CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

... Man lives with illusion because these illusions make the misery of real life bearable. That is to say, if he can wake up from the half-dream state, then he can come to his senses, become aware of his proper forces and powers, and change reality in such a way that illusions are no longer necessary.

- Erick Fromm

In the beginning, human beings lived naturally and never faced the problems of the civilized men and women. As they gradually grew conscious of their identity, they were alienated from Nature and they began to realize their biological inadequacies. They have constructed this world of culture and civilization to compensate for their inadequacies and to overcome their feelings of inferiority. Culture and civilization have suppressed their real nature and distorted their personality. Consequently, they have become fragmented, deformed and dehumanized.

Human beings are born whole and healthy. Yet each human being becomes fragmented, deformed and dehumanized as he or she grows up.
in the cultural environment. It may be said to operate in six ways and cause six cultural deformities - gender, social, political, physical, mental and spiritual. All these support and sustain one another and form a resilient network, a labyrinth where men and women get lost. Modern Indian Drama in English, as represented by Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar, seem to reflect all these cultural deformities of Indian society.

Gender deformity seems to have preceded the other cultural deformities. Human beings are originally neither masculine nor feminine, but cultural attributes go to make men masculine and women feminine. Consequently, in men, the faculties of controlling, rationality and adaptability develop while those of nurturing and intuition are suppressed. Similarly, in women, the faculties of nurturing, intuition and adaptability develop while those of controlling and rationality are suppressed. These acquired, incomplete and deformed personalities help men and women perform the functions culturally attributed to them and disable them to take up other tasks. And women suffer more than men on account of gender deformity as our society is patriarchal.

Gender deformity is comprehensively illustrated in Tendulkar’s Kamala. Jaisingh, whose faculties of rationality and leadership enable him to be a successful journalist, collect sensational news for his paper. His faculties of nurturing and intuition remain underdeveloped and so he cannot realize that he exploits women while he tries to expose their exploitation and oppression by big men. Sarita, his wife, looks after all his needs at home effectively as her faculties of nurturing and intuition help her in this. As she is educated, she becomes a sophisticated wife. She is under the illusion that she is free. She realizes that she is also a slave as Kamala, the tribal woman,
triggers her awareness with an innocent question. Jaisingh loses his job for exposing the flesh trade. Thus, the play shows that women are slaves at home while men are slaves at work.

Karnad’s *Naga-Mandala* questions the gender biased justice which favours men. Appanna treats Rani, his wife, contemptuously. He lives with his concubine and ignores Rani. Naga, a Cobra, assumes Appanna’s form and makes love to Rani at night. Thus, Rani commits adultery without knowing it whereas Appanna does the same thing openly and unashamedly. Yet the Village Elders ask only Rani to take an ordeal to prove her innocence. Tendulkar’s *Silence! The Court is in Session* also challenges patriarchal value system. The fellow actors accuse Benare of fornication and torture her mentally in the name of a mock-trial while Prof. Damle, the male culprit, who exploited the young lady sexually, is not found fault with. In Rakesh’s *Half-way House*, Savitri feels greatly frustrated as her husband does not fit her culturally acquired concept of a masculine man. She makes her life miserable and creates a hell for others.

Social deformity brings about inequality though human beings are born equal. The divisions of men and women into various castes and classes and their hierarchy are culturally programmed and transmitted from one generation to another. The people of higher rungs exploit and oppress those of lower rungs in our hierarchized society. The boundaries of castes are strongly guarded to sustain the social deformity in Indian society. The caste system has survived several revolutions and reforms by great leaders like Basavanna.

Karnad’s *Tale-Danda* is a dramatization of Basavanna’s movement against the caste system eight hundred years ago. Several people from various places come to Kalyan and join Basavanna’s ideal movement. They
shed caste and become sharanas. They work hard and take what is enough for their sustenance. They forget their differences and dine together. All this does not provoke any active opposition. Then sharanas perform a marriage between a dalit boy and a Brahmin girl. This leads to a violent battle between them and orthodox people. After the carnage of sharanas and the ravage of their property by the royal army, several sharanas flee into the forest. After a few centuries, they emerge as a new caste. This throws light on the resilience of social deformity.

Sircar's *Stale News* exposes the severity of social deformity in India. The dramatist juxtaposes the instances of gross exploitation and oppression of the British India and those of the post-colonial India. He also shows how the government oppresses the people of lower strata of the society to protect those of higher strata. The idea of man's baseness is ironically highlighted by repeating the statement that Man is the greatest creature on Earth. In Rakesh's *One Day in Ashadha*, Kalidasa, in his scramble to the higher rung in society, marries the princess after he becomes the poet laureate in Ujjain. Thus he betrays his love, Mallika who has inspired great poetry in him. All these plays prove that social deformity makes people inhuman.

If political deformity is not there, all human beings are equally powerful. They have enough power to help themselves and change their way of life for better. The people of lower rungs in this hierarchized society give away their immense power to those of higher rungs by taking the hierarchy for granted. The imbalance of power brings about power games. A power game involves three major roles: Rescuer, Persecutor and Victim. The Rescuer feels guilty about his superiority if he cannot make use of it in rescuing the Victim without being asked. The Persecutor feels angry at the inferiority of the Victim and seeks to reform him or her through punishment.
The Victim allows himself or herself to be rescued or persecuted. These roles form a triangle called Drama Triangle by Karpman. People usually have one favourite role each yet they shift to other roles. The power game may involve two minor roles Stage-Manager and Spectator.

Karnad’s *Tughlaq* illustrates Karpman Drama Triangle. In the play, Muhammad plays the Rescuer. He believes that he can alone save his people. So he gets his own father and brother killed and becomes the king. He introduces several reforms to build an ideal kingdom. All his reforms are exploited by people like Aziz. Then he goes down to the role of Victim. He does not tolerate any obstacle in his path and assassinates several people who oppose his idealism. Thus he shifts to the role of Persecutor. Soon after, he returns to his favourite role - the Rescuer. This shifting of roles can be found in other roles. The play shows that playing the Rescuer does not solve problems.

Tendulkar’s *Ghashiram Kotwal* presents the minor roles in addition to the major ones. Ghashiram is humiliated by the people of Poona and decides to avenge it on them. He sacrifices his daughter to the lust of Nana and becomes the Kotwal of Poona. He tortures and punishes people severely even for petty crimes. Finally the people get the permission of Nana and humiliate and kill Ghashiram. Nana plays the Stage-Manager and Peshwa, the Spectator. Sircar’s *That Other History* first shows the power game in a family and finally locates the demon, the Persecutor in human mind itself. It then depicts how that internal demon is responsible for war, violence and destruction, the dark side of history.

Physical deformity evolves as division, hierarchization and alienation invade the human body. The head (mind) and the body are divided and alienated. The head is considered the supreme organ. It carries the cultural
deformity in itself. It governs the body and suppresses its sensations. Consequently, people find their lives joyless and meaningless in addition to acquiring bodily deformities depending on their occupation. So they seek to get pleasure through alcohol and drugs and to find meaning for life in religious or secular ideals.

Karnad's *Hayavadana* exemplifies the alienation of the mind and the body and also external deformity. The play begins with the worship of Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed god. Then Hayavadana, the horse-headed man, is introduced. Later, he becomes a complete horse instead of a complete man as Goddess Kali grants his wish to become complete. In the main plot, Devadatta, a Brahmin, has a brilliant mind and a weak body whereas his friend, Kapila, a Shudra, has a dull mind and a strong body. Padmini, the wife of Devadatta, seeks to get a complete man. When the two friends behead themselves at the altar of Goddess Kali, she transposes their heads. Consequently, Devadatta gets Kapila's strong body while Kapila gets Devadatta's weak body. But, Devadatta loses the vigour of Kapila's body gradually as he discontinues his physical exercise in order to pursue his profession. Thus the play conveys that the head that carries culture in itself triumphs over the body.

In Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder*, Sakharam and Champa drink liquor and indulge in mechanical sex to overcome their joylessness whereas Lakshmi seeks to find pleasure in and meaning for her life in religious rituals. And Champa's husband gets sadistic pleasure in torturing his wife horribly and later masochistic pleasure in drinking liquor and inflicting pain on himself. In Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*, the eponymous character vainly tries to find meaning for his life in being different from common people. In his another
play, *There's No End*, the central character goes on changing his course of life to make his life meaningful.

If mental deformity is not programmed, all human beings are equally capable of perceiving and understanding the world. Their mind has two faculties - rationality and intuition. These are divided and alienated. So they do not function harmoniously and this impairs the awareness of people. Rationality is discouraged or suppressed in women and workers whereas intuition is discouraged or suppressed in educated men. And rationality is considered superior to intuition. All this is achieved through religion, education and mass media by discounting the rationality and intuition of people and by lying. This mental deformity sustains other cultural deformities.

Sircar’s *Procession* presents various situations where people are made and kept mindless. Procession is one of the rituals that religions, political parties and trade unions observe. It attracts people with its colours and sounds and makes them mindless. So the Old Man repeatedly says: "I'm lose." Khoka who symbolizes the truth is killed again and again. But, the Officer says that everything is all right and forcibly sends the people away. The Master offers the people religion when they complain about their suffering. Later he gives them liquor when their suffering becomes too severe to be numbed by religion. Finally he advises the Officer to drown the sorrows of the people in popular entertainment through fine arts. Thus the awareness of the people is maimed through religious and political rituals, alcohol and other narcotic drugs and popular entertainment.

Tendulkar’s *Encounter in Umbugland* exposes the role of the government and the press in making people ignorant. They arouse emotions in the people and paralyse their faculty of thinking and rationality. The Cabinet Ministers drive crowds of people against Vijaya, the Princess who tactically
turns them against the Ministers themselves. The play shows how the political leaders manipulate the mindless people to strengthen their power. Sircar’s minor play, *Scandal in Fairyland* throws light on the role of the press in the manipulation of the consciousness of the people. Rakesh’s *Mad Delight* depicts the fragmented mind of the modern man.

In spiritual deformity, division and alienation enter the innermost core of human personality. Life and death impulses are divided and alienated. This leads to the inner conflict between the love of life and its renunciation. This results in lovelessness. Other deformities also contribute to lovelessness. In the mad scramble to the top in the hierarchized society, people become dehumanized and this suppresses their capability to love themselves and others. This spiritual deformity facilitates ruthless exploitation and oppression and destroys human relations even within the family.

Rakesh’s *The Great Swans of the Waves* symbolically portrays the inner conflict of human soul. Nand, the protagonist, is caught in this conflict -- on the one hand, he loves Sundari who symbolizes the love of life and on the other, he reveres Buddha who stands for the renunciation of life. Like the modern man, he can neither love life nor renounce it completely. The great swans on the waves represent his wavering mind.

Sircar’s *Bhoma* exposes the relentless exploitation and oppression of women, peasants, workers, villages and developing countries by men, landlords, capitalists, cities and advanced countries respectively. This is attributed to lovelessness. It is repeatedly said in the play that the blood of man is cold. Then it is conveyed that love alone can remedy the situation. Tendulkar’s *Vultures* illustrates how exploitative culture makes people vultures. Hari Pitale cheats his own brother in business. His own children use violence to extract money from him. Ramakant and Umakant break the leg
of Manik, their own sister, to prevent her from informing her lover of their blackmailing him for money.

Thus, Indian Drama, as represented by Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Badal Sircar, reflects the cultural deformity of Indian society in all its six aspects. Each playwright deals with each aspect of the cultural deformity from his own point of view. All the playwrights have successfully shown the severity of the problems of human mind, individual, family and society. All the playwrights have been influenced by modern and progressive thoughts and ideologies, but nobody has dogmatically followed any ideology.

In his plays, Mohan Rakesh deals with cultural deformity as reflected in the human mind. Vivek Dutta Jha rightly points out: "One aspect of his plays is that he (Rakesh) pays much attention to the internal conflict in the minds of his character." Though Mohan Rakesh focuses on human mind, other details do not suffer in his plays. He deals with gender deformity in Half-way House, social deformity in One Day in Ashadha, mental deformity in Mad Delight and spiritual deformity in The Great Swans of the Waves. He treats physical deformity in his short plays, Perhaps and Hunh. But he does not touch upon political deformity in any play exclusively. He presents problems in his plays but he does not give any solutions to them. He expects the spectator or reader to search for solutions. In an interview, he says to Rajinder Paul:

You probably attribute a much greater personality to the artist than there is in him. Mostly the artist acting as a visionary, like our great Tulsidas, has only propagated certain maxims which through tradition has come to be accepted as values of life. I cannot take up the role of a futurist as the circumstances beyond my time will not be a part of my experience. The failings of even men like Marx, the greatest
visionary of our time, are quite evident. I really cannot go beyond the point of my direct confrontation of life. At that stage I go behind the wings and leave the man in the auditorium to deal with the situation as he likes.  

His plays elucidate the suffering of men and women, especially at psychological level, as they fall victims of socio-economic hierarchy and cultural hegemony.

Karnad deals with gender deformity in *Naga-Mandala*, social deformity in *Tale-Danda*, political deformity in *Tughlaq* and physical deformity in *Hayavadana*. He depicts the failure of solutions in his plays. His protagonists strive hard and sacrifice everything to solve the problems. But their solutions fail miserably on account of the powerful antagonism of cultural hegemony. The focus is on the individual who is portrayed as the victim of cultural deformity. Kurudava tries to bring about harmony between Rani and Appanna with the aphrodisiac root in *Naga-Mandala*. Basavanna strives to effect harmony among the people by eradicating the caste-system in *Tale-Danda*. Muhammad endeavours hard to achieve harmony between Hindus and Muslims by effecting various reforms in *Tughlaq*. Padmini attempts to attain harmony between the mind and the body in *Hayavadana*. All the individuals fail utterly as all the deformities are socio-culturally programmed.

Tendulkar successfully brings out the ugly cultural deformity of our society through his plays. He depicts gender deformity in *Kamala*, political deformity in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, physical deformity in *Sakharam Binder*, mental deformity in *Encounter in Umbagland* and spiritual deformity in *Vultures*. He does not touch upon social deformity exclusively in any of his plays. He shows cultural deformity in the family and the society. In his plays we find people using violence to get pleasure, money and power. And we
also see them using sex, money and violence to attain power. Tendulkar touches on the theme of power and violence in all his plays in various ways. He covers all aspects of gender deformity in his plays. He feels that the human situation is so complex that we can hardly suggest any viable solutions. He says,

I try to take my audience with me in this exploration. At its best, it can provide insights into the great jigsaw puzzle of human existence and enrich your understanding of life around you.³

That is why he never attempts any solutions in his plays.

Sircar does not deal with women's problems exclusively. Yet he says: "I believe in equal rights for man and woman and daily watch the exploitation of woman in home and at work."⁴ His feministic sympathy finds passing reference in his plays. In Stale News, THREE says:

Offices are closed on Sundays, half days on Saturdays. But there's no holiday for me. I had to light up the oven at daybreak and I've been on my feet ever since ... (100)

Sircar exposes, social deformity in Stale News, political deformity in That Other History, physical deformity in Evam Indrajit, mental deformity in Procession and spiritual deformity in Bhoma. His concept of the society without any cultural deformity finds illustration in his play Beyond the Land of Hattamala. Gowri Ramnarayan summarizes Sircar's ideas and plays in a few words:

Sircar's credo is simple: "From everybody according to his ability, to everybody according to his needs". When his plays began to exemplify this, even Marxists denounced him as a Utopian dreamer.⁵

Sircar believes in collectivism that finds expression in his plays and in writing and producing them.
If Girish Karnad borrows his themes from myth and history and his techniques from classical and folk theatre, Mohan Rakesh and Vijay Tendulkar rely for their themes on contemporary life and history. Girish Karnad deals with all the deformities at individual, familial and societal levels in his plays though mental and spiritual deformities do not find exclusive illustration. Mohan Rakesh focuses on the inner conflict of human mind brought about by cultural deformity. The themes of power and violence find expression in Tendulkar's plays. All the deformities are illustrated in his plays though social deformity is not treated exclusively in any of his plays in English translation.

All the deformities except gender deformity are elucidated in Sircar's plays. The plays of his Third Theatre depict cultural deformity at societal level. Rakesh and Tendulkar present problems in their plays and leave the task of finding out solutions to the audience whereas Karnad shows in his plays how the conventional solutions fail. However, Sircar conveys through his plays that all the people who are collectively responsible for this cultural morbidity should collectively understand the situation and find out the real solution. All the plays of these playwrights make good theatre as they have successfully blended their themes and techniques though some plays impress us more than others, depending on our sensibility.
REFERENCES

3. Vijay Tendulkar, Interview, Indian Express 27 May 1983; 5