This study primarily attempts to draw attention towards the idea that a text is open to numerous interpretations and cannot be confined to a place or time. The transference of a text from one culture to another is not restricted to mere translation but requires efficient adaptation to a new cultural environment so as to convey new meanings. Different approaches and techniques adopted by adapters and directors to fulfill this task are studied at length in the central chapters of the present study. Eventually, it stresses the role of human material present in the form of actors and audience in the realm of theatre.

Styan rightly opines that “the study of drama must be pursued in its own medium, the theatre” (241). Drama is translated into theatre only when a story is interpreted by a set of actors in front of an audience. Therefore, performance by actors and ‘viewing’ by public are the two basic ingredients of drama on the basis of which it differs from all the other literary and art forms. The audience has the power to affect theatre in many ways. Some audiences view theatre as a means of escape from worldly cares; others seek insights into significant topics or simply to increase awareness; and still others perceive theatre as a means to advocate action about current social and political issues. The audiences, in the end, enforce their opinion by supporting what appeals to them and rejecting what they fail to understand or appreciate. Therefore, adaptations are undertaken to bring a text closer to the cultural, historical, political and social sensibilities of the new audience, thereby, assisting in ready identification and easy comprehension on the part of the audience.

Furthermore, theatre is a collaborative art. It draws on and encompasses all the other art forms like literature, painting, architecture, music, sculpture, costume designing and dance. Nevertheless, the presence of a governing entity that organises this collaboration and decides what is to be selected or omitted cannot be overruled. Theatre, in general, and adaptations, in particular, always raises contention over who of the many artists involved should be termed as the ‘auteur’ of the piece. The writer who creates (or adapts) a plot, themes and characters is apparently the answer but the script of a play or a movie is subsequently worked upon by various other writers and is open to editing at many levels of production, thus, making the question of authorship even more complex.
Further, devised plays have done away with the concept of a writer altogether. In a devised play, all elements of the piece, including writing, direction, acting, sets, lighting and costumes, become the responsibility of a group of artists and a play is brought to theatrical fruition by their equal collaboration. In that case, the question of authorship becomes all the more sensitive and pertinent. Since theatre is unique in its use of human material, actors also compete for authorship, to a certain extent. Through gestures, facial expressions, glances, postures and tone of voice, an actor interprets a character for the audience. However, it is the director who casts the play after several tryouts and auditions, and rehearses the actors.

Besides, other artists like music composers, set and costume designers help in reinforcing emotions and directing the audience’s interpretation of the characters, yet they also remain immediately responsible to the director’s interpretation of the story. Like sets and costumes, music and dance cannot be composed in a void. Every detail has to be worked out to fit the timing and budget of the production regulated by the director. Therefore, the director emerges as the real author. The director joins forces with all the other theatre artists and co-ordinates all the elements into a finished stage performance. The script, also, is often changed through interaction with the director and the actors. It is the director who is responsible for the overall vision and the final impact of the product.

The present study, therefore, has focused on the directorial aspect of the plays concerned. Separate sections in each chapter have been assigned to the theatrical idioms of the directors selected for research. The directors, though varying in their styles and approach, unanimously agree on the collaborative and improvisatory elements of contemporary theatre. Kumara Varma and Anjala Maharishi, while dealing with theatre students, strive to give ample opportunities to the upcoming actors, technicians and designers so that they polish their skills by gaining experience of a full-fledged production and, as a result, also learn the finer nuances of the art. Where Kumara Varma employs male actors to play female parts, Maharishi assigns a single role to two actors. The endeavour is to utilise the potential of the students to the optimum level and to liberate the actors from any gender or cultural bias. Similarly, Neelam Man Singh engages female impersonators in her plays and her urban male actors also do not shy away from playing female roles, for instance the laundresses’ scene in Yerma. Besides,
she provides an international platform for the creative blend of urban and folk artists via
media her troupe, The Company.

In terms of collaboration, theatre also resembles the art of movie-making. However, unlike movies, collaboration in a stage play is of a fluid nature owing to the fact that live stage play, like dance, radio-plays, operas and musicals, is a form of repeated performances by groups of people. Hence, theatre is termed ‘ephemeral’ (Brockett 9). A sense of immediacy is associated with theatre which makes it stand apart from all the other forms of creativity, bringing it closer to life. When a novel or a poem ends, it remains relatively unchanged. Although, on repeated contact, it may produce different meanings, yet the basic text remains the same. Similarly, a painting, sculpture or a movie video remains unchanged on successive viewing. However, in theatre, when a performance ends, its essence cannot be fully recaptured except in pictures, reviews and memories of those who were present. Keeping in mind this aspect of theatre, this study has attempted to substantiate its analysis by providing pictures of various productions of the plays under scrutiny.

Shaw trenchantly summarises the position of a playwright in one sentence: “I do not select my methods; they are imposed upon me by a hundred considerations” (qtd. in Nicoll 33). Similarly, the directors are governed by a number of considerations of theatrical representation, such as the acoustics of theatre; shifting of sets; range of the performer’s voice; the casting, which is done in keeping with the physical attributes of the character; limits of the actor; capacity of the spectator; municipal laws which guard against fire and other untoward incidents; and also accidental circumstances which emerge during the production in hand. Though there are adapters who have adapted scripts to the Indian milieu, like Begum Qudsia Zaidi and Surjit Patar in the first two chapters, yet the directors remain largely responsible for the form and the effect of the end product.

In addition, the director has to deal with the chief problem of how to emphasise and underplay given portions of the text. The problem can only be resolved by employing appropriate theatrical techniques which may project the view of the director and, at the same time, control the attention of the audience. The sound and light effects of Kumara Varma in *Leedli Nagari ki Neeti-Katha* enhance the menacing atmosphere of the play.
The suggestive red light and the thunderous roar of the panther are premonitions of Alfred Ill’s fate and prepare the audience for the future events. Such methods qualify Kumara Varma’s reading of the character of Claire Zachanassian as well. The make-up and costumes of Nirmala and the eunuch pair call attention to their gender peculiarities. Moreover, the set and the costumes are created in accordance with the budget of the production.

On the other hand, Neelam Man Singh’s adaptation of *Yerma* becomes a celebration of rural life with luminosity of colour and earth-fragrant live music, while retaining the essential tragedy. Her characteristic use of fire, water, soil and dry leaves add to the texture of the play and supplies natural music on stage. They also symbolise the raw desire gnawing the insides of Yerma. The earth-image that Neelam Man Singh associates with Yerma is conveyed through these elements. Furthermore, masks, puppets, half-curtains and play-within-a-play are some of the devices engaged in to highlight the meta-theatricality of the production. The idea that drama is not confined to the sphere of the written or the printed word is reiterated here. When drama is deciphered on stage, or when it shifts from Hutcheon’s ‘telling’ mode to ‘showing’ mode, even the spoken word loses its dominance as the only means of communication. Significantly, every live staging of a play can be termed as an adaptation owing to the potential differences present in the media of print and performance. A text does not always guide an actor in the matters of gestures, blocking and expressions. It is the director, with inputs from the actor, who actualizes the text on the basis of his/her interpretation of the subtext. Therefore, every time a text is staged, it is re-created or, in a sense, adapted for the new medium. In the ‘showing’ mode, the ‘visual image’ captures more attention. Also, sounds, collapsible sets and eye or physical contact with the audience become important ingredients of a performance.

In *Azar ka Khwaab*, Maharishi launches an aunt instead of Higgins’ mother and Hajjo becomes the legitimate child of Khairati because the new audience should not face inhibitions in the reception of the play. All references to adoption of Eliza by Higgins are deleted and the retrieval of the ring by Hajjo points towards the romantic entanglement of the leading pair. It is noteworthy that the ‘new’ audience in all the three case studies is composed of the urban middle class. They are refined and educated but most of them are in the process of cultivating a love for and understanding of theatrical dialect. Moreover,
as in real life, a large percentage is chiefly driven by its morals and ethics in the field of art as well. Therefore, sensitive issues have to be depicted with utmost care for such a set of spectators. But it does not imply that directors are not free to indulge in dramatic or technical experiments. Neelam Man Singh has always tried to explore new methods of representation on stage and has triumphantly produced plays which are a pot-pourri of folk and urban styles with Naqqals, live music, mime and dance. *The Suit* has many bedroom scenes but they have been conceptualized in a manner which does not offend the viewer’s sensibility. The physical contact of the actors with the audience during the distribution of wafers and drinks for an alleged party is readily accepted by the crowd. Even Maharishi’s *Khwaab* has faced censure for the abuses in the script but she did not delete the objectionable words as that would have marred the impact of the play.

All the three plays, *Khwaab*, *Yerma* and *Leedli*, are successfully adapted to a new spatial and temporal milieu. The choice of the plays in three different languages – Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi – provides a glimpse of a wide range of theatrical conventions. Also, three diverse cultures are brought under the spotlight through these adaptations. Interestingly, all these plays were performed for essentially the same audience, that of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula. That the audiences were able to comprehend and relate to all the plays accentuate the cosmopolitan nature of the tricity. The basically Hindu setting of *Leedli*, the robust and vivacious Punjabi environment of *Yerma*, and the polite Nawab culture exhibited in *Khwaab* were received without prejudices and were played to packed houses. The essence of theatre, in fact, lies in the “simultaneous presence of live actors and spectators in the same room” which demands a healthy partnership on both the sides because the responses of the audiences are visible and immediate (Brockett 9). If the play fails to involve the audience, it, usually, means that the methods of expression and communication employed by the director are lacking in effectiveness and have failed to convey the idea to the viewer.

The present study has endeavoured to compare the source text and its adaptation by means of analysing not only the printed word but also the performance text. It also considers the reactions of the adapters as well as the directors to the playwrights of the source texts. Contrary to the belief that adaptation is re-creation of a text in a new medium, such as drama to movies or novels to movies or television, this study has dealt with plays which have been adapted just as plays, but in a new and entirely different
This study reveals that while dealing with foreign-language dramatic texts, the adaptation takes place not only at the literary level but also at the level of performance directed by the theatrical conventions of the new milieu. The ‘familiar’ is re-invented and re-staged after traversing time and space barriers. Many local adaptations of plays including *Blood Wedding* (Agg dey Kaleerey), *The Good Person of Setzun* (Rampur ki Aurat Bhali Ram Kali), *An Enemy of The People* (Jana-Shatru) and *Mad Woman of Chaillot* (Shehar mere di Pagal Aurat) are available for exploration. They will be good opportunities to further investigate the crucial shift of the written word onto the stage, and also the role played by the political, social and cultural experiences of the new audience in the creative process of adaptation. An inter-disciplinary research like this opens possibilities for a study of various approaches to theatre – the translation of drama into theatre; adaptation at the literary and performance levels; shifts from ‘showing’ to ‘showing’ or ‘telling’ to ‘showing’ modes and vice-versa; and how culture defines theatre. Reception studies, like the role of audience, the interaction of actors and audience, and the impact of a play in a given socio-cultural scenario can also be developed. In the present study, with the help of three select plays, mine has been a tentative foray in a direction that can open up immense possibilities for future exploration.