers who enact the story through dance and dialogue. The bhagvatha acts as the storyteller, introducing the story to the audience in the first act.

A characterizing feature of Yakshagana is the vibrant and colourful costumes, the elaborate make-up, head-dress and masks. One can make out the standard character types from their costume and colour of make-up. For e.g. black and red make-up indicates a demonic figure, while pinkish yellow and a teardrop shaped turban is reserved for the heroic character.

Influence of Yakshagana on Girish Karnad came at a very impressionable young age when in Sirsi, Karnataka he was exposed to the travelling theatre troupes, Natak Mandalis, through his parents who were deeply interested in it and the servants of the

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household. It enriched his mind with all kinds of stories – folk, Purana, Ramayana, Mahabharat, etc.

Hayavadana is one such play that incorporates many elements of Yakshagana. As Karnad points out,

"It was when I was focusing on the question of the folk forms and the use of masks and their relationship to theatre music that my play, Hayavadana suddenly began to take shape in my head" (Girish Karnad, "Theatre in India" 346.)

The playwright here employs the conventions of folk theatre such as masks, curtains, mime, songs, the commentator-narrator, dolls, horse-man, the story within a story facilitating mixture of the human and the non-human to create a strange magical world.

One of the main feature of a Yakshagana performance is that the bhagvatha i.e. sutradhar plays a key role in it, In essence, he is similar to a narrator in any play, except that his narration may even accompany the performance, portraying the story as it is being narrated. While every performer in a Yakshagana performance has a role to play, it is the *bhagvatha* who holds the story together; Karnad's Hayavadana is a key text in which this feature is seen i.e. it has been narrated by a bhagvatha. He is the commentator-narrator that keeps the audience up-to date on the happenings of the play, he is responsible for directing the production and his is the first act on the stage, narrating the story through a combination of dialogue and singing, often infusing it with humour. He uses a finger cymbal, called a *thaala* to keep the beat.

Another feature that makes this play very much identifiable with a Yakshagana is the use of mask, to project the personality of different characters. In the beginning of the play Devadatta appears on the stage wearing a pale-coloured mask and Kapila a dark mask. Later on, to signify the transposed heads, their masks are interchanged.

The play begins with the bringing of the mask of Lord Ganesha, the presiding deity of traditional theatre on the stage and his worship like a typical "Yakshagana" play. The Bhagavata accompanied by musicians, sings verses in praise of Lord Ganesha. At the outset the theme of the play is introduced as Ganesha possessing the head of an elephant and human body symbolizes incompleteness. As the Bhagavata comments,

"An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly whichever way you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection of incompleteness. Could it be that this image of purity and holiness, this Mangalamoorthy, intends to signify by his very appearance that the completeness of God is something no poor mortal can comprehend . . .?" (*Hayavadana*, 1)

Another feature of Yakshgana in Hayavadana is the use of a half-curtain. Traditionally this technique is used to prolong the introduction of a character, revealing them slowly and deliberately to make their entrance more exciting, but in this play it is used for comic effect as his horse's head keeps popping out and he continues to duck

behind the curtain. Then curtains again are used in the act of appearance and disappearance of Goddess Kali. One of the very important events in the play which is Sati of Padmini is shown through the use of curtain on which is painted the fire, and till very end of the play this curtain is present on one corner of the stage.

In the play itself it is written –

“Two stage-hands enter and hold up a half-curtain, about six feet in height – the sort of curtain used in Yakshatgana or Kathakali.” (*Hayavadana*, 5)

Even this employment of stage-hands in the play is an element of stage techniques used in Yakshagana.

Another feature of yakshgana is seen through the amalgamation of song and dialogue, there are many instances where songs are used in the play, in fact the main plot of the play is introduced to us through a song, when the Bhagvata sings –

“Two friends there were – one mind, one heart. They saw a girl and forgot themselves. But they could not understand the song she sang.” (*Hayavadana*)

To which the female chorus replies with another song -

“Why should love stick to the sap of a single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many-petalled, many-flowered lantana, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower?” (*Hayavadana*)

These songs set the whole mood of the play along with introducing the audience with what they are going to witness by preparing us for the desire of Padmini for completeness; and it sets the main plot of the play into motion.

Influence of Yakshagana can further be observed in the act of mime. At various places we observe how actors use mime to indicate or show something like knocking, felling of tree, cart riding, etc. Actual cart isn't brought out on the stage.

The use of dolls is again a feature of Yakshagana. The dolls speak more fluently than human beings. They introduce comic features by arguing with each other. They enter into the dreams of Padmini and disclose her secrets to the audience, make us aware of the truth. These inanimate things understand what living beings could not. They think of themselves as human beings, are proud and cannot bear anyone making fun of them or ignoring them.

There is also the use of myth at many places that allude to the stories from Ramayana and other epics (Sati- Mahabharat). As Yakshgana traditionally borrowed its topic from these epics.

In Hayavadana the "Yakshagana" folk theatre idiom transcends regional or linguistic barrier without losing its essence. It comes to the forefront that the main purpose of Karnad's search was not to revive traditional but to understand and assimilate it for creative use. Thus, through the amalgamation of Brechtian form of theatre (Epic

theatre) and folk theatre strategies – having taken the sources of themes from Indian myths and tales, Karnad seeks to present them in a modern setting. Infact use of Epic theatre only highlights the manifold aspects of the traditional theatre. It is in the play, the characters are engaged in the mad dance of incompleteness. The problem is eternal: an individual aspiring for the ideal and Karnad's ultimate design is to make the audience aware of the fact that ideal is always unattainable.

The bhagavata narrates how far Padmini the central character of the play, divides herself between Devadatta (the mind and intellectual) and Kapila (the body and sensual) with a conviction of attaining both, but, attaining neither completely, ends herself. Karnad draws the attention of the audience towards the frustrated desire (incomplete desire) of the decentred modern self through Padmini.

Thus the conclusion can be drawn that Karnad is an exemplary writer who by successfully employing Yakshgana has made the play *Hayavadana* rich and evergreen, and conspicuously this only seeks to highlight the sense of India's rich cultural past and traditional heritage.

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## संवाद / गिरीश कर्नाड से गौतम चटर्जी 'दृष्टि ही साथ देती है, अनुभव के पार ले जाती है'

गौतम चटर्जी\*

शायद यह उनका अन्तिम संवाद था। क्योंकि लौटने के बाद पता चला वे लगभग निर्वाक हो गये हैं। न बोलते हैं न कहते हैं किसी से कुछ। लेकिन ऐसा मैंने सोचा नहीं था जब उन्होंने लम्बी सांस लेकर कहा था, 'दृष्टि पाने में ही पूरा जीवन बीता। दृष्टि ही साथ देती है और हमें अनुभवों के पार ले जाती है।' उच्चारित करते हुए उन्होंने आंखें बन्द कर रखी थी।

उनके पूरे लेखन पर संवाद दो बार में पूरा हुआ था। पहली बार 2005 में सुयोग बना जब उन्होंने अपना अन्तिम नाटक अंग्रेजी में लिखा 'हीप ऑफ ब्रोकेन इमेजेस'। यानी 'खण्डित छवियों का ढेर'। पहली बातचीत में उनके नाटकों को लेकर ही देर तक बातें हुई थीं लेकिन वे व्यक्तिगत अधिक होती गयी थीं। उनका फिल्मों में विभिन्न भाषाओं में अभिनय करना, रंगकर्म के बारे में सोचना, संगीत नाटक अकादमी से जुड़ना और निजी अनुभवों का अतीतरागात्मक संस्मरण उस बातचीत के केन्द्र में आ गये थे। उनके सम्पूर्ण लेखन की कर्मशः विकसित होती गयी प्रक्रिया या विकासक्रम, रचनाशीलता के अनिवार्य विचार और दर्शन तथा मूल विचार को नितान्त अपनी कलाभाषा देने की आकुलता ये सब हमारी दूसरी बातचीत के केन्द्र में आ गये जो पिछले साल सम्भव हो सकी जब वे प्रायः ही अस्वस्थ रहे। हमने उनके प्रारम्भिक दो नाटकों 'ययाति' और 'तुगलक' का जिक्र छोड़ा इस तरह कि सिर्फ वे कहते रहें और हम सुनते रहें। बाद में 'नागमंडल', 'हयवदन', 'तलेडंडा', 'दी ड्रीम्स ऑफ टीपू सुल्तान' और 'अग्नि और बरखा' अन्य प्रसंग बने। हमने सोचा कि वे हमारे छोड़ने से उत्तेजित हो उठेंगे जैसा कि हमें 1990 में कोलकाता के नन्दन परिसर में फिल्मसमारोह के दौरान हुई मुलाकात और दिल्ली की उस पहली बातचीत से बनी धारणा के आधार पर लगा था। लेकिन वे शान्त थे। उनके स्वभाव का यह पक्ष मेरे सामने पहली बार उद्घाटित हो रहा था। और यह पक्ष तीन घंटे की उस बातचीत में अन्त तक रहा। या कहें, उनके इस पार्थिव अन्त तक।

उन्होंने जीवन भर लिखा अंग्रेजी और कन्नड में और बातचीत की सिर्फ अंग्रेजी में। बाहर भी और घर में भी। जबकि वे कन्नडभाषी थे और उनकी मातृभाषा थी कोंकणी। उनके नाटकों का हिन्दी में अनुवाद अंग्रेजी से ही होता रहा है और इस नाटक का अभी तक नहीं हुआ है। हिन्दी रंगपरिवेश को इसकी जानकारी भी नहीं है। जैसे गिरीश से वरिष्ठ नाटककार बादल सरकार बांग्ला में लिखते थे और अनुवाद हिन्दी में होता था। लेकिन जीवन के अन्तिम दिनों में जब उन्होंने तीन खंडों में अपनी आत्मकथा लिखी 'पुरोनो काशुन्दी' तो न इसकी जानकारी अभी तक हिन्दी परिवेश को हो पायी है न बांग्ला परिवेश को ही। गिरीश की भाषासम्बन्धी ये सब बातें मुझे पहली बार उसी पहली बातचीत से पता चली थीं। उन दिनों वे काशी हिन्दू विश्वविद्यालय के एक परिषद के सदस्य भी हुआ करते थे। इस नाटक का बंगलोर के ही रंगमंच पर उसी वर्ष मंचन हुआ। मंचन कन्नड में 'ओडाकलु बिम्ब' नाम से हुआ और निर्देशन भी उन्होंने ही किया। यह नाटक अंग्रेजी में लिखने वाले भारतीय लेखक पर है। नाटक का सेट एक टीवी स्टूडियो का है और इसमें सिर्फ एक महिला चरित्र है जो अंग्रेजी की प्रोफेसर है और कन्नड में लघु कहानियां लिखती है। काफी कुछ लिखने के बावजूद जब वह पाती है

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\* कलाविद् एवं रंगकर्मी

कि वह अपरिचय की स्थिति ही जी रही और सफल नहीं है तो वह अंग्रेजी में लिखने लगती है और बेस्ट सेलर हो जाती है। उसके बारे में विभिन्न स्क्रीन पर परिचर्चा तो कभी साक्षात्कार आने लगते हैं लेकिन वह पाती है कि स्क्रीन पर उसका चेहरा खंडित है। इतनी कहानी सुनाने के बाद गिरीश बताने लगे – 'नाट्यशास्त्र में दस प्रकार के रूपकों का उल्लेख है जिसके अनुसार ही भारत में नाटक लिखे जाने चाहिए। इन रूपकों में से एक है भाण। यह नाटक उसी रूपक में लिखा गया है। यह एकल अभिनय उस प्रथम प्रस्तुति में अरुन्धति नाग ने किया था। यह नाटक आत्मकथात्मक है और यह एकांकी है।'

मैंने सिर्फ यह कहा था कि आपको नहीं लगता कि नाटक 'ययाति' के रचनासौष्ठव पर विदेशी नाटकों का प्रभाव है ? उन्होंने न सिर्फ यह स्वीकार किया बल्कि इस आत्मस्वीकार के साथ उन्होंने यह भी बताया कि किन लेखकों से वे उन दिनों प्रभावित थे और किन नाटकों का प्रभाव इस नाटक पर है। वे बोलें, 'जिन दिनों मैं ययाति लिख रहा था उन दिनों मैं यूरोपीय नाटककारों से विशेष प्रभावित था। जैसे मुख्य रूप से सार्त्र और कामू से। सार्त्र के 'दी फ्लाइज' और 'नो एग्जिट' तथा कामू के 'क्रॉस पर्पज', 'कैलिगुला', 'दी जस्ट ऐसेसिन्स', 'दी पजेस्ड' एवं 'रिक्वाएम फॉर ए नन' मेरे पास और मेरे साथ रहते थे सदैव। उन दिनों मुझ पर ही नहीं, लगभग प्रत्येक भारतीय लेखक पर इन दोनों लेखकों का प्रभाव रहा करता था। यह 1958 के बाद की बातें हैं जब मैं बीस इक्कीस साल का हुआ करता था। कामू के मिथ ऑफ सिसिफस या आउटसाइडर या दी फॉल या फिर सार्त्र के नॉसिया से ही मेरा जेहन बन चुका था। 1960 में ऑक्सफोर्ड गया था पढ़ने। ययाति के पूरे लेखन स्वरूप में यूरोपीय लेखकों के नाटकों का फॉर्म स्पष्ट झलकता है। यह मेरा दूसरा नाटक था। पहला नाटक कन्नड में लिखा था 'मां निषाद'। यह एकांकी था। लौटकर 1964 में मुझे लगा कि भारतीय परिवेश पर कोई ऐतिहासिक नाटक लिखना चाहिए जो ग्रैंड स्केल यानी व्यापक स्तर के परिवेश पर लिखा जाय जिसमें कम से कम पचास चरित्र हों। तो मैंने लिखा 'नाडेडु बंडा डरि' यानी तुगलक। इस नाटक को कई निर्देशकों ने मंचस्थ किया जैसे इब्राहिम अल्काजी, मनोहर सिंह, बी वी कारन्त, दिनेश ठाकुर और श्यामानन्द जालान। कारन्त जी ने ही इसका हिन्दी अनुवाद किया था। श्यामानन्द जी ने इसे बांग्ला में किया। दिल्ली नाट्य विद्यालय में पहली बार यह 1965 में मंचित हुआ था। तब तक मुझे यह अहसास नहीं था कि लेखन आत्मसंवाद को साझा करने का उत्कृष्ट माध्यम है। उस उम्र में आत्मसाक्षात्कार का भारतीय दर्शन नहीं, अस्तित्ववाद के प्रति सार्त्र और कामू की दृष्टियां थीं। कामू तो तब तक काफी मेटाफिजिकल हो गये थे लेकिन सार्त्र पूरी तरह मार्क्सवादी विचारधारा और कीर्कगार्ड के अस्तित्ववादी दर्शन को अपने आचरण में ढाल चुके थे। पूरी दुनिया उन्हें सुन रही थी। पश्चिम बंगाल में वामपंथ था और नक्सली प्रवृत्तियों ने भी उसी यानों साठ के दशक में ही सिर उठा ली थी। इतिहास से चरित्रों को लाने की मेरी भूख तो तृप्त हुई लेकिन फिर भी तृप्ति नहीं मिली। एक बेचैनी हमेशा चलती रहती थी। पच्चीस से पैंतीस साल की उम्र में भारतीय युवा रचनाओं में भी ऐसे ही सोचता है। श्याम बेनेगल, अदूर गोपालकृष्णन, जी अरविन्दन, शाजी करुन आदि उसी दौर में बड़े हो रहे थे लेकिन बांग्ला में रंगकर्म कला और विचार दोनों ही स्तरों पर शीर्ष पर था। मराठी, गुजराती और दक्षिण में उसी का प्रभाव बन रहा था। तब तक सत्तर का दशक शुरू नहीं हुआ था। साठ के दशक में असन्तोष, अस्वीकार, प्रतिरोध और प्रतिवाद में मुक्ति का स्वर ढूँढने की परिपाटी विकसित हो चुकी थी। यह मैं सिर्फ नाटकों की बात कर रहा। हिन्दी फिल्मों की नहीं। हिन्दी रंगकर्म तो था ही नहीं, यानी आधुनिक हिन्दी रंगकर्म की रूपरेखा तक तक बनी नहीं थी, बन रही थी और अल्काजी के साथ बन चली थी। वहीं से हिन्दी रंगकर्म दिखने भी लगा। साठ और सत्तर के दशकों में ही हिन्दी में सर्वाधिक और उत्तम नाटक लिखे और खेले गये। अन्यथा हमारे पास सिर्फ बांग्ला रंगकर्म था और वह भी शिशिर कुमार भादुड़ी का। वे टैगोर के लिखे नाटक कम प्रस्तुत करते थे।

शम्भू मित्र ने अधिक प्रस्तुत किया। आपको बुरा लग सकता है यदि मैं कहूँ कि टैगोर एक महान कवि थे लेकिन नाटककार वे दूसरे दर्जे के थे यानी मिडियाकर। यही बात मैंने पिछले दिनों कही तो बांग्लाभाषियों को बुरा लगा ...'

'आपने उनका नाटक 'राजा' पढ़ा है ?' – मैंने पूछा।

'देखा था। वही शम्भू मित्रा का। बाद में पढ़ा भी। लेकिन मेरी धारण अभी तक नहीं बदल सकी है। उन्हें सिर्फ कविता लिखनी चाहिए थी।'

'इसमें जनसंघर्ष है लेकिन इससे पहले आत्मसाक्षात्कार की तैयारी। और आप अभी नाट्यशास्त्र की बात कर रहे थे। भरत ने नाटकों को कविता और रंगमंच पर इन कविताओं के मंचन को दृश्यकाव्य कहा है। यानी नाटक दृश्यकाव्य हैं। तो टैगोर ने भरतार्थ में नाटकों के रूप में कविताएं ही तो लिखी हैं ...'

'हो सकता है' – गिरीश बोले – 'मैंने पिछले दिनों यूनेस्को को अपना वर्ल्ड थियेटर डे मैसेज भेजा था जो 2002 में 27 मार्च को दुनिया भर में जारी हुआ था। उसमें मैंने रंगकर्मियों को यही कहा था कि वे साहस के साथ रंगकर्म तो करें ही, जो सही नहीं है उसे साहस के साथ कहें भी कि यह गलत है। किसी कवि का नाम हो जाय आर उसे नोबेल पुरस्कार मिल जाय तो ऐसा नहीं हो जाता कि वह जो भी लिखेगा या जिस भी फॉर्म में लिखेगा वह उत्कृष्ट होगा। सार्त्र को भी मिला था नोबेल सम्मान और उसे लौटा दिया था ...'

'इसलिए कि उन्हें साहित्य के लिए मिला था। वे दार्शनिक थे। और उन्हें दर्शन के लिए दिया जाना था ...'

'लेकिन उनके नाटकों में उनका दर्शन ही तो है' – वे बोले– 'नाटकों में लेखक का दर्शन या विचार या फिलोजॉफी ही तो होता है। क्या ययाति या तुगलक में कोई विचार नहीं ? या बाद में सत्तर के दशक में मैंने हयवदन लिखा तो क्या उसमें कोई सन्देश या विचार या दर्शन नहीं ?

'ययाति की कथा महाभारत में है। और हयवदन की कहानी पुराण में है। स्वाभाविक है दोनों नाटकों में भारतीय दर्शन ही तो है' – मैंने स्पष्ट किया।

'एग्जैक्टली, यही तो मैं भी कह रहा' – गिरीश की शान्ति संतुष्ट हुए। वे काफी कुछ कहना चाह रहे थे लेकिन मानो जुबान को कोई रोक रहा था। मुख्य रूप से देह में पनप चुकी कोई बीमारी। वे रूक रूक कर बोल रहे थे। बाद में उन्होंने बताया भी कि यदि प्रवाह में कोई कठिन शब्द आ जा रहा और उसे बोलने में वे दिक्कत महसूस कर रहे तो वे उसकी जगह बोलने के लिए कोई आसान शब्द चुन ले रहे जैसे फ्लावर की जगह लीफ। वे जाहिर है अंग्रेजी में बोल रहे थे – 'साठ के दशक के अन्त या सत्तर के आरम्भ तक मुझे यह समझ आ गया था कि मुझे अपना भारतीय अर्थ में मौलिक फॉर्म नाटकों में ढूँढ़ लेना है और रचनाप्रक्रिया को अनुभव आत्मसंवाद या आत्मसाक्षात्कार के स्वाद में बदलना चाहिए। तभी मुझे तृप्ति मिल सकेगी। लेकिन ऐसा मैं कर तो रहा था पूरी तरह कर नहीं पा रहा था। सत्तर के ही मध्य तक मैं फिल्मों में अभिनय भी करने लगा जिसकी परिणति देवआनन्द के साथ की फिल्म मनपसन्द हुई। मैंने उसे इसलिए स्वीकार किया था क्योंकि यह बर्नाड शॉ के माई फेयर लेडी पर बन रही थी। अस्सी और नब्बे के दशकों में मेरे सामाजिक सरोकार बहुत बढ़ा दिये गये जब मैंने संगीत नाटक अकादमी ज्वाइन किया। दो बातें तब भी मेरे जेहन में चहलकदमी कर रही थीं भले ही मैं एक प्रकार से सफल था। एक अपने मौलिक नाट्य फॉर्म तलाशने की जिजीविषा। जो अपने दोस्तों के अनुसार मैंने ढूँढ़ ली थी। अब रह गयी थी अपने साथ संवाद यानी आत्मसाक्षात्कार स्थापित करने की जिजीविषा। वह नब्बे के दशक तक या कहें 2005 तक नहीं

स्थापित हो सका। तब मैंने सोचा क्यों न आत्मकथा लिखूं। कन्नड और अंग्रेजी में लिखता हूं। अपने ही जीवन को लिखूं। फिर यह कौंधा कि क्यों न इस विषय पर नाटक ही लिख डालूं। और तब मैंने वह नाटक लिखा जो आपने भी देखा है। कन्नड समझने में दिक्कत आयी होगी।'

'नहीं। रंगभाषा सशक्त थी' – मैंने कहा। लेकिन कन्नड में असफल लेखिका का अंग्रेजी में सफल हो जाने के बाद आईने में अपने दरकते या खंडित हुए चेहरे को देखकर यथार्थ को समझ पाना या विभाजित मन की नियति को त्रासदी के तौर पर लेना कि वह सफल हो सकी अपनी भाषा में नहीं बल्कि विदेशी भाषा में तो पश्चाताप और आत्मग्लानि से भरा मन उसके लिए आत्मसाक्षात्कार का सोपान तो नहीं बन सका, यह मैंने नहीं कहा। किन्तु गिरीश जारी थे –

'इस नाटक के साथ अन्ततः आत्मसंवाद स्थापित हो सका। मैं तृप्त हुआ। अवार्ड, पुरस्कार और सम्मानों से लेखक तृप्त नहीं होता। आत्मसाक्षात्कार ही एकमात्र मार्ग है। एक प्रशस्त मार्ग। प्रकाश से भरा। काश मैं एक और नाटक या नाटक नहीं तो कुछ और लिख सकता। लेकिन मेरी देह जीर्ण होती चली जा रही। और अब मैं मृत्यु की तरफ हो। जीवन का क्लाइमेक्स। वृद्ध ययाति को आर जीना था। संसार को भोगने की इच्छा और बढ़ी तो उसने अपने बेटे की युवा देह ले ली। मैं क्या करूं ! ऐसा नहीं कि मैं मिडियाकर रहा हूं। मैंने भी सोचा है मृत्यु पर। और वर्षों तक सोचा है। इसीलिए लिखा अग्नि और बरखा या तलेडंडा लेकिन मृत्यु तो फिर भी है। भय फिर भी है। मृत्यु से साक्षात्कार ही मेरी परिणति है। मृत्यु से मुक्ति नहीं।'

आप एक और नाटक लिख सकते हैं, अपने पहली एकांकी की तरह, अभी की मनस्थिति पर ... ?

बिल्कुल फुसफुसाहट—सी उपांशु वाणी में उन्होंने कहा – मैं एक कविता लिखना चाहता हूं। एक एपिक पाएम।'

उनके इस आप्तउच्चार में एक गहन मौन था।

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