CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTORY

...man is by nature good, and the acts and institutions of civilization have produced perverted expression of his true nature.

- Rousseau

... All the world’s a stage
And all the men and women merely players;

Shakespeare

These two epigraphs succinctly but aptly describe the human condition as it obtains today. Human beings, who are not living a full-blooded life, but only existing, seem to play various roles which are culturally attributed to them. In doing so, they get alienated from their real nature. This seems to be the basic cause for all the problems that they have been facing since
the dawn of civilization. And drama truly reflects the cultural deformity of
human life more than any other genre of literature does.

Human beings feel proud of their culture and civilization which they
have envolved through ages of their tireless endeavour. But, they are not
really happy in as much as the milk of human nature is sapped by culture
and civilization. They have constructed their own world, based on their
acquired culture and civilization, in order to overcome and compensate for
their biological inadequancies, as maintained by Peter L. Berger.¹ This has
involved the processes of division, differentiation, alienation and antagonism
which both the individual and the society have under gone. While discussing
the Indian concept of creation, J. Bruce Long points out:

In more specific terms, it might be said that the act of fragmenting
the primal unity and distributing the parts throughout the world along
lines of bi-polar opposition, was both a necessary preconditition for the
emergence of the world-order and a tragic testimony to the world's
imperfection.²

The fragmentation of the primal unity is endorsed by Indian dramatists like
Badal Sircar and Mohan Rakesh. Sircar aptly observes: "I am a fragmented
man living in a fragmented world full of contradictions".³ Mohan Rakesh
shares the same mood:

Everyone of us is living a life in fragments. During the course of one
single day one is forced to play ten different parts and some times
more than one version of each part. What remains constant is one's
sense of being; the idea of a crisis. It is this that I call today's mood
of life. And it is in this sense that one feels fragmented... something
like an atomic fission keeps taking place in the landscape of one's
mind.⁴
While some fragments overdevelop, others remain underdeveloped according to the dictates of culture. For example an intellectual develops his mind and neglects his body whereas a worker develops his body and neglects his mind. This uneven growth makes man incomplete and deformed. Devadatta, an intellectual, and Kapila, an athlete, suffer from this incompleteness and deformity in Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*. In his agony, Kapila questions: "why should one tolerate this mad dance of incompleteness?" So in the process of culture and civilization, man has become fragmented, deformed and dehumanized as Marx described him.

Division of labour is a product of culture and civilization. It generates certain roles which become canonized. The human world of culture and civilization creates new needs which also bring about some new roles. Everybody plays a number of roles. People are neither good nor bad, but are considered good in certain roles and bad in certain other roles. Both the roles of a cop and a thief are created by civilization and canonized by culture. A person playing the role of cop need not be completely good and a person playing the role of a thief need not be absolutely bad. The same person can be good in a certain role and bad in another. Vijay Tendulkar, talking about his characters, says:

... A violent *good* may be equally noble at heart, a smuggler extremely god-fearing and religious, a popular chief minister may be a sex-maniac, an affectionate and loving father may be corrupt as a public servant, a brilliant poet may be a rank opportunist, 'Good' is invariably entangled with 'bad' ...

Anthropological studies prove that criminal behaviour of the people is also a product of culture. Gamst and Norebeck observe:

Criminals, alcoholics, sexual deviants, drug addicts and juvenile delinquents are seen primarily as 'the products of society', that is as the
result of certain combinations of cultural factors with unintended effects upon human life. Studies of socially normal types of personality conducted by all fields of the social sciences similarly tend strongly to reflect the anthropological view that personality is largely a mirror of culture.

One's personality is a complex product of the interaction of various roles that one has to play. People are trained in playing these culturally programmed roles from their birth. They grow deformed and dehumanized as they learn playing their roles.

Certain concepts of Transactional Analysis, a Post-Freudian school of psychology, originated by Dr. Eric Berne, are made use of in defining and describing various deformities that form our culture. Claude M. Steiner, an intimate friend and disciple of Eric Berne, in his brilliant book, *Scripts People Live*, discusses six basic maladies of our culture: sex role scripting, inequality, powerlessness, joylessness, mindlessness and lovelessness. These observations of Steiner facilitated the derivation of a paradigm to study the cultural milieu of Indian society.

The six basic maladies of our culture generate six kinds of deformities. Each deformity influences and reinforces the other. All the six deformities form a powerful, effective, resilient network. This network of deformities forms the cultural labyrinth where people get lost. They hardly perceive the real cause of their various problems. When they try to solve a problem, they get entangled in other problems. In their strife, they become exhausted and accept the oppressive lifestyle. This is because when one deformity is attacked, it is unitedly saved by the other deformities from danger. Therefore, revolutions that aim at destroying one or a few deformities inevitably fail and effect costume changes only. A brief study of the six deformities will elucidate the paradigm of cultural labyrinth.
A LABYRINTH OF CULTURAL DEFORMITIES
By nature, Human beings are neither masculine nor feminine. Men become masculine by suppressing their potential for nurturing and intuition while women become feminine by suppressing their potential for controlling and rationality. In obeying the sexist culture, both men and women suppress their potential for spontaneity. This is done by the sexist cultural environment which inscribes firmly sex roles on the tender minds of children. So, children grow into masculine men and feminine women and acquire deformed personalities. This is gender deformity. It deprives both men and women of the real joy of life. But Women suffer more than men in our patriarchal society.

Division of labour based on the nature of work breaks human society into several fragments. In course of socio-cultural evolution, these divisions become hierarchized, resulting in inequality. In Hindu society, the social inequality took the form of caste system. The people of lower castes toil and produce wealth which the people of higher castes enjoy. Socio-economic inequality has co-existed with and influenced socio-cultural inequality greatly. Consequently the poor of even a higher caste suffer illtreatment and humiliation at the hands of the rich of their own caste while the condition of the poor of a lower caste is much worse. Individualism and competition support and sustain inequality. Cultural and economic environment impresses inequality, individualism and competition on the young minds and so children accept and practise these things as they grow up. Thus, our society is fragmented and deformed.

In our hierarchized society, the people in the lower rungs give away their power by feeling inferior while those in higher rungs usurp their power by feeling superior to them. Some superior people feel guilty of their superiority and rescue the inferior people without being asked. The other
superior people feel angry at the baseness of the inferior people and persecute them. Thus, there are three roles -- Rescuer, Persecutor and Victim which form a Drama Triangle according to Stephen Karpman. Everyone has a favourite role though people shift to other roles temporarily. Rescuing and persecuting make and keep people powerless and dependent. When parents rescue their children, they do the things that children can do for themselves. When they persecute children, they overcontrol and punish children for petty things. All this prevents children from growing fully and being independent. This polarization of power causes political deformity.

Inequality does not confine to society but invades human body, mind and soul. Gender and social deformities are translated psychosomatically, leading to physical deformity. Intellectuals and women are generally weak and tender while workers are strong and tough. The organs having more exercise become stronger than those having less exercise. The strong adept right hand and the weak inept left hand are the product of this cultural programming. Since the body is considered base, its sensations are not allowed to reach the mind. This leads to the split and alienation between the body and the mind. This self-alienation kills spontaneity, spoils health and causes joylessness in addition to deformity. This often leads to drug addiction and abuse of sex.

Human mind has two faculties: intuition and rationality. In men, rationality is encouraged more than intuition while in women, intuition is encouraged more than rationality. So in men, intuition remains repressed whereas in women, rationality remains repressed. People become mad when their rationality is severely maimed. Lying is universal and children are trained intensely to lie and to accept lies so knowledge contains more
falsehood than truth. Their rationality, intuition and feelings are often discounted. All this makes people mindless, mentally deformed.

Culture and civilization desecrate human soul and break its primal unity. The forces of life and death become divided, differentiated, alienated and antagonistic. The inner conflict and the scarcity of love caused by gender, social and political deformities distort and emaciate human soul. Lovelessness is encouraged as it facilitates exploitation, oppression and any gross atrocity. Real love is very rare and recognition, a poor substitute for love, is used for survival. People are love-starved and they are supplied recognition on ration as much as they are obedient to cultural norms. The people of higher rungs get much more recognition than those of lower rungs in the hierarchized society. The inhuman crimes and atrocities are due to this spiritual deformity.

The studies of both science and theosophy reveal that these divisions and deformities are not inherent, neither biologically programmed nor divinely determined. They are culturally programmed and transmitted. This culture is man-made. But man "merely forgets that the world he lives in has been produced by himself." So, he thinks that this culturally constructed world is real and eternal. He does not realize that "the reality of this world is not an intrinsic quality, nor is it given once and for all". Hindu philosophy, therefore, considers this man-made world mythical, illusory. Culture is the network of illusions. Going beyond these divisions and deformities caused by culture and civilization, human beings have to seek salvation, moksha, through reunification, that is what religion etymologically means. Long aptly observes:

Hindu literature and spirituality are informed by the condition that, as man and his world came into being through the disruption of a
primal unity and as man is identified essentially (i.e., spiritually and ontologically) with that primordial reality, he will realize his highest ideals only by transcending this world of cosmic conflict and illusoriness and, thereby reintegrating himself with the source from which he and the cosmos emerged in the beginning.20

Human beings have to strip their souls of all the enveloping cultural layers and reach the inner core, their true nature, humanness on the one hand, and, on the other, they have to dissolve their cultural world in order to reintegrate with Nature. We have thus come to agree with Rousseau and say that since culture makes man morbid we have to go back to Nature. Until then people will continue to suffer from various hydra-headed problems caused by our cultural deformity.

This is exquisitely exemplified in both the Pre and Post-Independence Indian English drama. In the first, gender deformity is illustrated by Rabindranath Tagore and other dramatists. Tagore deals with the problems of women as a part of his plays. The eponymous character of Malini is a Buddhist Princess. Fanatic Hindu Brahmins demand her banishment. Her unperturbed grace shocks them and changes their mind. In Natir Puja, Srimati is a dancer in the court of king Ajatasatru. She offers her dance in her worship to god. She sheds all her adornments and emerges as a Buddhist nun with her yellow wrap during her dance. She is then killed at the command of the king. But these plays do not touch the suffering of women caused by patriarchy. However, the performance of Natir Puja raised many patriarchal objections and feminist questions about a woman's freedom as discussed by Rimli Bhattacharya in her paper.21 In Ama and Vinayaka, Ama marries a Muslim. Her father kills the Muslim and her mother forces her to commit Sati on the funeral pyre of the Hindu bridgegroom who is to marry her and who dies in a fight. Karna and Kunti shows Kunti's love
for Karna whom she abandons as she is afraid of patriarchal values against premarital pregnancy.

Coming to the other minor dramatists of the Pre-Independence period, Kailasam's *A monologue* depicts how women depend on men. The play, thus, considers patriarchal cultural to be real. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's *The Parrot* shows how women, bound by cultural values, suffer intensely throughout their life. A.C. Krishnaswami exposes, in *The Two Twice-Borns*, the plight of young girls who are married to old men in olden days. V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar in *Blessed in a Wife* shows how some men torture their wives by neglecting them and visiting concubines. V. Narayanan's *The Lawyer and His Daughter* deals with the suffering of the widows of higher caste Hindus. Balwant Gargi's *The Matriarch* condemns the suffocating authority of some mothers over their sons. Purushotham Tricumdas in *Sauce for the Goose* humorously portrays the rebellion of women against immoral men. The feminist leader, Sunitadevi challenges the patriarchal concept of chastity:

> Chastity is not natural to women. It has been enforced by man to satisfy his vanity.  

Some of the plays during the second period, exemplifying gender deformity are as follows. *Alone in Ayodhya* by Mathuram Boothalingam presents women's problems and questions patriarchal practices. The theme is borrowed from *the Ramayana*. Sita argues with Rama and desires to participate in politics. Urmila, a women of self-respect, takes Lakshmana to task for neglecting her and feeling too proud of his race. B.S. Kalsi's *The Little Dictator* portrays a patriarchal father. Mr Pandit is dictatorial in his attitude towards his wife and children. He oppressen them and causes hatred, fear and disgust in them. Shiv K. Kumar's *The Last Wedding*
Anniverssary is about marital disharmony. Lalit, as sensitive as a woman, marries Rupa as ambitious and as sociable as a man. Their personalities are complementary so they become psychologically dependent on each other. Yet their personalities remain alien to each other and loving relationship does not develop between them. The reappearance of Neela, Lalit's first love, precipitates their marital disharmony. Gender deformity is the source of the problems in these plays.

Again the first period, passing on to social deformity, Rabindranath Tagore condemns the cultural oppression and economic exploitation of the people of lower castes and classes by those of the higher castes and classes. His Chandalini hints at how dalits are humiliated as untouchables. Anand, a Buddhist monk, drinks water poured by Prakriti, an untouchable girl. She sees for the first time a man who considers her human. This overwhelmingly pleases her and she falls in love with him at once. The aspect of renunciation in Buddhism renders her awakening futile. Since the Buddhist monk will not marry her, his treating her equally is of no use. In Mukta-Dhara, Tagore shows how science and technology are used in exploiting the people economically.

Kailasam goes to Indian myth to focus on the social deformity. Ekalavya in The Purpose and Fulfilment, and Karna in Karma: the Brahmin's Curse are the greatest archers but they are not allowed to exercise their talent only because they belong to lower castes. The eponymous character of Keechaka lets himself be killed by Bhima, the husband of Draupadi, because he loves her honestly, R.G. Joshi points out; "Kailasam chose the characters from the Mahabharata and tried to interpret them in the light of human values". Harindranath Chattopadhyaya exposes the exploitation of capitalism in The Window and that of imperialism in The Sentry's Lantern.
V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar shows in *The Surgeon-General's Prescription* how Sitapati tries to marry his daughter, Kamala to a rich old landlord against her wish and in *The Point of View* how the mother and the wife of Ramachandra Rao, a rich landlord, wait for his death to inherit his property. The plays illustrate how people become loveless in their mad scramble to the higher rung of the socio-economic ladder. Balwand Gargi’s *The Vulture* depicts the inhuman exploitation of poor peasants by a landlord in a village. In V. Rampall’s *Almighty Gold*, Krishencharan an industrialist worships gold and forces his son to marry a rich girl against his wish to marry a poor girl whom he loves. In Ranganath’s *A Star is Born*, the corruption of doctors is exposed.

In the second period, social deformity is treated by a few playwrights. Asif Currimbhoy’s *Darjeeling Tea* depicts the exploitation and oppression of the poor workers by the landlords of tea-estates. His *Inquilab* is about the Naxalite movement against the exploitation of poor peasants by landlords in villages. Radical students finally murder not only the landlord but also the Professor who is branded a revisionist. Swami Avyaktananda in his collection of plays *India Through the Ages* aims at dissolving social and religious distinctions through universal love. D.M. Borgaonkar in *Rakhi* ridicules the medieval concept of the superiority of blue blood. The Rana of Vijaygarh refuses to accept the donation of blood by the Rana of Vishalgarh for transfusion in the critical condition because the latter is inferior to the former. Later the former accepts it when his wife ties a *rakhi* around the wrist of the latter. In his *The Temple Entry* Mira the daughter of the priest of the temple leads Bijan and other untouchables into the temple against the inhuman tradition of untouchability.
As regards political deformity, in Indian English drama of the first period, Rabindranath Tagore in *The King and the Queen* shows how Queen Sumitra rescues King Vikram by looking after the administration while the king persecutes her by exploiting her kindness to indulge in sensual pleasures completely. Sumitra takes her brother's help from Kashmir to subdue the rebels. Vikram feels belittled by Sumitra so he wants to assert his power. He decides to make Sumitra humble and imprison Kumarsen, her brother. Sumitra still plays the Rescuer and finally sacrifices herself to gratify the ego of her husband. This deflates his ego and he feels powerless. The eponymous character of Sri Aurobindo's *Rodogune* loves Antiochus, a son of Cleopatra. Timocles, her other son, feels envious about it. Cleopatra favours Timocles because she cannot understand the honesty of Antiochus. Chancellor Phayllus and his sister exploit the rivalry between the brothers and make Timocles kill Antiochus. Rodogune also dies for her lover. Thus the power struggle make people loveless and turn them against love.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya in *The Window* illustrates how workers and poor people become powerless by accepting the social hierarchy and the theory of fate (*Karma*) that sustain exploitation. The worker thinks that the rich are fortunate because they buy god. His wife believes that it is their fate to be poor and to suffer. In V.V.S. Aiyangar's *Sub-Assistant Magistrate of Sultanpet*, Krishna Sarma gets promoted as the Sub-Assistant Magistrate of Sultanpet. He plays the Persecutor and abuses his power. Finally he becomes the Victim when he is caught by the police.

In the second period, *The Dissident MLA* by Asif Currimbhoy which is based on the dissolution of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly in 1976 reflects contemporary Indian political scene. Manubhai is the fictitious MLA who becomes a dissident to have his own way. He instigates various
agitations such as the *gherao* of the Vice-Chancellor by the students, a donkey-ride of a minister, loot, arson and many MLAs breaking away from their party. All this leads to the dissolution of the Assembly and the imposing of President’s rule. *Larins Sahib* by Gurcharan Das is about Henry Lawrence, a British Resident in Punjab. He is honest and faithful to the land. He loves Rani whom the British Government banishes against his wishes. Gradually he develops lust for power and assumes the authority of an 'Angrez-Badshah'. Finally he is dismissed from his post. In Manohar Malgonkar’s *Line of Mars*, a royal family resorts to immoral means to sustain their power that they lose because of Dalhousie’s cunning Doctrine of Lapse. In D.M. Borgaonkar’s *Bhasmasura*, Professor Dinesh Chandra Budhisagar, a scientist, invents a powerful destructive weapon. In his mad pursuit of power through his intellect, he feels excited over the effectiveness of his invention which kills his wife. Thus, in our hierarchized society, people do not mind doing anything to reach the higher rungs of power.

Coming to physical deformity, in the first period, Rabindranath Tagore does not approve complete renunciation. He thinks that renunciation without love will not lead anybody to salvation and that bodily happiness need not be sacrificed. In fact, physical love alone takes one to the heights of spiritual love. His plays *Sanyasi* and *Chitra* illustrate this. In *Sanyasi*, the saint renounces all worldly pleasures and sits in meditation. Vasanti, a pretty lass, seeks his company but he runs away from her in panic. But he cannot run away from life. Finally he realizes the truth and decides to embrace life. But the girl has already died. The eponymous character of *Chitra* loves Arjuna when he is an ascetic. She is granted celestial beauty for one year by the Gods of Love and Spring. Arjuna now cannot resist her charm and breaks his vow of celibacy. The physical beauty that has kindled love disappears. But their love does not confine to their body and it spreads to
their mind and soul. Consequently, they overcome their temporary discontent and love each other honestly and passionately. By obeying one’s body, one can overcome self-alienation and achieve the unification of one’s body and soul.

Bharati Sarabhai, like Tagore, attempts to show in Two Women that salvation demands the unification of physical and spiritual fulfilment. Anuradha, an orthodox woman, marries Kanakaraya, an anglicised man. She believes in the religious ways of Hinduism and dislikes enjoying life while he wants to enjoy life. They decide to live their separate ways. At last, she realizes that the Himalayas, her religious refuge, can be found anywhere. Now she is ready to enjoy life with her husband but he dies of a secret disease. Urvashi, another woman in the play, is a widow and devotional singer who attempts to blend the physical and spiritual aspects of her life. In K.A. Abbas’s Invitation to Immortality, the Scientist invents the Elixir that makes man immortal. He announces that he will give it to a person who convinces him of his worth. Various people like a film star, a British officer, a Priest and a ‘Hitler’ try to convince the Scientist of their worth but nobody succeeds. At last, a worker comes and tells them that work is the real elixir of life.

In the second period, The Doldrummers by Asif currimbhoy is about the poor young people who live on the pavements of such cities as Bombay. They are alienated and unhappy. They derive pleasure from drinking liquor, resorting to violence and committing fornication. In V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar’s The Jolly Club, the members enjoy drinking and gambling. They call their club South Indian Psychic and Spiritual Research Institute (SIPSRI). They feel elated not only in their self-indulgence but also in violating the prohibition secretly. The Police Commissioner is also a member of the club. He raids
the club in order to please the minister. J.M. Lobo Prabhu's *Apes in the Parlour* is about the elite who seek happiness in illicit sex with Indira, a film star. Partap Sharma's plays *The Professor Has a Warcry* and *A Touch of Brightness* also deal with morbid sex.

In the first period, mental deformity finds a good illustration in Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's *The Saint* and *The Coffin*. There are more false saints than true ones. The saint, in the play, fools people by performing certain items of magic in the name of miracles. He leads corrupt life by exploiting the mindlessness of people. The play very successfully shows how religion is used to make and keep people mindless. *The Coffin* condemns the poets who tell lies to people through literature. Thus, they, like saints, create false consciousness in people. The play also illustrates how parents and elders bring them up. Mohan, the central character, gets his daughter a cradle which looks like a coffin. The cradle, thus, symbolizes the burial of real consciousness. Mohan himself lives in the illusory world created by his aunt. At last, he comes out it. Through him, the playwright conveys his message that the poet "should write about starving babies, about cruel masters, about poor sad women, about people who are shot because they asked for bread".24

The other plays of Pre-Independence include V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar's *The Two Selves*, Niranjan Pal's *The Goddess*, A.S.P. Ayyar's *In the Clutch of the Devil* and D.M. Borgaonkar's *Image-Breakers*. *The Two Selves* depicts the mental conflict of Sri Vasudeva Sarma. Sarswati Bai, his first wife, does not bear him any children so he marries Dhani Bai. He starts loving his second wife more than the first one. He also begins drinking liquor. Gradually he experiences an inner conflict between his "Higher Self and Lower Self*. *The Goddess* Portrays how corrupt priests exploit people by
using the name of religion. Abhiram, the chief priest at the temple of the Goddess, makes use of the blind faith of the people and amasses wealth. *In the Clutch of the Devil* also exposes the superstition of people and its exploitation by priests, astrologers, wizards and also money lenders. Raghavan and his wife believe that the death of their children is the result of black magic. So they spend a large amount of money on performing rituals to counter the black magic and punish the agent. But this benefits priests and money-lenders and drives Raghavan mad. *Image-Breakers* shows how religious faith maims human love. A number of young people form a league of Image-Breakers and rebel against the conventional marriage system.

In the second period, Asif Currimbhoy’s psychological plays exemplify mental deformity. *The Clock* is about Henry, a neurotic. He resigns his job compulsively and rationalizes it. He then feels desperate and depressed. He is obsessed with love for his lady secretary. Later his feelings of guilt take the form of two gunmen and his boss. He feels angry with his boss. Finally, he grows intolerant as he hears the clock tick and smashes it. But the noise does not stop. *The Dumb Dancer* portrays a Kathakali dancer who thinks that he is really Bhima, the character that he plays. Paradoxically, the psychiatrist, trying to cure him, becomes insane himself. *The Alien Native Land* depicts the alienation of Jews in India and their psychological problems. Currimbhoy’s play *An Experiment with Truth* is about Gandhiji’s life and his firm adherence to truth which is a real solution to mental deformity. In *Deep Roots* by Murli Das Melwani, Arvindo grows aware of the falsehood of customs, especially of marriage, and refuses to accept his father’s choice. He exposes his friends mercenary choice of a rich lame girl. Finally, he marries Neena ideally. Thus he frees himself from the mental deformity of our morbid culture.
Spiritual Deformity is elucidated in the plays of Sri Aurobindo in Pre-Independence period. All the five plays of Sri Aurobinda deal with love. In *Rodogune*, the eponymous character and her lover, Antiochus, fall victims to the power struggle. In *Perseus*, the eponymous character loves Andromeda and they together fight against Poseidon, the sea-god. In *Vasavadutta*, the eponymous character is a jailor but falls in love with Udayan, the prisoner and enemy of her father. In *The Viziers of Bassora*, Nureddene, the Vizier Alfazzal’s son loves Anice, a slave-girl. Their love survives the plot of Almuene, the bad vizier. The eponymous character of *Eric* falls in love with Aslaug, the sister of his enemy. Similarly Aslaug who comes to kill Eric ends up in loving him. Thus love defeats hatred. Srinivasa Iyengar observes:

All five plays underline the need for love, for love alone is the great solvent of all varieties of evil. Love is supreme truth and goodness and power, and it can defy death and conquer it, and turn dross into gold.25

Tagore deals with the lovelessness of our culture in *Sacrifice* and that of civilization in *Mukta-Dhara*. *Sacrifice* is about the religious practice of sacrificing animals at the altar of Goddess Kali. The king is moved by the agony of Aparna, a beggar girl, whose goat is sacrificed so he forbids sacrifice. *Mukta-Dhara* shows how the products of science and technology are used to exploit and oppress people. The king constructs a dam to control the free flow of water. This makes his exploitation of Shivtarai for Uttarkut more effective than before. The Prince himself breaks it. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya’s *The Sleeper Awakened* also criticizes loveless civilization.

CIVILISATION: Then get out of the house.
SOUL FORCE: That is not possible.
CIVILISATION: I’ll drive you out.
SOUL FORCE: You cannot.26
The plays convey that love cannot be destroyed by civilization. In Bharati Sarabhai's *The Well of the People*, an old woman wants to go on a pilgrimage but realizes that service to mankind is service to god. She therefore spends her savings on building a well for 'the untouchables'.

In the second period, Asif currimbhoy's plays *The Refugee* and *Sonar Bangla* depict the inhuman atrocities of the Bangla Desh war in 1971. Women were raped and their breasts were cut off. People were literally butchered. Among the soulless people, a few compassionate humane men can be found. For instance, in *The Refugee*, Sen Gupta gives shelter to Prof Yassin, a refugee and Prof Mosin help him get a job in the local University.

D.M. Borgaonkar's *The Great Coward* and *The Refugee* deal with the miserable sufferings of the victims of the partition immediately after Independence. Lakhan Deb's *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* exemplifies the spiritual deformity of the people who can assassinate Mahatma Gandhi who has always stood and striven for truth, non-violence and communal harmony. Like Sri Aurobindo, various playwrights through their plays have endeavoured to show how love cures spiritual deformity and its ill-effects.

*India Through the Ages*, a collection plays on various religions of India by Swami Ayyaktananda preaches universal love and communal harmony and aims at dissolving social and religious distinctions. In *My Sons* of Mrs J.M. Billimora, five students of Bombay University give up their linguistic and religious differences and live together like brothers. Similarly in *the Flute of Krishna* by P.A. Krishna Swami, Murali and Vidyaranya love each other though they belong to different castes; they think that they, like the flute, are the instruments of God to serve the humanity.

Thus, a brief survey of the Pre-and Post- Independence Indian Drama in English reveals that it deals with a gamut of various problems of
the individual and the society arising from gender, social, political, physical, mental and spiritual deformities. Although the focus, in each play discussed above, is on one cultural deformity, the other deformities are invariably touched upon. An attempt is made in the following chapters to treat the cultural deformity as reflected in the English versions of the select plays of Mohan Rakesh, a Hindi playwright (North), Badal Sircar, a Bengali playwright (East), Vijay Tendulkar, a Marathi playwright (West) and Girish Karnad, a Kannada playwright (South) who truly represent the modern Indian sensibility.

Mohan Rakesh is a famous Hindi short-story writer, novelist and playwright. He belongs to the modern Hindi literary movement of nai kahani (new short story). Some of his plays are first written as short stories. For example, The Great Swans of the Waves is first a short story. N. Choudhuri points out: "With Mohan Rakesh (Mohana Rakesa, 1925-72) Hindi drama makes a departure from pseudo-modernism and traditional symbolism to the drama of 'non-communication' - the modern man's failure to understand himself or to understand the other person and their mutual failure to understand each other, which is the real tragedy of modern life." Mohan Rakesh is greatly influenced by Marxism. He says: "We called ourselves progressive because most of us, including me, agree with the philosophical aspects of Marxist thinking...." Yet he does not completely align himself with the 'die-hard progressives'. Consequently he is criticized by both progressive and non-progressive writers. He explains the difficult situation that he is in:

... that set of die-hard Progressives called us non-Progressive or anti-Progressives because we did not align ourselves with their way of thinking, which stated that writing is to be done according to slogans and manifestoes. On the other hand, we also were condemned or
Like Dharmvir Bharati and Karnad, he also makes use of history and legend in *One Day in Ashadha* and *The Great Swans of the Waves* to throw light on contemporary problems. He justifies this: "I don't think that there's any harm in exploiting a particular character or situation in history for the sake of saying something modern, particularly if using such a character or situation would make it easier for the writer to do so." His plays elucidate the suffering of men and women, especially at psychological level, as they fall victims of socio-economic hierarchy and cultural hegemony.

Girish Karnad is a great bureaucrat, famous TV and film artiste and director, and successful playwright. He wanted to become an English poet but he wrote his first play *Yayati* in Kannada. The play emerged from his resentment at being suffocated by the responsibilities of his parents thrusted on him. His other plays also show the strong impact of his rebellion against cultural hegemony. He borrows his themes from Indian history, myth and legend and employs in his plays the techniques of classical and folk theatre of India. On the one hand he cannot waste his time on inventing new stories and on the other he wants to make use of culture to destroy its own false values. So he argues: The energy of 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 head. He shares the disillusionment of modern Indian intelligentsia and he is not fascinated by Marxism as he realizes its limitations. He points out: "Even
Karnad borrows his themes from history in *Tughlaq* and *Tale-Danda*, from myth in *Hayavadana* and from folklore in *Nagamandala*.

Vijay Tendulkar is the avant-garde Marathi playwright and short-story writer. In the beginning, he was a journalist. Then he moved around and saw things closely. But he felt dissatisfied when he started writing editorials with the information received from second-hand sources. He says:

> It started with my journalistic dissatisfaction, but it grew into much bigger proportions, in the sense that it became a matter of conscience as a human being. I became restless.\(^{33}\)

He left journalism when he received Nehru Fellowship for the years 1973-75. During his travel throughout India, he saw directly all kinds of violence. From this experience, he infers:

> Unlike the communists I don't think that violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or, for that matter, in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that the human being is born with. Not that its bad. Without violence man would have turned into a vegetable.\(^{34}\)

Thus he visualized both the positive and negative faces of violence. As a student, he worked in the '42 movement as a courier.\(^{35}\) Regarding ideology, he says:

> I do not align myself to any political ideology ... I do have my sympathies with the left.\(^{36}\)

He was actively associated with the civil liberties movement\(^{18}\). He exposes all kinds of inhuman violence in his plays. He never romanticizes his
He is a prolific writer. Of his twenty eight full length plays, only six have been translated into English.

Badal Sircar is a civil engineer and great Bengali playwright Ella Dutta in the Introduction to *Three Plays* of Sircar writes:

> Badal Sircar stands in the forefront of a new theatre movement in India. Both in form and content he has moved away radically from what the proscenium has to offer us today. (v)

Sircar first wrote humorous plays during late fifties. Then he wrote his plays of sombre existentialism during sixties. Finally he evolved Third Theatre with the influence of Grotowski's Poor Theatre and Schechner's Environmental Theatre. Third Theatre is different from the urban proscenium theatre (the first theatre) and the rural folk theatre (the second theatre). It does away with all paraphernalia and is virtually free theatre. Sircar's focus shifts from the individual to the society in his existential plays of sixties and it is on the society in his plays of Third theatre. Sircar abandons plot and characterization in these latter plays because the sociological approach demands it. Sircar writes: "A character may be too limiting in its individuality, a story may be too specific to the subject". He has sympathy for communists yet he differs with them. Ella Dutta writes,

> He does not wish to create new myths in place of the old. He prefers to raise the consciousness and create awareness of the issues. (viii)

Sircar aims at effecting awareness in such a manner that it makes people feel guilty of their indifference. He does not attempt to give any clear specific solutions but only hints at them.
REFERENCES

10. See Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: *Writing and Speeches* (Bombay: Govt. of Maharashtra, 1987).
14. See Hogle Wyckoff, "Sex Role Scripting in Men and Women".
16. See Norman O. Brown, *Life against Death*.
29. Rakesh, 23.
30. Rakesh, 33.
32. Karnad, 7.
36. Vijay Tendulkar, "No Ideology* (Interview), *India Today*, June 16-30, 1980; III.
37. Quoted by Gowri Ramanarayan, "The endless road of Badal Sircar's "free theatre"" in *Frontline* August 28, 1992; 75.