CHAPTER SIX
THEATRE OF DIRECT ACTION

In the early twentieth century when the freedom struggle had started gaining momentum, the whole nation was fired with the spirit of revolution. The educated middle class who took the lead and involved themselves actively in the freedom struggle realized the importance of theatre as an effective medium to convey their message, introduced theatre of direct action for social and political propaganda. Until then drama was seen purely as a powerful medium of ‘self expression’. Hindi playwrights like Khwaja Ahmed Abbas played a prominent role in bringing about this transformation and in Bengali it was Manmatha Roy, Sambhoo Mitra were responsible for starting theatre of social activism. As a result social and political problems emerged as subject for independent treatment. Political consciousness and general aspiration of freedom from foreign rule was highlighted by specific ideas of different social maladies. Many regional amateur theatre groups like Andhra Nat Mandal, Gujarat Sahitya Sangh in Bombay and Seva Sangh in Madras participated actively in theatre movement. Theatre moved from huge auditoriums to streets and actors changed from professionals to common man. *Middle class was the most active group in the political agitations against the British rule. Members of middle participated actively in the theatre movement and thus the actors of theatre of direct action constituted of men and women from the masses who performed plays in every corner of the country. Theatre was no more a mere narrative of mythological episodes or lives and deeds of historical personalities with certain indirect, incidental or occasional references to contemporary everyday life. **It now became a vehicle of presenting directly the aspirations and struggles for a better life of the common man; not just a reconstruction of the achievements of the past but also a mirror of
The theatre of direct action addressed the acute, immediate conflicts of today's life. Theatre gained a new sense of social responsibility of contemporary life. Before analyzing the contribution of the theatre of direct action in the freedom struggle, it is important to discuss the consequences which gave birth to such a theatre movement.

6.1: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF TRANSITION FROM THE EXISTING MODE OF THEATRE TO THE THEATRE OF DIRECT ACTION

A. Impact of World Wars

The two world wars made a great impact on India's freedom movement. World War I began with an unprecedented outpouring of loyalty and good will towards the United Kingdom, contrary to the initial fears of an Indian revolt. India contributed generously to the British war effort by providing men and resources. About 1.3 million Indian soldiers and laborers served in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, while both the Indian government and the Princes sent large supplies of food, money and ammunition. But high causality rates, soaring inflation compounded by heavy taxation, a widespread influenza epidemic and the disruption of trade during the war escalated human sufferings in India and the prewar nationalist movement was revived, and the moderate and the extremist groups within the congress submerged their differences in order to stand as united front. The British themselves adopted a 'carrot and stick' approach in recognition of India's support during the war and the response to the renewed nationalist demands. In August, 1917, Edwin Montague, the secretary of state for India, made the historic announcement in parliament that the British policy for India was increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of the self-governing institution with the view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of British empire [37].

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limited exercise in autonomy was short lived were the confrontation in Europe between the fascist forces and the West exploded in World War II [30]. On third September, 1939, the long dreaded world conflict broke out in Europe. The same day the governor general, without consulting the Indian people declared that India was at war with Germany. The Indian leaders were not blind to the menace to civilization posed by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy against whom England and her allies were raged [4]. The Indian National Congress which spearheaded the freedom movement and which in fact, controlled a most all provincial ministries had always been against the Japanese attack on China and supported the democratic forces in the Spanish war [30]. "In a conflict between democracy and freedom on the one side and fascism and aggression on the other, our sympathies must be inevitably on the side of democracy", said Jawaharlal Nehru. **A resolution was passed by the Congress Working Committee meeting held from 8th to 5th September reaffirmed its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and suppression of the human spirit. But the resolution also stressed that "the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by Indian people only". Gandhi said, "A slave India could not enthuse about democracy only for its masters. Ideally, a free India would fight shoulder to shoulder with democratic forces but, he said, India would co-operate even in bondage if the war aims included eventual independence" [4]. This, the British were unwilling to recognize. The popular governments resigned and the repression was renewed.

As the war progressed, two unconnected developments affected the fortune of theatre in India. Following the repression and the renewed struggle led by Gandhi a famine struck the province of Bengal which was already depleted by the needs and exigencies of the war. As a result of the fierce famine, nearly two million souls perished. Coinciding with this, Germany attacked the Soviet Union. The Soviet entry into the war caused an acute crisis in the minds all thinking people and also in the ranks of the political forces. Till then, the war had been

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perceived as a clash between fascism and imperialism. But this new development created an emotional contradiction for many Indians as the Soviet Union was fighting in alliance with the West in the same political arena. This situation brought about a sharp cleavage of perception between the leftists and the nationalists who were not willing to fight along with the imperialist Britian. Non communists, though unwilling to compromise with imperialism were, however, prepared to support the Soviets in their struggle against fascism. However, on the cultural plane, some sort of a unity persisted between the two sides. The communists tried to capitalize on this and among the many fronts of possible unity, they created was one of theatre. That is how the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) came into existence [30].

B. Need for Religious and Communal Harmony and IPTA

From the very day of its creation, IPTA realized the need for the religious and communal harmony because, in India, especially near Independence, communal riots became a part of daily life which were largely due to ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British government. They had good reason to encourage disunity between Hindus and Muslims. *Had the different religions and communities in India presented a united front against them, the British could not have remained in the country for long; indeed, they could not have even conquered it in the first place. That they did remain in power was due to the fact that they could successfully play one community against the other. The history in India offers many examples of this strategy of ‘Divide and Rule’. The governor-general Lord Ellenborough wrote in 1843: “I cannot close my eyes to the belief that that (Muslim) race is fundamentally hostile to us, and our true policy is to reconcile the hindus”. The Wahabi movement and the Great Revolt of 1857 which the British blamed principally on the Muslims confirmed the foreigners in their pro-Hindu tendency. But around 1875, there was a reversal of British policy. The Hindus had learned their lessons a little too well; the time had come to set the right balance. “The better class of Mohammedans,” wrote a British officer in 1894, “are

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a source to us of strength and not of weakness, since their political interests are identical with ours" [4]. There are many more examples of the policy of ‘Divide and Rule’. *The British left no stone unturned to divide Hindus and Muslims to create disunity among Indians. But the revolutionists were well aware of their intentions and they worked hard to create awareness among the masses. The members of IPTA, its actors, dramatists and so on found common cause with them and staged many plays on the need of Hindu-Muslim unity. But, despite their efforts, the seeds of disunity, sown by the British bore fruits and the saddest day in the history of India arrived on 14th August, 1947 when it was divided into two countries namely, India and Pakistan.

C. *Dissatisfaction of the Artificiality of Parsi Commercial Theatre*

The artificiality and superficiality of Parsi commercial theatre was discussed at length in the previous chapters. The Parsi theatre emotionally exploited its audience for its commercial considerations. Even if they staged social and patriotic plays or tried to express nationalistic and patriotic feelings, the gaudy stage decorations, romance and the exaggerated emotions they indulged in betrayed these efforts [32]. **No doubt, Parsi theatre due to its gimmickry attracted a huge audience earlier, but during early twentieth century when whole nation was under the stir of revolution and freedom movement was at its peak, the audience refused to accept the artificiality indulged by it and wanted to see their real life stories. There was no time for the revolutionary dramatists to indulge in detail of the make-up and stage decorations. They staged plays with artists having no make up and portraying the real characters so as to educate the audience and to light a fire of revolt and revolution in them.

D. **Revolutionary Spirit of Freedom**

The early twentieth century can rightly be called the period of revolutionary political activism which had in turn inspired cultural activism. Both the extremists

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and moderates were fighting in their own ways to gain freedom for India. Possibly, one of the factors that brought the movement for independence from a few individual groups to the masses was the entry of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in Indian politics in 1915. His movements found widespread support among people it awakened a new sense of nationalism. The freedom movement came to a head between 1918 and 1922 when the first series of non-violent campaigns of civil disobedience were launched by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhi. The non-violent movement obtained cultural, religious and political unity never before in the history of India. Committing itself to Purna Swaraj in 1930 and 1932, the congress led a mass struggle between 1930 and 1932 [37]. Between 12 March and 6 April, 1930, Gandhiji launched his famous Dandi March or the Satyagraha, a march of about 400 Km from his commune in Ahemdabad to Dandi, on the coast of Gujarat. At Dandi, in protest against the British government's taxation on salt, he and thousands of his followers broke the law by making their own salt from sea water. *The Second World War pushed Indians into a political dilemma as the British had unilaterally and without consulting the elected representatives of Indians, entered the war. The British wanted the Indians to fight and die in the name of the very freedom that they were denying the Indians. In a climate of frustration, anger and other tumultuous emotions, arose two movements that formed the climax of the 100 year struggle for independence. These were INA and Quit India Movement. The arbitrary entry of India into the war was strongly opposed by Subhash Chandra Bose who organized INA with Indian POWs and Indian expatriates of South East Asia, with the help of Japanese. Bose's aim was to reach India with the INA as a fighting force that would inspire public resentment and revolts within Indian soldiers to defeat the Raj. Bose clearly anticipated that the British would be driven out of India in an armed struggle [39] and that a social and political revolution would begin when the Indian people would see the British rule under
SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE
PLATE :19
attack in India itself [40]. This revolution, he believed, would bring an end to the age old caste system and traditional hierarchy which would be replaced by an egalitarian, casteless and classless society based on socialist models although this process would require very careful guidance, with a firm hand, to prevent anarchy and chaos [41]. *Bose believed that India’s freedom would be achieved only through the efforts and sacrifices of the militant revolutionary and politically-conscious younger generation [42]. However, the INA failed to achieve its ultimate goal, owing to disrupted logistic, poor arms and supplies from the Japanese, and the lack of support and training [43]. Nevertheless, Bose’s actions and radical initiative energized a new generation of Indians. Many historians have agreed that it was the INA and the mutinies it inspired among the British Indian armed forces that was the driving force for India's independence [44, 45, 46]. After the war, the stories of Azad Hind movements and arms that came into public lime light during the trials of soldiers of the INA in 1945 were seen so inflammatory that, fearing mass revolts and uprisings—not just in India, but across its empire, the British government forbid BBC from broadcasting their story [47]. In such a charged political climate, how could the dramatists sit quiet? For them it was not the time to stage mythological or Shakespearean plays. It was the time to convey the message directly and this gave birth to direct theatre where the prime duty of theatre was the message of revolution which was to be conveyed to the masses directly.

**E. Launch of Quit India Movement by Mahatma Gandhi**

After the failure of the Cripps mission, Gandhiji’s attitude towards British underwent a fundamental change. He said in May, 1942, “I used to say that my moral support was entirely with Britain. I am very sorry to confess that today my mind refuses to give that moral support. British behavior towards India has filled me with great pain” [4]. Gandhiji was convinced that at the presence of British in India was an invitation to Japan to invade India and their withdrawal removed the bait. He wrote in his paper, The Harijan, on 26 April, 1942: “Whatever the consequences therefore to India, her real safety, and Britain’s too lies in the in

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orderly and timely British withdrawal from India" [48]. He also elaborated how there should be unadulterated non-violent non-co-operation movement against Japanese and advised people not to give quarter to them and be ready to risk loss of several million lives" [49]. On 7 June, he wrote, “I waited and waited until the country should develop the non-violent strength necessary to throw off the foreign yoke. But my attitude has now undergone a change. I feel that I cannot afford to wait. If I continue to wait I might have to wait till doomsday. For the preparation that I have prayed and worked for may never come and in the meantime I may be enveloped and overwhelmed by the flames that threaten all of us that is why, I have decided that even at certain risks which are obviously involved I must ask the people to resist the slavery,” [50] and so, the *All India congress Committee endorsed the ‘Quit India Resolution’ on 8 August, 1942 which authorized 'the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale. Gandhiji said, “Everyone of you should from this movement onwards consider yourself a free man or woman and act as if you are free.....I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. We shall do or die. We shall either free India or die in the attempt [4]. **The Quit India movement was the biggest movement ever in the history of India. The British government was stunned by it. All the Congress Party’s working committee leaders were arrested. They also banned the political parties altogether. Large-scale protests and demonstrations were held all over the country. Workers remained absent in masses and strikes were called. The movement also saw wide-spread acts of sabotage. Indian underground organizations carried out bomb attacks on allied convoys, Government buildings were set on fire, electricity lines were disconnected and transport and communication lines were severed. The British swiftly responded by mass detentions. A total number of over 10,000 arrests were made nationwide, mass fines were levied, bombs were air dropped and demonstrations were subjected to

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MAHATMA GANDHI
PLATE :20
public flogging. Revolutionary dramatists also contributed in their own way to add oil to the fire of revolution. In support of Quit India movement which directly asked the British to leave India, they made use of Theatre of Direct Action to approach directly to people and ask them to fight for their independence.

6.2 THEATRE GROUPS, PLAYWRIGHTS, ACTORS AND DIRECTORS OF THEATRE OF DIRECT ACTION

A new significance was brought to theatre because of a maze of complex sociopolitical changes. The October Revolution of Russia in 1917 had influenced the whole world including our own National movement against British imperialism. Meanwhile, Stanislavsky had revolutionized not only the Russian theatre but the theatre of the world, with his new method in acting and a totally different approach to theatre production. This gave rise to a new crop of playwrights such as Gorky, Chekhov, Tolstoy, etc, all of whom influenced both Indian writing and Indian thought [51]. Also, as a result of the growth of the political consciousness among the masses, generally by the events after 1930, ‘a progressive’ or what is called ‘leftist’ tendency emerged. This idea of ‘progressivism’ influenced literature too, and all over the country, there was a downpour of ‘progressive’ poems, stories and plays. To imperialism were added, as the latest objects of hatred, dictatorships like Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Hitler’s Germany. By the time, the Second World War started the writers and intellectuals like Sajied Zaheer were ready to meet in an All India Conference of Progressive Indian Writers [1]. Soon after, the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) was formed which involved all our top-ranking musicians, dancers, writers and artists. *IPTA was established at National level on May 25, 1943 in Bombay. Its mission statement was ‘People’s Theatre Stars the People’. In his presidential address, Professor Hiren Mukherjee gave a call to those present, “Writers and artists... Come actors and Dramatists, Come all, those who work by hanc and the thinkers, come and dedicate yourself to create a brave new

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world and a society that values freedom, independence, and social justice”.
*IPTA’s goal was to bring cultural awakening among the people of India [52].
IPTA’s cultural movement portrayed contemporary situation and reality through visual art, traditional art forms with modern thought. It created awareness for socio-political change. IPTA members were obsessed time and again by the power for their progressive and revolutionary ideas and expressions. IPTA gave a new direction to Indian theatre. It presented people's pains and sorrows, dreams and ambitions in a new form breaking down the existing and traditional forms [53]. IPTA drew in remarkable cross-section of the most talented people irrespective of political affiliation or interest like Sombhu Mitra, Shanti Bardhan, Ravi Shankar, Mulk Raj Anand, Romesh Thapar, Sachin Shankar, Narendra Sharma, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas and Balraj Sahni. In the early months of its inception, IPTA could not evoke an enthusiastic response from the people. The Bengal famine of 1943 which sent a wave of horror throughout the country and as much an intense desire to help the unfortunate province, provided a capital issue and the IPTA seized upon it. Thousands of artists and intellectuals flooded under this banner. Bands of actors, singers, dancers went round the country performing in aid of famine relief. Branches sprouted everywhere and a countrywide movement began [30]. The Bengal unit of IPTA had attracted an assorted band of intellectuals, party activitists, writers, musicians, journalists, aspiring actors and playwrights widely differing in age, background, temperament, accomplishment and outlook, they had a common meeting ground in a mood of social and artistic rebellion, and an indeterminate allegiance to Marxist ideology [8]. **The most important of the dramas were Nabanna (Harvest). Nabanna is a folk-cultural festival of Bengal to celebrate the harvest. This Bengali drama, written by Bijon Bhattacharya and directed by Shambhu Mitra, portrayed the devastation caused by the 1943 Bengal famine and the indifference of the British rulers and as also the richer strata of Indian society towards the plight of the millions dying from the famine. Nava Jiboner Gaan (Song of New of Life) by Jyotirindra Moitra and

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the film *Dharti ke Lai* (Children of the Earth) by K.A. Abbas followed *Nabanna* in addressing the needs of the people. These performances were characterised for their vivid, stark portrayal of the suffering of the masses. Similar productions were carried out all over India, like *Desha Sathi* in Marathi which was about the attack on the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany; *Prarambham* in Telugu; and *Zubeida* directed by Balraj Sahni and based on the story of a Muslim girl from Malabar [37].

IPTA’s contribution to the modern theatre movement has been both significant and valuable due to its *pan* Indian character. Writers like Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, Manmatha Roy and Actor, producer like Sombhu Mitra who contributed to the freedom struggle through their plays were among the active members of IPTA. All over India, it brought out new dramatists, new actors, new themes and an active theatre. The Indian people found some consolation in the plays that followed the Bengal famine of 1943, plays which showed this avoidable tragedy in all its horrors. It was the IPTA which organised all these shows and troupes travelled from village to village in Bengal to perform these plays- one act plays, full-length plays and ballets. Not only did the theatre regained the attention of the audience but it also earned its respect. From now on, dramatists and theatre people from the various regions of India could meet on one platform, exchange views and discuss the theatre in all its aspects in relation to the life of the people [1].

With the political situation easing, the other theatre enthusiasts who were in jail during the Quit India movement launched by Gandhi in 1942 had come out. Their love for theatre prevented them from being silent observers of a situation in which it ran the danger of becoming a tool of any ideology much less of a political ideology. Even while in jail, some of them had decided on their course of action. They conceived the idea of a nation wide theatre which later formed as Indian National Theatre (INT) under the leadership of Smt. Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay.

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Its aims were consciously to establish new traditions and standards seeking inspiration from the past utilizing the techniques of the present. The first production of I.N.T was a ballet based on Jawahar Lal Nehru's book, 'The Discovery Of India'. I.N.T, as an all India institution, established its branches in different towns and in various states all over India [30, 1].

6.3 DRAMATIC STRUCTURE AND STAGING METHODS

*The sociopolitical conditions and the revolutionary activities all over the country forced the dramatists to throw away the age old traditions and techniques of drama and acquire new techniques which would reach audience directly and make them face to face with the actual happenings in their daily life. IPTA being popular theatre movement catered not only the upper crust of the society but to the broad masseses of the people and for this purpose encouraged the study and use of folk forms. These efforts brought to theatre the directness and simplicity of presentation, which were not only noble but even exhilarating [30]. Drama came out of the huge auditoriums to the streets, villages, towns and actors came in direct contact with people. Bijon Bhattacharya, one of the earliest members of the anti-fascist writers and artists association and IPTA, who wrote one act play, "Jabanbandhi", which dealt with the theme of the pauperisation of a peasant family, created sensation when it was staged on 3rd January, 1944. Encouraged, Bijon Bhattacharya wrote 'Nabana', a full length play on the same theme but ending on a note of hope and belief in the collective strength of peasantry. 'Nabana' was first produced in October and November, 1944 directed jointly by him and Sombhu Mitra. Its reception was beyond all expectations. Its contemporarity was in any case inescapable as was its thematic realism. In content and form, 'Nabana' blazed the trail of a new theatrical idiom. Gone were the artistic sets, painted wings and the striving after illusory effects; gone too were historic pyrotechnics of individual brilliance and the familiar forced accomodation of available actors. The play and the production had the genuinal ingredients of a new theatre movement. The movement was ripe. Death by
BENGAL FAMINE
PLATE :21
starvation on a colossal scale brought about not by vagaries of nature but by greed, corruption and collapse of moral values was too outrageous an experience not to have generated anger and protest. ‘Nabara’ gave articulation to both. Protest necessarily implies rejection of the old. The rejection was emphatic. The characters in the plays were peasants ground down by poverty and preyed upon by human vultures. The portrayal was direct and vivid. The actors and actresses were young. Their lack of experience was in fact a distinct advantage. They brought to their role a spontaneity that met the requirements of the play. Bishnu De, the poet wrote that “never before had we seen a director like Sambhoo Mitra with his insight into and mastery of the totality, his vision of the whole production as one and the genius to utilize all the little details and even limitations that come his way” [54]. The strength lies in its non-observance of the rules, in the genuineness of the emotions of its personae, and in the dramatist’s feel for the rustic language and turns of speech of the poor. There is a lack of definition in characterization and an awkwardness in its structure. Paradoxically, these very defects gave the play an edge as a play of protest. ‘Nabara’ extended the thematic boundaries of Bengali dramatic literature by founding it firmly on social realities. Bijon Bhattacharya’s plays dealt with his concern with social oppression and his quasi-Marxist views on exploitation and struggle. What saves his plays from being schematic tracts is the way he used folk rituals, religious observances and dialects for his dramatic purpose. Shunning any set structural pattern, his plays take shape from a presentation of a milieu of rural society which he knew as few others did and where he found exploitation and struggles were a way of life. Theme of his play ‘Devi Garjan’ set in a tribal belt in West Bengal is the oppression of poor peasant aggravated by emergence of a new class of traders turned land grabbers. Bijon Bhattacharya’s plays can be faulted on accounts of exaggeration and inconsistency but they have a quality of purity in them, a quality that comes from drawing sustenance from the soil. There is nothing of the Jatra in them yet they have a folk colouration which is uniquely Indian indeed regional [8]. K. A. Abbas produced a

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film ‘Dharti ke La’ in 1946. It was based on the vision of Bhattacharya’s dramas ‘Nabana’ and ‘Antim Abhilasha’. Abbas’s journalistic writings dealt with different aspects of contemporary society, national and international. He worked as a messenger of peace during Hindu-Muslim riots. His play ‘Main Kaun Hoon’ was very popular. It depicted Hindu-Muslim riots very vividly. The action of play occurs at different locations and these locations were portrayed not by changing sets but influenced by folk drama, by they were shown on the same set by replacing a few items [3]. *So, the theatre of direct action broke all the age old traditions. Bijon Bhattacharya’s play ‘Nabana’ proved to be path breaking. Shankar Vasudev’s “Maa Bhumii”, along with the plays of Dr. Rashid Jahan, K. A. Abbas, Ali Sardar Jafari, T. Sarmalkar, Balwant Gargi, Jaswant Thakur, Mama Warerkar, Acharya Atrey and others established and practised such type of theatre in country. Directors and actors included Balraj Sahni, Sambhoo Mitra, Habib Tanvir, Bhishma Sahni, Deena Pathak, Rajendra Raghuwanshi, R. M. Singh, Utpal Dutt, A. K. Hangal, Rameshwar Singh Kashyap and Shella Bhatia. Shadow plays and improvisations were experimented. Tapas Sen made his contributions in the stage light-effects and Shilpa Kumar in set-designing. Companies experimented not only in indigenous folk forms adapted to contemporary issues but even with the works of Western Progressive writers like Clifford Odets whose “Waiting for Lefty” set in Indian context was produced by Mulk Raj Anand [53].

**So, theatre of direct action truly marked the rebirth of Indian Drama.

6.4 Regional Amateur Theatre
As seen in the previous discussion Mahatma Gandhi’s, non-co-operation movement. The cream of intellectuals of India came under the magic spell of this first wave of Gandhism. Those who joined his political movement and those who did not – every intellectual Indian was fired with a revolutionary spirit. Attempts were made by groups of intellectuals to write and perform, in different places,

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new plays conveying the message of the newly-awakened nationalism. Many of the plays written were suppressed. It would not be an exaggeration to say that more plays were written than performed; texts were proscribed and performances banned. This way amateur theatre which was mainly the creation of the educated also suffered as every attempt was crushed by the Government. Despite, all the problems, the movement inspired the dramatists and during this period, it could be noticed that a number of plays written which mainly revitalized the amateur theatre. *By, 1930, the signs of the amateur theatre had taken root. The repressive measures of the government might or might not have put down the political agitation, but they could not suppress the new spirit of dramatists awakened in 1920 [1]. Within ten years, there was flowering of literature all over India. Many amateur dramatists adopted the format of one-act plays which due to their brevity and easy technical nature gave a fillip to the college theatre. More and more one-act plays were written between 1930 and 1939. The quality was such as to enthuse and the quantity was such as to keep more and more college theatres engaged. In Kashmir, S.P. College Amateur Dramatic Club made a start in 1938 to revive Kashmiri Drama. In Punjabi, 70 percent of the dramas written between 1935 and 1947 were one-act plays. The void that had been created by the inactivity of the amateur and the disintegration of professional theatres during the ten years from 1920 to 1930 was now being filled up by a new generation of youngsters [1]. In 1930, history was created in the Andhra amateur theatre, when T. Raghav presented Rajamannar’s play, ‘Thappervard’ (Whose fault), a play of an entirely new type, employing new production methods. In Maharashtra, in 1932, a group of young intellectual enthusiasts started a new organization called ‘Natya Manwar Ltd.’ and their first production was ‘Andhalyanchi Shala’, an adaptation of a Norwegian play, “Their’s was an organized and active protest against the conventional style of acting, against theatricality, against declamation, against narrative soliloquies, against painted cloth curtains that rolled up and down at the end of the scenes, against over-emphasis and exaggeration, against

HIGHLIGHTS:
*By, 1930, the signs of the amateur theatre had taken root. The repressive measures of the government might or might not have put down the political agitation, but they could not suppress the new spirit of dramatists awakened in 1920.
The indiscriminate use of songs in midst of dialogue, against the star system, against plays written for this or that actor, and against the atrocious practice of men playing women's roles" [15]. The amateur theatre was on the way to organize itself. In Karnataka, in 1933, an amateur association called 'The Kannada Amateurs' was founded by a new playwright, Sriranga and his friends. For the first time in amateur theatre, plays on social problems were written with no scenes within an act and produced without the use of curtains. With new plays being written, new amateur groups were formed and with one act plays, the schools and colleges kept an active theatre. The one-act plays helped the performing groups to overcome one of the primary obstacles to a theatrical production, viz., a play house. Between 1930 and 1940, a number of play houses in many parts of the country had been converted into cinema-houses. But, a social, one-act play could be produced in a public hall and even in a classroom. It was discussed earlier that the formation of IPTA was a revolution in the history of theatre as was the birth of INT which established a national theatre which had branches all over India. Under the banner of these two organizations many plays were produced in many Indian languages. In multilingual cities like Bombay, they produced plays in not only the language of the majority but also in those of the minority groups. These groups not only influenced the amateur theatre groups, but also encouraged amateur theatre activity as they believed that it was important to reach common man and narrate him his story in his own language. Institutions like the 'Telugu Little Theatre' and the 'Andhra Federation' in Andhra; 'Kalakendra', 'Rangbhoomi', 'Nat Mandal', etc. in Gujarat; the theatre branch of Mumbai Sahitya Sangh in Bombay show the enthusiasm of theatre-lovers [1]. And this way, theatre revolution spread in whole of the country and united, they awakened and encouraged masses to fight for their rights and achieve the goal of independence which was not far goal now. In this way, Theatre of Direct Action became a movement of the people, by the people and for the people and that is why; it was successful even when it was amateur in comparison to the techniques of the professional theatre.
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