Chapter II

Narrative and Resistance

Narrative, an inevitable part of our lives, is implicit in everything which we interact with. It is, in fact, a universal form found in every human culture. Aesthetically, narrative is an integral and pervasive element in all forms of literary and artistic expressions. It can be anything that tells or presents a story; be it a text, a picture, a performance, or a combination of these. In other words, it is a form of communication which presents a sequence of events caused and experienced by characters in genres like novels, plays, films, comic strips, and so on. Narrative is, therefore, an indirect way of representing a reality. Narrative can be appropriated to represent the self or the identity in various discursive practices. Language or its analogues often assumes the centre in many narratives.

In postcoloniality resistance is an inevitable response to and consequence of oppression. Resistance spontaneously evolves out of the inequality of power relations. Resistance is variously expressed as centrifugal reactions like different forms of counter culture. Mainstream narratives endorse the hierarchy of power relations and conform to conventions of language and other forms of hegemony. Narrative
appropriated by the colonized are counter hegemonic and alternative forms of discourses. They try to retard the oppressive strategies perpetuated by the colonialist discourses, manifested in the narrative forms of Eurocentric genres.

Therefore, in the postcolonial context, narrative’s relationship with resistance is vital. Of the diverse uses of narratives, its use as a tool of resistance is the most significant one. The conventional narrative styles followed by different genres of literature are too rigid to defy structural patterns. As this rigid mould seems to be an obstacle to the true representation of the self, many contemporary writers try to subvert the structures of the conventional narrative. They incorporate different kinds of languages, narratives and styles, to the conventional mode and make the literary genres a site for new experiments. Thus, the writers of the postcolonial world, be it poets, novelists, or playwrights, use the power invested in the narratives to resonate with their resistance to dominant European forms. As paradigms of language, narratives are endowed with latent power which can be challenged as forms of resistance. So narratives, like derivative discourses, can be appropriated into analogues of power.

The postcolonial theatre is, therefore, a part of this resistance echoed in literature by the colonial subjects. In order to foil the dominating tendencies of western forms the postcolonial dramatists have conducted
experiments in the narrative strategies and in their theatrical performances. They have generated new theatrical forms by negotiating between indigenous performance modes and imported imperial culture. The traditional, “contamination” of Standard English and the “hybridization” of western forms which they have explored, are part of a programmatic strategy used by the postcolonial dramatists to subvert the hierarchies of power. The result is a wholly new form of theatre, which is neither a western mimetic form nor a purely indigenous one, but a hybrid of both. Thus, the colonial people have used theatre as a cultural/political tool of resistance and as a weapon in the struggle against European neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism.

The widespread cultural domination and oppression by the colonial powers is one of the defining features of postcolonialism. Postcolonial drama can be traced to the articulation of resistance to the cultural dominance and oppression. The long years of colonial subjugation robbed the indigenous writers of their own voices and reduced them to mimicry or silence. Their cultural identity was submerged in the invasion of the colonial culture. They were devoiced or silenced by the cultural hegemony practiced by the colonizers. The educated modernized subjects’ unquestioned adaptations or mimicry of western plays failed to reach the common people as they could not appeal to their sensibility. These dramatists began to
perceive the existing western theatrical tradition inadequate to express their cultural ambivalence. The playwrights’ themselves were confronted with an identity crisis in such adaptations. Their decisive realization that a return to their indigenous culture and traditions alone could bring a distinct voice and identity, resulted in the emergence of the postcolonial theatre.

The postcolonial fusion of native and western conventions reflects the playwright’s desire to express his own postcolonial identity and heritage, rather than using either a strictly traditional or a western dramatic style. In this context, Bill Ashcroft observes in *Post-Colonial Transformation*:

The most sustained, far-reaching and effective interpretation of postcolonial resistance has been the ‘resistance to absorption,’ the appropriation and transformation of dominant technologies for the purpose of re-inscribing and representing post-colonial cultural identity. (142)

Though the playwrights adopt the western conventions, they never blindly assimilate them. The theatrical conventions are appropriated and domesticated so as to convey the postcolonial cultural experience. This fusion and incorporation can also be viewed as part of a cultural resistance by the colonized people who try to naturalize the western forms.
The postcolonial theatre is thus a problematic area dealing with the intricate amalgamation of imported discourses and languages of the colonizer with the indigenous culture and language(s). It gives a very useful analytic frame for looking at the theatre, dramatic practices and theories of the former subjects who occupied the peripheries of the empire. Moreover, it is an attempt by the playwrights of these peripheries to shed their marginal position and to move on to the centre spot. Once they occupy the centre of the new nation-state, their perspective of their new position and identity has changed. The representation of their postcolonial experiences changes with respect to their point of observation or their position in the cultural hierarchy of the postcolonial society and its power structures.

The concept of resistance has always been at the centre of the struggle between imperial power and postcolonial identity. The postcolonial dramatists use “cultural resistance” as the most important tool in their dramatic productions. The term “cultural resistance,” as Stephen Duncombe observes in Cultural Resistance Reader: “is used to describe culture that is used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and/or social structure” (5). Cultural resistance works to foster or retard radical political activity. It offers a sort of “free space” for developing ideas and practices. The freedom from the limits and constraints of the dominant culture gives
ample scope for experiments with new ways of seeing and helps in
developing tools and resources for resistance. Transforming or decolonizing
the imperial culture itself is a source of cultural resistance or is an attempt to
subvert the colonial strategies that try to erase the native culture.

In the postcolonial context, cultural resistance is effected by the
process of hybridization. The colonized use the cultural tools of the masters,
carefully reshaped, to dismantle the master’s own voice or power
constructs. (Duncombe, 193). Theatre is one such tool of the master. It can
be seen as a powerful cultural expression, as it has the potential to actively
involve a wide range of physical, emotional and imaginative resources. It
can bring together many facets of cultural creativity: socio-political,
religious, ritualistic, mythological and story-telling; dance, music, satire,
mimicry, role-playing and the festive celebration of a community. In other
words, resistance can be expressed through narrative discourses like myths
and tales, rituals and ceremonies, memories and experiences. Resistance can
be demystified as a practice of everyday life. Dramatization of these cultural
practices of everyday life finds expression in the postcolonial theatre.

Drama, thus, forms an effective medium for cultural expression. The
postcolonial dramatist, as a part of cultural resistance, tries to domesticate
the techniques of western dramaturgy. Their incorporation of native forms is
in fact a part of this resistance to dominant forms. The by-product of this incorporation is a syncretic theatre which can be defined as those theatrical products which result from the interplay between the western theatrico-dramatic tradition and the indigenous performance forms of a postcolonial culture. Here the cultural resistance is, in Duncombe’s phrase, “a politics that doesn’t look like politics” (82). The politics behind cultural resistance is implicit, latent and oblique, where culture is explored to attain the desired results. Construction of cultural identity of the postcolonial subjects is one of the desired goals of cultural resistance represented in postcolonial theatre.

The postcolonial playwrights use many strategies to achieve these desired effects. The most prominent concern among all postcolonial dramatists has been a quest for their identity in the postcolonial scene. Since the postcolonial identity is a hybrid one, almost all writers have felt a craving, as Brain Crow observes in An Introduction to Post-colonial Theatre, to “return to roots” (9). This urge is expressed by the postcolonial playwrights in different ways. For Ngugi wa Thiong’o, the fundamental aim is “restoring the African personality to its true human creative potentialities in history involving a return to the roots of our being” (9). In Wole Soyinka’s plays there is a call for the evocation of an authentic
tradition in the cause of society’s transformation process which he sees as a form of “self-retrieval” or “cultural recollection” (9). Girish Karnad or Vijay Tendulkar attempt to construct a new theatrical paradigm which symbolizes the postcolonial Indian identity. The narratives of postcolonial writers are strongly anchored in the native culture. The Eurocentric/Western genres popularized by the colonial culture are selectively incorporated into the postcolonial theatre.

A similar concern for the “return to roots” can be seen in the contemporary Indian playwrights like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani and Badal Sircar. The “theatre of roots” movement in India advocate “both the need and search for the indefinable quality called “Indianness” in Indian theatre” (Crow, 9-10). Such a cultural homecoming is needed as an essential part of the process of decolonization, to recuperate their histories, social and cultural traditions, and their own narratives and discourses. K. N. Panikkar, another representative of the roots movement, also exhibits similar concerns through his Sopanam Theatre in Thiruvananthapuram. His search for a form of modern theatre that is “Indian” has led to an exploration of Sanskrit drama. The dramaturgical structures and aesthetics of Bhasa’s plays, written some time in the first few centuries A.D, have influenced Panikkar enormously.
An evaluation of the characteristics of postcolonial theatre reveals their function as a tool of cultural resistance. The ambivalent existence of the postcolonial individual has encouraged him/her to opt for a suitable form of theatre which expresses his/her ambiguous state of existence. In spite of their call to return to roots, theatre for the postcolonial playwright has been at once traditional and modern. This requirement is met by adopting a hybridized form of theatre. In postcolonial view nation and culture are hybrid and porous. This hybridity and porosity are reflected in the postcolonial theatre.

In order to achieve the hybrid forms fit to convey their unique postcolonial experiences, these playwrights have to experiment with different forms. They often blend the traditional indigenous performance arts, which need to be rediscovered and reinvented, with the sophisticated western metropolitan theatrical techniques. In this context, Brain Crow comments in his *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theatre*:

In contrast with the Western tradition of realist drama and acting, these traditional modes of performance are usually stylized, often incorporate dance, music and song and operate from an oral rather than a literary—base. (12)
Traditional modes of performance are drawn from the oral/folk traditions. The dramatists often embrace a wide range of narrative forms. They represent a rich kaleidoscope of native cultures:

Indian classical and folk forms, West African and Caribbean story telling performance, Yoruba ritual and dramas performed in honour of Ogun and other deities, Aboriginal story telling and corroborees, and preaching in black American churches. (Crow, 12)

The hybrid narrative language synthesized by them is a variegated medium with uncommon narrative energy. These narrative forms have a racial orientation. The ritual/ethnic bearing has a universal frame which is subaltern in character. If appropriated, these narrative forms can be universally used by postcolonial writers.

The postcolonial incorporation of traditional oral narratives with European literary forms has altered its rigid structuring giving rise to new patterns of narrative structures. Folklores, myths, rituals, customs, and so on flow freely into the narratives along with the use of traditional dramatic forms like Yakshagana and the Sanskrit tradition of drama like Kuyiyattam. Thus, the oral folk tradition and the traditional performances have become a source as well as inspiration for the postcolonial dramatist.
The rediscovery of indigenous performance traditions has often served to illuminate the limitations of western realism in terms of both writing and performance. The native traditions have offered a means of escape from the physical constrains of western traditions like the proscenium arch stage, which distinctively separate the worlds of stage and audience. Traditional theatres, especially Indian traditional theatres, provide: “an intimate, interactive relationship between spectators and actors and the capacity to watch performances from different angles and levels, allowing a constantly changing perception of the action” (Crow, 13). The performance in postcolonial theatre is rather interactive. This interactive nature can also be seen in carnivals and rituals which are also adopted by postcolonial dramatists. This makes the construction of cultural identity a process of collective participation and the theatrical experience collective and interactive.

The return or reversion to native traditions of performance not only provides the postcolonial dramatists with rich sources of stylistic or dramaturgical conventions and devices but also allows to tap the currents that energized the cultural past. But this return to the traditional theatre does not mean an acceptance of the traditional values associated with it. Rather, it allows the playwright with a dissenting political agenda and a contemporary sensibility to attain critical and subversive ends. Hence, he
reveals to the audience strong political and social statements about contemporary life in the guise of theatrical conventions. His attempt is to dissociate the traditional theatre from the conventional values, revive the theatre and associate it with contemporary political and aesthetic values.

Postcolonial playwrights’ resistance to western tradition can be observed in their choice of language. The choice is often a political one. As Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins observe, in *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, practice, politics*: “When a playwright chooses an indigenous language over English, s/he refuses to submit to the dominance of the imposed standard language and to subscribe to the ‘reality’ it sustains” (169). The choice of language is a political act as the writer here tries to confer on his native language the same command and reputation that any other tongue boasts off. An instance is the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o who prefers his native tongue, Gikuyu, to English for theatrical composition. Language is a deceptively political medium; it is an index of the ideology and social class of the dramatist. Though language appears to be apolitical, it is actually analogous to the ideological structure of the writer. The reality represented through language is a language specific reality which, like languages itself, is not politically neutral.

The colonial education enforced by the imperial centre was an ethnographic project aimed at erasing the identities of groups and individuals, both ethnic and national. Vernacular education was neglected
and the colonized were forced to learn the colonizer’s language for official and educational purposes. The colonial education was thus explored as a form of what Althusser calls “politics by other means,” to perpetuate and reinforce the hegemonic colonial rule. The colonial rule destroyed not only the conventional system of industrial production but also the traditional system of cultural and textual productions of identity and meaning of life. The colonial education is characterized by a utilitarian approach to the aspects of life: so, the construction of identity is governed by the tactics of survival under colonial oppression. The materialist concept of value has changed the subjects’ perspective of life. New pedagogic practices associated with the colonial education have brought about parameters of values and new standards of judgments. However, they could not wholly destroy well entrenched native cultures.

The colonial banning of native language is the first step towards the destruction of native culture. The loss of language leads to the possibility of loss of names, of oral history, and of a connection to the land. There is a correlation between the geography of a place and the psychography of the people: the self and the landscape are interrelated. Identity is often defined as a self-referential landscape. The postcolonial playwright’s return to his native language can bring back the lost dignity and sense of autonomy. The energy behind the indigenous languages is that they are intrinsically
connected to the precolonial culture. Hence, their use on the stage enables
the playwright to convey to the audience, the literal, metaphorical and
political meanings which are specific to their own culture and experiences.
Moreover, the presentation of these indigenous languages on the
stage can function as “an act of defiance and an attempt to retrieve cultural
autonomy,” in the context of the colonial authority’s banning of its use in the
public (Gilbert and Tompkins, 169). It is an oblique form of cultural
resistance.

The resistance represented by the playwrights who use English as a
basic medium of expression is much more implicit. Rather than using
Standard English, most of them opt for a necessarily modified, subverted, or
decentred form, often “contaminated” by the incorporation of the elements
of indigenous languages. Most of the postcolonial writers, as Wole Soyinka
comments, in _In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics_, are compelled to
“stress such a language, stretch it, impact and compact, fragment and
reassemble it with no apology, as required to bear the burden” (Cited in
Gilbert, 4). The colonizer’s tongue is appropriated by these writers in order
to make the dominant language voice the native’s concerns. This is what
Caliban tells Prospero in _The Tempest_: “You taught me language, and my
profit on’t / Is, I know how to curse.” (Act I, Scene II).
Language is one of the most powerful markers of colonial authority; so, a strategic alteration of its style and structure can effect the subversion of a dominant linguistic practice. This subversion is a vicarious mode of articulating resistance. In this context, Gilbert and Tompkins observe:

When playwrights interfere with received discursive codes (especially through parody) and / or introduce the rhetorical devices of other languages into English, they diminish the power invested in the colonisers’ language and re-establish local/indigenous modes of expression for theatrical representation. Inflating or deflating rhetoric, exploiting grandiloquence, or incorporating aspects of oral tradition – such as proverbs – into the dramatic text are just some of the more common ways of destabilizing ‘English’ to ensure that other languages (and their correlative cultures and histories) are voiced. (181)

This indigenizing of the colonizer’s language is essential to make the foreign tongue voice the experiences of the colonized.

The indigenizing process of imperial tongue demands much appropriation and abrogation. Words, phrases, local idioms and so on of the native language are infused to the dominant language to give it an indigenous flavour. Indigenous words that are more descriptive or accurate
than any imposed terms become adopted into English. The oral tradition of the colonized world turns out to be a suitable medium in indigenizing the western language and its theatre. As theatre deals with spoken languages, it allows the orality of postcolonial languages to be fully realized. Proverbs, which are passed on from generations to generations, recall the oral forms of history and culture, and find their place in postcolonial plays. Thus, the elements of oral/folk traditions are assimilated into the dramatic texts in largely unmediated forms. This orality of the text provides an authentic dimension to the plays.

The postcolonial playwrights, either by preferring their native languages over English or by appropriating the colonial tongue, make their linguistic medium appropriate to convey their postcolonial experiences. In this regard, Crow also observes in *An Introduction to Post-colonial Theatre*:

... though the post-colonial dramatist can hardly avoid issues of language and the ambivalent and often contradictory feelings attached to them, what needs to be stressed is the richness with which they have
created the linguistic means to render their and their people’s experiences. (8)

Hence, a strategic use of languages in postcolonial plays helps to reinvest the experiences of the colonized people and their characteristic systems of communication with a sense of power and an active place on the stage.

The postcolonial inclusions of traditional enactments such as rituals and carnivals contribute to the hybrid form of theatre. This also serves as a form of resistance to dominant European traditions. Hybridization attempts to counter the homogenization of Western theatrical traditions. In this regard, Gilbert and Tompkins observe:

Rooted in folk culture, these enactments are not only mnemonic devices that assist in the preservation of history but are also effective strategies for maintaining cultural differences through specific systems of communication – aural, visual, and kinetic – and through specific values related to local (often pre-contact) customs. (54)

These traditional elements are marked by their difference from the western realist forms. The system of communization adopted in postcolonial theatre is multimedia system. The postcolonial dramatists use these differences in the semiotic systems as a power tool to uphold and maintain their cultural identity.
The incorporation of traditional performance elements into a contemporary play makes a remarkable effect to the play’s content, structure, style, and consequently, to its overall meaning / effect. Such an appropriation or indigenizing of conventional theatre is important to convey the experiences and aspirations of the colonized people. These tendencies can be seen in the theatrical space of the former colonies, including Africa, India and the Caribbean. Traditional enactments have special functions in postcolonial societies and they are often key sites of resistance to imposed values and practices. This incorporation is, therefore, a subversive process which contains the impact of the colonial culture and its disciplinary powers. It is an attempt to thwart the hegemonic structures of the colonial culture and its homogenizing functions.

Of the various kinds of traditional enactments, ritual and carnival stand out in their difference. Intricately linked to the indigenous culture, ritual is one traditional art which makes explicit the native culture’s precolonial reality. In the colonial world, ritual’s role is a vital one; the natives have rituals for every occasion. Rituals are “always efficacious for the community and enacted for a particular audience to preserve the order and meaning of anything from harvests to marriage, birth, and death” (Gilbert and Tompkins, 57). Hence, rituals are acts based in history.
performed by “knowledgeable human agents,” for the continuance and regeneration of a specific community. Ritual is a defining characteristic of a community: each cultural community has a set of rituals which differentiates it from other communities.

Ritual and its importance to a community are comparable to drama and its function in a society. Both are similar in their transformative, translational qualities, but they are emphatically not the same. While drama is guided by an ideology or aesthetics, ritual is guided by a distinct spiritual and sacred dimension. Though ritualistic performances have entertaining values or effects, entertainment is not its ultimate goal. But rituals can be transformed into theatre easily. Once the sacred element of ritual is removed/lost, it becomes a spectacle or an entertainment. Ritual can be an ingredient of drama; but drama is not a prerequisite for ritual. Drama incorporates and secularizes rituals. Ritualization of drama is an indigenizing process by which postcolonial theatre is tempered with native performance elements. Though drama and ritual intersect at different points, they should be recognized as distinct practices.

Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson perceive the working of resistance through the enactment of rituals. The resistance operates through the construction of a field of power: the hegemony of the colonizer hems in the
culture of the colonized, limiting its influence to a restricted sphere which is
defensive and reactive. They observe that in relation to the hegemony of the
colonizer, the colonized is a subordinate cultural formation; so the colonized
develops its corporate culture through cohesive and defensive structures like
rituals (41). The hegemony and subordination are overcome by cultural
resistance in the form of rituals. Though the cultural practice of rituals is
viewed as a subculture by the colonizers, it is an essentially defensive
construction of resistance. The ritualistic practice can upset the intrusive
invasion of colonial consumerist ideologies. It is a network of kinship and an
articulation of communal space (Hall and Jefferson, 81). Rituals are
defensive cultural formations which reconfigure traditional elements to
strengthen vulnerable points of incursions by the domination of colonial
culture. Rituals have only limited political value, but they are symbolic
forms of resistance. They function at the level of a community and not at the
individual level. Rituals are collective and sub cultural solutions to the
vulnerable and inadequate sites of the cultural fabric of the colonized.

While Western drama is based, to some extent, on the principles of
Aristotelian mimesis, theatre of the colonial world is not. As ritual is the
most enduring traditional form of the postcolonial countries like India or
Nigeria, the dramatists of these countries tend to incorporate the rituals of
their indigenous culture into their plays. These combinations can provide
new performative experience and voice the change brought about by colonialism. Wole Soyinka, among other writers, interweaves elements of western drama with Yoruba rituals to situate ritual more prominently in a contemporary world. The resulting hybridity and “contamination” can provide a constructive way of locating ritual in a post-imperial context. Enactment of rituals is a symbolic act that defends an imaginative but constantly threatened space in the cultural map of the nation.

Gilbert and Tompkins discuss the two ways in which rituals are explored in postcolonial plays. One is the dramas which centre on rituals and the other is plays which use rituals as a backdrop for the action. In the first type, rituals become the determining factor of the play’s structure and style; in these plays rituals’ transformations are given prime importance in the theatrical experience. Fatima Dike’s *The Sacrifice of Kreli* (1976), and Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman* are instances of this type. In *Death and the King’s Horseman*, Soyinka succeeds in recreating the complete, credible world of African ritual. The enactment of rituals reconstructs the conventional/mythical world in the contemporary context. This element of dramaturgy can symbolically subvert the relative positions of centre and margins with respect to a postcolonial nation.
The second type of plays uses ritual more as an incidental activity, or a backdrop for the action. In these plays rituals provide a general mood of an indigenous performance. In this regard, Gilbert and Tompkins observe that rituals also provide a context or performative model:

Rather than being the central thematic and / or structural focus, ritual supports the action in such a play and tends to be used as part of a larger recuperation of tradition / history, as an expression of hybridization, as a device to establish settings / context, or as a performative model for various sections of the action / dialogue. (73)

In these plays rituals act as tools for postcolonial subversion and help in creating an overall theatrical effect as an expression of postcolonial culture. Tess Onwueme’s *The Broken Calabash* and Jack Davis’s *No Sugar* are instances of this type of plays.

There are also other instances where ritual and theatre co-exist. In Indian devotional dramas, where themes are often drawn from the epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, Hindu rituals occupy an important part. Ritual elements and dramatic elements co-exist in these plays. Moreover, there is a tradition in Indian theatre, where a play starts and ends with rituals. The preliminary rituals are prayers or invocations to Lord Ganesha for the successful completion of the play and the concluding rituals are offered as
prayer to gods asking their forgiveness for any omissions and commissions on the part of the actors. Rituals frame these plays, associating their specific theatrical activities more closely with sacred or devotional rites. Traditionally, sacred rites are part of the practice of everyday life. So, ritual co-existing with drama is a form of resistance practiced in everyday life.

Many postcolonial Indian dramatists use these traditions in their plays as a tool of indigenizing their theatre. Most explicit examples are Girish Karnad’s plays. Like a typical Yakshagana play, his Hayavadana initiates with the invocation of Lord Ganesha on the stage. Pooja is the ritual performed at the commencement of all traditional Indian theatre in which offerings are made and prayers are recited for a successful performance. The presence of Ganesha, visualized by a mask of a one-tusked elephant, serves well to establish links with traditional theatre. The play ends with Bhagavata’s prayer to god for forgiveness. Karnad’s Nagamandala also employs similar techniques in the structure of the play.

Native North American theatre and Maori theatre of New Zealand frequently begin or end with such a ritualistic moment: Maori plays often include a ceremonial welcome or blessing while in indigenous North American plays, a sacred circle ceremony invokes the gods or spirits to honour the participants or to ask for protection from evil.
As already stated, most dramatists of the postcolonial world employ indigenous rituals in their plays. More than adding to the aesthetic effect of the performance, traditional rituals serve to highlight the political dimension of the play. In this regard, Gilbert and Tompkins observe that the enactment of rituals is a subversive political act that challenges the colonial authority to ban rituals:

...the political dimension of ritual intersects with the sacred, not least because many rituals were officially banned by imperial agents. Such forbidden events became subversive activities under colonial role and can now function as symbols of liberty for an independent post-colonial system, especially when ritual is contextualized by —— and / or located in a particular community. (76)

The local flavour of the rituals helps its objective as a tool of resistance against dominant European forms and the hegemonic structures that enforce them. Like other forms of political theatre, a ritual-centred theatre foregrounds belief systems and demands some kind of active response.

Michael de Certeau provides an account of the ways in which the practices of everyday life play in the space of “the Other,” to facilitate a space for the oppressed for preserving their distinctive ways of life without
sacrificing their alterity to the dominating culture. The language of the “the Other” is more mobile than the language of the ruling class as it is distributed over different sites of culture like race, gender or class. Since the colonized is constructed as “the Other” of the colonizer, the practices of everyday life like rituals can represent the varied power structures and the cultural tension between the colonized and the colonizer in a common problematic irrespective of their special locations (58). This evolves a poetics of the oppressed, an essentially aestheticizing strategy in which the social logics informing specific forms of resistance is exchanged for a generalized account of transgression. It depends, as Toni Morrison comments, on “a Unifying myth of a common otherness” in which the qualities of the coloured and the gendered Subalterns derive an identical value from their function as negation (36). The common otherness is a broad dichotomous division. As power is absolute there is no outside from which power can be resisted. This is because all individuals are conditioned into what Jeremy Ahearne calls “the disciplinary mechanism of panoptic power as necessary elements of their functionality” (146). De Certeau believes that power is held absolutely by the colonizers. Colonization is a polar model of power structure in which sovereign power is held and exercised by the ruling class over a mass of oppressed popular subjects who lack all power. Ritual is a metalanguage offered as a resistance by the colonized as “the Other” through a practice of everyday life.
Carnival, the second type of the traditional enactments, is also marked by its difference. Though derived from pre-colonial culture, carnival, like sacred rituals, helps the postcolonial theatre to articulate the specificities of local experience. As a secular festival of the society, carnival offers a style of performance that decentres imperial conventions. Carnival is a celebration where differences dissolve. It erases social and political disparities and annihilates cultural dichotomies and ideological polarities. It is an exuberant, non-naturalistic, and self-consciously theatrical element of expression. Postcolonial theatre is based on festival enactments and it calls attention to public space, communal activity, and vernacular languages. Like ritual drama, festival drama also works towards revitalizing the folk culture even while adapting in specific tropes. Carnivalization is an oblique attempt by the marginalized to subvert marginal borders, to mix formal and vernacular languages and to occupy public space.

Carnival has emerged as one of the primary influences on Caribbean drama. Trinidad Carnival remains an important source of inspiration for theatre practitioners in the Caribbean. Carnival motifs appear with great frequency in the work of well-known playwrights such as Errol Hill, Earl Lovelace, Mustapha Matura, and Derek Walcott. Derek Walcott’s the *Joker of Servile* (1974) is an instance of carnival play. Carnival, like ritual,
provides an appropriate model for postcolonial drama; it provides a link between art and tradition necessary for the process of decolonization. Carnival is a form of resistance or oblique politics that accelerates the decolonization of theatre and thus the decolonization of the spectators’ psyche.

In shaping the stylistic devices of postcolonial theatre, music / songs and dance play a prominent role. Postcolonial inclusion of music in the plays not only helps to bring in indigenous moods, but also enhances the over all effect of the plays. In this regard, Gilbert and Tompkins observe:

When music is combined with theatre, its signifying power inevitably multiplies: in addition to its own signification, music contributes to the mise-en-scene to, for instance, enhance a mood, or effect an atmosphere. Moreover, if post-colonial theatre provides an occasion for a vocal expression of solidarity, resistance, or even presence, song can intensify the reactions of both the actors and the audience. (194)

More than literal transference of meaning the music and songs are obvious and effective means through which an indigenous culture can be staged.
Above anything else, the music and songs are likely to survive the effects of colonization. Their impact is so strong and popular that they are effective tools of decolonization.

Postcolonial dramatists make use of songs and music in variant ways. They either employ indigenous songs and music in its pure form, or use them infusing with western forms creating specific hybrid varieties. The use of indigenous songs / music recalls pre-colonial oral traditions and helps in rejecting the western dominant forms of music. The fusion and the creation of the hybridized forms facilitate the subversion of dominant traditions. This can be done by the incorporation and “contamination” of musical words, patterns and structures of the native forms. Hence, songs or music, either in pure forms or hybridized varieties, act as tools of resistance in postcolonial drama.

Music and songs also form important elements of rituals and carnivals. The incorporation of these art forms into postcolonial theatre also ensures a strategic and effective use of these elements. Songs of invocation, which depict the appearance and exit of gods, and songs of dismissal, which effect the safe passage of a dead person’s spirit into the ancestors’ realm, are all used by the postcolonial playwrights. Choral songs, another feature of rituals, are also used by these playwrights to inspire a linguistic rebellion.
against the norms of imposed rhetoric of languages. Music is also paramount to the carnival and is syncretic in composition. The continual hybridizing of Carnival’s musical base makes it a productive model for the theatre of marginalized cultures. Like the colonized, the marginalized communities can also resist the hegemonic mainstream theatrical forms that try to erase their cultural identity.

Musical instruments of the colonial world also have significance in postcolonial plays. In many African and Afro-Caribbean rituals, drums form the significant musical instrument. More than a mere accompaniment, drums are principal forces guiding the action in rituals and carnivals. It shapes the dance and song and helps to summon spiritual power(s). They are also used as a theatrical device; rather than using lighting to signify changes of location or mood, music, drumming, and songs serve the purpose. The use of Yoruba musical instruments like the bata drum, the dundun and so on can be seen in the plays of Nigerian playwrights like Wole Soyinka.

In Indian tradition, the use of song and dance as part of the very fabric of theatrical representation has been accepted as an internalized convention. It has been part of the grammar of theatrical form for centuries; from Bharata to modern times, music and dance are employed in both
classical and folk forms. It is hence accepted as part of the natural language of theatre: its use, therefore, causes no unease, except to those of who have become alienated from the tradition.

Postcolonial Indian dramatists adapt this practice of music and songs in their plays as these serve to convey emotions, moods and even help in the narration of the events. The songs of the Bhagavata in Yakshagana, for instance, are generally narrative in character and while singing them, the stress is more on its meaning than on the melody of the musical composition. In Karnad’s plays the Bhagavata’s songs serve different purposes. They introduce the story and the characters, comment on the situation and reveal the inner feelings and thoughts of the characters. More than enabling the successful portrayal of emotions, events, and feelings, music and songs enhance the total effect of the plays. It also helps the playwrights to bring in the native/ethnic culture and to give an indigenous flavour to the plays.

As a remarkable form of cultural expression, dance has a number of important functions in drama. Dance is a form of special inscription intrinsically linked to a specific culture. Hence, it is a very productive and effective form illustrating the native culture. It is also a counter-discourse against dominant western tradition. Like the use of music/songs, the use of
dance in theatre denaturalises the conventional theatre system, bringing in an alienation effect.

The widespread use of dance in indigenous drama testifies to its communicative power and subversive potential. For the oppressed characters who are denied of their right to speak verbally, dance often functions as a mode of expression and empowerment. It evolves as a locus of struggle in producing and representing individual and cultural identities. In this way, dance recuperates postcolonial subjectivity by centralising traditional non-verbal forms of self-representation. In postcolonial contexts, traditional styles of dance are often hybridized with western forms and fashion, to express a multifaceted identity possessed by the postcolonial individual. Hybridized dance forms represent a kind of communication which cannot be expressed through verbal form like music and dialogues.

Though drama is mainly concerned with acting, music and dance deserve attention as devices used for the effective rendering of the story. They make the show more entertaining and enjoyable. Moreover, music serves the need of performance. Several scenes that cannot be easily produced on the stage are made to be experienced by the spectators with the help of musical notes, particularly background music like the sound of lightning, heavenly forecasts, running of horses or chariots or singing of
birds. Dancing, on the other hand, enhances the effect of the play. Dance and music are two fascinating factors which introduce the element of wonder in a dramatic execution and speed up the effect denaturalizing process.

The politics of body has a prominent role in the postcolonial plays. In order to instigate and maintain the desired hierarchies of power, imperialism has subjected the colonized bodies to disparaging inscriptions. Race and gender, as visual markers of identity and difference, are particularly used by colonizers for this purpose. The binary categories of male/female and white/black are not simply biologically determined, but they are historically and ideologically conditioned. These constructed images of the colonized, for instance, black men for physical labour, and black women as sex objects and often sold for breeding, are widespread. Hence, roles for blacks in the western theatre have been constituted within racist discourses, with more emphasis on their supposed violence and sexuality. This kind of representation denies the colonial subject any humanity. The image of the colonized is negatively constructed through their body and sexuality. This is to consolidate the positive image of the colonizer.

The body of the colonized subject has always been an object of the colonizer’s fascination and repulsion and, in effect, possession. Though the colonized is constructed as the Other, the colonizers ironically desire to possess them. In this regard, Elleke Boehmer remarks: “[T]he Other is cast...
as corporeal, carnal, untamed, instinctual, raw, and therefore also open to mastery, available for use, for husbandry, for numbering, branding, cataloging, description or possession” (Cited in Gilbert and Tompkins, 203). An essential reinscription and self-representation of the colonized body is a highly essential strategy for reconstructing postcolonial subjectivity. Hence, current movements towards cultural decolonization involve not just verbal/textual counter-discourses, but a reviewing of the body and its signifying practices. The body is a visual paradigm of racialized and gendered discourses.

In the postcolonial theatre, the colonized body has become a site for resistant inscription. It attempts to disrupt the imposed space and signification left to it by the colonizers. In this regard, Gilbert and Tompkins observe:

The body which has been violated, degraded, maimed, imprisoned, viewed with disgust, or otherwise compromised has particular relevance to postcolonial literatures and invariably functions within some kind of allegorical framework. (221)

The personal site of the inscribed body becomes a major visual sign of a collective culture and identity. The long violated, tortured, humiliated colonial subjects are bestowed with a voice of their own through their body.
The derogated body is given an opportunity to recuperate its mutilated, incomplete state and to transform its signification and subjectivity. In the theatre, the derogated body is a potent site of representation since the constraints and oppression it endures can be visually displayed rather than simply described. The political/cultural impact of the body is related to its potential as a visual sign which functions in resonance with other visual and verbal signs.

In postcolonial plays, which foreground rituals, the body becomes a potent force. Unlike in naturalist theatre where the body undergoes a conscious and voluntary transformation so that the actor becomes a completely different fictional character, the ritual body is inscribed with symbolic and political awareness. As the site for the reception or the manifestation of gods / spirits, the ritual body baffles the imperial rationale and refuses capture and containment. The use of dance, along with music, in these ritual plays for the effect of transformation or possession, reiterates the vital role of body in performance. In this sense, performativity is the signification of the body in performance. This is part of the visual semiotics of theatre.

Costume, yet another important factor in postcolonial plays, helps in framing the spatio-temporal context of the postcolonial body. More than mere clothing for the actors, costumes are instrumental in setting the over all
mood of the play; they convey the period of action, characters’ social status and background, culture and cultural difference, and so on. The imperial/colonial discourses use costume as a marker of difference, to distinguish the “civilized” from the “savage.” But in the postcolonial scene costumes are noted for their connotative functions. They function as modifiers/qualifiers to the meanings constructed by the body on the one hand, and construct new meanings and identities on the other.

As postcolonial body symbolizes something more than an actor function, costumes perform a complex part in the theatre’s semiotic system. It helps in framing the postcolonial body. A strategic inversion of costumes can effect a change not only in its connotations but also the way in which the plays are perceived. Costumes help in the subversion of colonial status. In this regard, Gilbert and Tompkins observe:

The most obvious framing, costume, is particularly resonant since it can (mis) identify race, gender, class and creed, and make visible the status associated with such markers of difference. The paradox of costume’s simultaneous specificity and versatility makes it an unstable sign / site of power. (244) The obvious visibility of costumes on stage can perform strategic role. It helps in the subversive celebration intended by the carnival and adds to the resistance practised through carnival and ritual.
Cross-gender or cross-cultural dressing in postcolonial plays helps in further subversion of the social status in the colonial hierarchy. As an attempt at homogenization, it can depoliticize costume, body, culture, and identity. When a colonized subject wears the costume of the colonizer it serves to subvert the colonial hierarchies and resists the power inherent in the colonizer’s dress code. He tries to alter the power relations, and to become at par with the colonizer. Costume actively addresses the definition of colonized corporeality and it can be used to resist hegemonic locations of body. Thus, costume constitutes a subversive form of resistance to colonial hierarchy and colonial hegemony.

The civilizing intent of European-style clothing is an important factor which forced the natives to leave their traditional costumes. The colonized body, captured and contained by western dress, is often confronted with an identity crisis. Clothing alone does not make a White of the colonized, but it does remove him from the same class as his coloured fellows. Hence the colonized man wearing a police, military uniform finds himself ambivalently positioned between the coloured and white antagonists. The character of Njandini, in Percy Mtwa’s Bhopa (1985) is an instance for this: a man ambivalently situated between the native black culture and the white colonial culture.
Many African plays use western dress to signal acculturation with its concomitant dilution of traditional values. In an attempt to anglicize himself the colonized individual gets obsessed with western ways of life as well as western mode of clothing, resulting in the denial of local culture and tradition. Such an attempt places him in a new location, an interspace of two cultures, where he is open to abuse from both coloured groups and the whites. *I will Marry when I Want* (1980) by Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Ngugi wa Mirii gives an apt discussion on this issue. The impact of westernization primarily takes place in the dress code of groups and individuals. This is because dress is the visual impact of acculturation.

Costumes play a vital role in postcolonial plays which employ ritual elements. As ritual is sacred, its associated costumes and belongings are also sacred. The ritual costume carries with it various unspoken authorities or powers which are specific to native culture. While it may serve as a body covering, its signified meanings and effects extend far beyond the utilitarian. Hence, ritual costume serves as a potentially powerful tool for postcolonial cultures. The ritual costume like that of the priest or the witch doctor or the chief is the visual paradigm of retrieved power structures usurped or erased by the colonial hierarchy. Through a combination of movement, costume, and mask, carnival constantly reconstructs the submissive colonized body as an unruly resisting body that threatens the institutionalized authority’s
control on representation. Costume and dance work together to reconstruct the colonized body as potentially resistant.

Masks, as part of costume, play an important function in denaturalizing the western stage. Most postcolonial playwrights employ masks of the traditional performance in their plays to bring in the native flavour. Masking of the actor often reveals a site of cultural significance. Mask is invested with power and authority. Mask also represents crisis in identity, both cultural and political. Mask often enhances the narrative potential of the play.

Masking is an important feature in ritual plays. Mask is associated with cultural archetypes. In this regard Gilbert and Tompkins observe: “Masks are mostly used to create archetypes and to help establish ancestral links; thus, in ritual transformation, the masked performer is animated by the spirit / god he or she depicts” (63). In folk rituals, the mask represents the spirit by whom the dancer seeks to be possessed. It is common in the plays of African playwright, Wole Soyinka, who draws heavily from folk rituals. Hence, the masks of different gods like Ogun are seen in Soyinka’s plays. The employing of ritualized mask in contemporary African plays signifies a return to traditional values and an overthrowing of colonizing, western influences. It also asserts the continuation of traditional or indigenous ritualized religious practices, despite the influence of Christian missionaries.
The use of masks is politically and culturally very significant. It shows that the impact of westernization and Christianization consequent to colonization is superficial. The traditional religious structures remain inactive at the deeper level of the cultures.

The use of masks can also be seen in Indian theatre. Many folk and traditional theatrical forms make ample use of masks in their performance. For example, in Ram Lila, a dramatization of the epic Ramayana, a bird mask for Jatayu, a monkey mask for Hanuman, a ten headed mask for Ravana and demonic masks for Shurpanakha and other rakshasa characters are used. (Varadpande, 252)

In the Krishnanattam, a cycle of plays regularly performed in the courtyard of Guruvayoor temple in Kerala, characters like Yama, the god of death, Brahma, the god of wisdom with four heads, and certain demonic characters wear masks appropriate to their roles. In the beginning of the performances of many folk and traditional theatrical forms, an actor wearing the elephantine mask of Lord Ganesha appears on the stage and dances. This is done to offer prayer to the god for the successful completion of the plays. In conventional Indian theatre the use of mask is ritualistic and religious on the one hand and practical and utilitarian on the other.
In Indian traditional theatres masks are used to portray the complex characters like Narasimha, Hanuman and so on, where the use of the mask is part of the costume (vesham). Its use is utilitarian as well as ritualistic. Masks often help to convey in the stage those things difficult to convey through ordinary make-up or verbal narration. The postcolonial dramatists use masks either to conceal or reveal a character’s reality. Karnad’s *Hayavadhana* is an instance for this. Here, masks are used to show the change of identity after the transposition of heads of the central characters. Masks create a confusion of identity in the audience and therefore, represent the crisis of identity.

Folklore, one of the most important ingredients of the postcolonial theatre, is a fascinating branch of anthropological study. From long past “folklore,” as R. M. Sarkar puts it, “has been distinguished as the oral traditions of the people, especially belonging to the simple societies, which transmit through generations verbally” (2). It can be seen as a verbal art, which is characterized by broad-based perspectives of human accomplishments like myths, legends, folktales, ballads, riddles, proverbs and the like. This verbal art is the consequence of time-tested interaction the folk mind has with the surroundings in which the people live and work. Folklore is collectively constructed and collectively inherited by a cultural community.
As a storehouse of hidden, forgotten and indigenous cultural perspectives, the folklores, when properly explored, become the incessant suppliers of past events in the present situation. Thus, an animated linkage is established between the past and the present circumstances which is essential to evaluate the human mind through the ages. Thus, a substantial body of folktales is more than the literary expression of a people; it also gives a picture of their way of life. An evaluation of folklores from different parts of the world reveals that they are similar in different cultures. This is because folklore is a form of meta-language: the basic structures of meta-languages are analogous in all cultures.

Along with the body of folklores, myths of different cultures find their prominent place in the postcolonial dramatic narratives. Myths are narratives about gods, heroes or historical figures, passed down traditionally from generation to generation and linked to the spiritual or religious life of a community. Once their spiritual dimension is broken, they lose their mythological qualities and become folktales or fairytales. Thus, myths are not same as fables, legends, folktales, fairytales, anecdotes or fiction, but these genres overlapped into one. Mythology figures prominently in most religions. Myth often deals with the origins of the world and the emergence of its creatures. In this sense, myth is a specialized language describing
cosmic events. The main characteristic of this language is that it is built in incredulity. They are often said to take place before the recorded history begins. All cultures have developed over the time their own myths, consisting of narratives of their history, religions, and heroes. Most of the myths have survived for thousands of years. This is due to the power of the symbolic meaning of these stories for the culture. The cultural significance of myths makes Levi-Strauss to regard myths as a form of meta-language.

Mythological themes have often been consciously employed in literature since the time of Homer. The resulting work expressively refers to a mythological background without itself being part of a body of myths. The use of myths in literature offers some advantages to the writers. It gives an aura of objectivity and it is easily comprehensible as well as credible. Moreover, myths have a psychological existence as in a dream; they are, therefore, convincing. The advantage of the convincing narrative of the myths makes most postcolonial dramatist to employ them in their creative works. The mythical framework helps them to distance their personal experiences and brings in impersonality in writing.

The Puppet Theatre of ancient India, another source for the postcolonial dramatists, is as old as the Indian drama. Since ancient times both forms of dramatic entertainments have co-existed in India, influencing
each other in some way or other. A puppet is usually an inanimate object, but not necessarily a character, used in a play or a presentation. There are many kinds of puppets and they are usually sculptured or modelled, sometimes extremely simple and sometimes highly sophisticated. A puppet may be operated directly by a puppeteer or indirectly by the use of strings.

Whatever be its kind, puppet theatre is an essential part of entertainment of traditional India and they are very popular in India even today. Various types of puppets like glove puppet, rod puppet, and string puppet are found in the country. *Kathapulali* of Karnataka are string manipulated puppets. These highly stylized puppets of Karnataka resemble *Yakshagana* actors with their colourful dress and make up.

The glove puppets of Kerala not only imitate *Kathakali* characters in make up and costumes but also perform *Kathakali* plays to entertain their audience. Puppet tradition is thus an integral part of the performance tradition of India and it also forms an important segment of the contemporary theatrical activity. Most of the contemporary dramatists have drawn inspiration from this ancient form. A varied use of puppets can be seen in the plays of Girish Karnad, Maheshwata Devi, and many more.
The wide range of adaptations from different sources has proved advantageous to the postcolonial purpose of giving, in Brechtian terms,
“a complex seeing” (TPKarnad, 14). Karnad elucidates the significance of using folk traditions in appropriate terms:

The energy of the folk theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning these values, of making them literally stand on their heads. The various conventions – the chorus, the masks, the seemingly-un-related comic episodes, the mixing of human and nonhuman worlds – permit the simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view, of alternative attitudes to the central problem. (TP14, 14)

The folk traditions provide a context to highlight the alternative points of view toward the central conflict of the play. It provides a multiple perspective to the central problem of the play.

Consequently, the postcolonial dramatists embrace a wide range of folk elements, from Sanskrit tradition to the folk drama of Yakshagana, from Yoruba rituals to Caribbean story telling, and so on. Almost all the traditional practices like the Puppet theatre, the use of masks, songs, dance, myths and folklore can be seen in the plays of the postcolonial dramatists. The dramatic text is a unique expression of the divided postcolonial mind, which is an amalgamation of western sensibility and native aesthetics. These adaptations make the postcolonial drama, an unquestionably hybridized text.
This hybridity is in fact a political strategy whereby the colonized subject gradually develops himself as an independent voice that, whatever be its original components, at some point of time, begins to make itself heard, begins to perform itself.

As hybridity is the predominant trait of the postcolonial theatre, it is, in fact, a kind of theatrical interculturalism. The intercultural performance tradition opens up possibilities for a dialogue between cultures. So, the theatres of widely differing cultures have engaged in an ever increasing tendency to adapt elements of alien theatre traditions into their own productions. This interculturalism, especially the relationship between the theatres of the East and the West has become a matter of major critical and performance interest in recent years. This establishes the fact that the postcolonial theatre is essentially intercultural and interfusional. This strategy subverts the dominance of one culture, especially the colonial culture. So interculturalism is a form of resistance.

Though the intercultural theatre tradition has been popular since the 1970s, the productive association of the theatre of one culture with that of an alien one is neither entirely new nor unique. It has a long history which, in western culture, reaches as far as antiquity. With the German writer and playwright Goethe’s concept of the “world literature,” it has become a
conscious programme. Goethe’s interest in various literatures resulted in his adaptations of world classics like Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. He was also immensely influenced by the classical Indian play *Sakuntala* by Kalidasa.

Instead of attempting a blind adaptation of the foreign plays, Goethe undertook some alterations to the original text. Through this approach, Goethe assimilated the components of foreign culture and made them a vibrant part of the European theatre of his times. In this context, Erika Fischer-Lichte observes in “Interculturalism in Contemporary Theatre”: “Goethe thoroughly succeeds in bringing the works of a foreign culture to his audience and in making them a vigorous component of the theatre of his time” (Pavis, 29). He succeeds in making his theatre the mediation between the two cultures: the native and the foreign. Goethe was supported in this endeavor by Friedrich Schiller, as his adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* shows.

The history of western theatre exemplifies continued adaptations and indiscriminate cultural borrowings. Since the end of the nineteenth century, Asian theatre has been an explicit influence on many European directors, including Jacques Copeau, Bertolt Brecht, and Antonin Artaud. In France, Copeau became an advocate of theatre reform and he staged his adaptation
of Dostoyevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*, plays of Shakespeare, Molière, and other classical as well as popular dramatists. Artaud’s admiration for the highly ritualized Eastern forms of theatre, particularly the Balinese dance performance, resulted in his innovation, the “Theatre of cruelty.” The German playwright Brecht’s illustrious theory of Alienation effect had its origin in Chinese theatre. All these artists tried to enrich their theatrical forms by the inclusion of the foreign elements. They succeeded in finding a new meaning in their creations by these inclusions.

Interculturalism as a conscious movement began in late twentieth century. Noted practitioners of the movement like Peter Brooks, Eugenio Barbra, Ariane Mnouchkine, Robert Wilson and so on, turned to the foreign theatre traditions, especially the Asian, to renew their own theatres. From the point of view of these Western directors, the recourse to exotic and especially Asian forms is often experienced as a means of renewing the realistic tendency of their own tradition, of creating a distance and effect of strangeness in opposition to the naturalistic perception. The introduction of the element of strangeness into conventional European theatre has revolutionized the form as well as the impact of performances.
The new avant-garde movement in theatre has rejected the form of bourgeosis theatre of illusion dominated by language and has turned to theatre traditions of completely foreign, non-European cultures to encourage and advance European theatres. As a result, Peter Brooke, the British director, has experimented to a great extent with the Indian dance theatre, *Kathakali*. Brooke’s choice of these foreign elements is based on its suitability to afford meaning in cultures other than the original one. He takes the view that every theatrical tradition is composed of elements which can be employed even in the context of other traditions. His interfusional method allows his theatre to be understood and performed in many widely differing cultures. Brook’s dramatized adaptation of the epic *Mahabharata*, which primarily employed western performance techniques, can be called an instance of “intercultural” or interfusional theatre.

Ariane Mnouchkine, the French director, is a strong believer in the collaborative process of theatre. She used elements of Japanese and Indian theatre in her productions of Shakespeare plays such as *Richard II* (1981), *Twelfth Night* (1982), and *Henry IV, Part 1* (1984). These productions were influenced by the Indian dance form *Kathakali*. Oriental techniques were also applied to the ambitious epics based on the lives of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia (1985) and Mahatma Gandhi (*L’Indiade*, 1987). Mnouchkine does not attempt a simplistic imitation of the Asian forms. For her, it is a
useful tool or a technical device for renewing the western theatre from naturalism by incorporating the sacred, the formal, and the ritualistic.

Robert Wilson, the American director, also borrowed many elements from the Japanese theatre in his works. Music, text, dance, and the visual arts of various cultures are often combined in his theatre to create a hallucinatory effect. His mammoth project, the CIVIL warS (1984) embodies the international and intercultural elements in him. Eugenio Barba, the Italian author and authority on theatre, is much influenced by the Indian dance drama, Kathakali, and its traces can be seen in his woks.

The ever-increasing web of international connections has intensified the interest in interculturalism recently. These intercultural theatres create hybrid forms drawing a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural sites. But, as Patrice Pavis observes in The Intercultural Performance Reader, the dramatists’ of this field strive:

never to reduce or destroy the Eastern form from which they gain inspiration, but to attempt a hybridization with it, which is situated at the precise intersection of the two cultures and the two theatrical forms and which therefore is a separate and complete creation. (4)
The cultural transfer in contemporary staging does not always imply a flattening out of the imported culture. The imported cultural forms are at times altered or naturalized to make it intelligible to the audience and also to create a new experience of theatrical performance. The intercultural theatre is, therefore, a kind of “in between theatre,” constructed from two distinct cultures.

The western dramatists’ adaption of Eastern forms can be traced as a search for a theatrical form which they lack. The western realist theatre is, in fact, not a proper form in the true sense of the word. It lacks the power to make the theatre essentially theatrical. In “The Theatre is Oriental,” Mnouchkine observes: “The moment one uses the word “form” in connection with theatre, there is already a sense of Asia” (Pavis, 97). For most of these dramatists, the origin and the source of theatre is Asia and it acts as a base to work from. As Mnouchkine’s title rightly suggests, “The Theatre is Oriental.”

Similar to the East’s influence on the Western drama, the influence of western theatrical techniques, especially modern realism, and the impact of dramatists like Brecht, Ibsen and Shakespeare, has been enormous even in those Oriental countries with the richest theatrical traditions of their own such as India, Japan and China. In the early twentieth century a new western
model theatre arose in Japan called Shingeki, literally meaning "New Drama." This is in fact the Japanese retelling of western realist theatre. Retellings include the works of western writers such as Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, Maxim Gorky, and Eugene O’Neill, and reflecte the styles of proscenium theatre. In spite of the fact that he is a pre-naturalist writer, Shakespeare has become a commonplace of the classic Shingeki repertoire. Thus, members of the Shingeki movement have turned towards the potential of renewal offered by realistic dramas and theatre of western origin.

In the postwar period, there was a phenomenal growth in new dramatic works, which introduced fresh aesthetic concepts that revolutionized the orthodox modern Japanese theatre. The identity conflict of the age resulted in a new Japanese theatrical space, a return to the native theatre forms. Hence, Shingeki, the imitation of an already antiquated western model was, rejected and a brand new “Little Theatre Movement” was established in Japan.

The quest for an own theatre led the “Little Theatre Movement” back to the own traditions as represented by Noh and Kabuki theatre and Shinto rites. In this regard, Erika Fisher-Lichte, in “Interculturalism in Contemporary, Theatre” observes: “Whilst Western theatre increasingly
turned the foreign, principally Asian theatre forms, the ‘Little Theatre Movement’ declared a new awareness of the own, almost, it was believed, forgotten traditions’ (Pavis, 33). Hence, the priority is to establish an own cultural identity which, need not simply exclude the influence of the foreign Western culture.

Important representatives of the movement were Suzuki Tadashi and Terayama Shuji. After dealing successfully with contemporary Japanese dramas, which make use of indigenous techniques, Suzuki turns to the intercultural trends by experimenting with the plays of Chekhov, Shakespeare, and the Greek tragedy. Suzuki interprets western play texts with a performance style which clearly draw, on the performance techniques used in traditional Japanese theatre forms. In this way, Suzuki’s plays are instances for intercultural trends in Japanese theatre, as they display specific relations between elements of western and traditional Japanese culture.

Interculturalism in theatre evolved in different countries due to varied reasons. When the revival of the Western realist theatre led to the intercultural trends in Europe and Japan, colonization and subsequent decolonization encouraged it in the Third World countries. The long years of colonial subjugation made them adapt the western plays and their theatrical techniques in the beginning. It was an attempt made by the educated colonial
subjects to be at par with the colonizers. Thus, translations of English plays, Shakespeare as well as the Classics, began to be staged in all these countries. But the educated natives had lost their innate “nativeness” through contact with their colonizer. This binary vision in the native necessitated the invention of a new identity for himself. This new identity, essentially a paradigm of hybridity, was fashioned out of the binary strains of native revivalism and westernization.

India, which has a rich theatrical history dating back to ancient ages, faced many transformations under the colonial rule. The western educated dramatists of early twentieth century attempted to anglicize the Indian stage by staging many English plays and their translations. Thus, Shakespeare, the Elizabethans, the Classics, and so on were performed on various theatres. But, the search for a cultural identity made these artists to return to their indigenous theatrical forms. Thus, the great tradition of Sanskrit theatre and its plays like Kalidasa’s *Sakuntala*, and theoretical treatises like *Natyasastra* began to be explored. Though the new generation dramatists have adapted the western style / tenant / principles, their strong inclination to Sanskrit texts remains unaffected.

This intercultural or hybrid nature of Indian theatre can be seen in the plays of Bengali dramatists like Michael Madhusudan Dutta and...
Girish Chandra Ghosh. While Dutta searched for higher sources in Shakespeare, the Elizabethans, and the Classics, Ghosh opted for historical and mythological plays which were rooted in the contemporary context. Aesthetically, these artists’ feet were on two rocking boat’s at the same time: Western dramaturgy and Indian aesthetics. The blend makes them truly intercultural.

The intercultural trends can be seen in many contemporary Indian playwrights like Girish Karnad. From his very first play, *Yayati* (1961), Karnad displays the intercultural taste in him. While the theme and language are typically native, the play owes its form to the western playwrights; it is almost like a Sartrean play.

This blend of the East and the West can be seen in most of Karnad’s plays. His play *Hayavadana* is an outcome of the two cultures that influenced him: Indian and Western. Karnad employs a wide range of theatre crafts in this play. It betrays the influence of *Yakshagana*, the folk theatre of Karnataka; the puppet theatre of ancient India; folk conventions like half-curtains, songs and dancing, oral style of narration, and so on. The play also highlights the western influences in him: masks, miming, chorus, Brechtian, Shakespearean and Greek elements. The blending of different forms make Karnad’s theatre truly syncretic.
Karnad’s approach to the theme of his plays – be it mythical, historical or legendary – is always modern. His interest is not in recreating the old myths and legends, but in re-visioning them to suit his artistic purpose. Although rooted in Indian mythology and history, his plays convey a strong and unmistakable western philosophical sensibility. The use of mythology in modern literature helps him validate individual experience and universalizes it.

The Nigerian playwright, Wole Soyinka’s plays give another example for intercultural trends in the Third World nations. Like Karnad, Soyinka takes up the techniques of European theatre and employs them in his native themes; he also writes in English. In this regard, Erika Fisher-Lichte observes in “Interculturalism in Contemporary Theatre”:

[Soyinka] ties those elements of Western culture to elements of African culture – themes and characters of Yoruba history, mythology and religion, poetic devices from orally transmitted poems and the methods of characterization and structure that are employed in traditional rituals, such as the “Obaela Festival.” (Pavis, 35)

After national independence the evolution and confirmation of the cultural identity naturally become one of the most important tasks of theatre in these nations. In order to attain this, a return to the native traditions is
indispensable and this is evident in Soyinka’s plays. Soyinka effectively blends the two divergent dramatic traditions and makes his theatre a perfect example for intercultural tradition.

The basis, programme, orientation, method of approach and goal of the theatre artists such as Wilson, Brook, Suzuki, Karnad and Soyinka are individually different. But an analysis shows that the conscious and productive encounter these artists’ theatre have with foreign theatrical elements serve similar functions to create, in Erika Fisher-Lichte’s terms, a “universal language of theatre” (Pavis, 38). This “universal language,” resulting from the constant interaction and mediation between cultures facilitate in creating a world culture in which different cultures not only take part but also respect the unique characteristics of each culture and allow each culture to have its authority. The evolution of the “universal language” assimilates the elements of resistance and transforms them in both text and performance.

Theatrical interculturalism in fact facilitates and enriches both the cultures, of the foreign and the receiving ones. As intercultural trends encourage communication between members of diverse cultures, they help to confer a new impulse on their own culture. The adoption of what had been till then wholly foreign theatre traditions enriches the receptive culture with theatrical techniques which it lacks. Hence, the more language based
western drama is infused with a more form based eastern theatrical tradition
to develop a new language of theatre. An intercultural practice such as this
can become a form of resistance against standardization, against the
Europeanization of super productions. This kind of intercultural/
interfusional theatre challenges the hierarchy of power structures imposed
by the colonialisit discourses and subverts the inherent forms of oppressive
ideology they contain. This nascent theatre is a form of alternative and
counter-hegemonic theatrical discourse. It can generate a quest for a new
cultural identity which is essentially postcolonial.