In this final chapter an endeavour has been systematically and chronologically made to record the observations that have been found in course of analysing the social, economic and political factors which were responsible for 'social change as revealed in Bengali drama/theatre' or the prime problem of this treaty. Since it is an empirical study, the importance of observations need no further elaborations. But before an attempt is made in that direction a few minor points require discussion for the sake of clarity and transparency. First of all, the time frame of the present study is 1872-1990 or to be more precise a period of 118 years. In such a wide spectrum, it may be humbly submitted that the sub-problems arising out of the main problem may have remained unresolved due to the constraints of time, finance and man-power. However inspite of such limitations, the present worker made a persistant effort to present the main problem in its entirety. Thus an emphasis may be found that focussed the core-part of the problem primarily, relegating all other side-issues in the secondary region.

Observations

The problem has been considered in relation to space and time. The time frame has been divided into two parts, namely, pre-Independence and post-Independence. Periodwise these are 1872-1947 and 1948-1990 respectively. This appears to be realistic and rational for the simple reason that the two periods denote two sets of social norms followed by the Bengali society in general. A penetrating analysis of these norms could not have been possible had the two periods been amalgamated and treated conjointly. The basic venue of research for the present study is the city of Calcutta which according to the experts is still a premature metropolis (Bose, 1965) but yet again a heterogenous city (Redfield and Singer, 1956). The ramifications and implications of these concepts went a long way in establishing the significance of the venue of research. Thus a pattern of the society, cosmopolitan nature of its people, their educational orientation and financial status and last but not the least, their cultural heritage - all have been observed in great details in the light of the forementioned anthropological concepts.

As a sequential part of the cultural heritage, the attempted genesis of Bengali theatre convincingly establishes its birth to be a by-product of the culture contact with the British. While forming and shaping this theatre, the Bengali aristocracy, who were mostly western-educated, played a vital role. But this is quite natural in the city of Calcutta where these English educated aristocrats assumed the role of 'intellegentia' and were quite influenced by 'the invasion
of a culture-civilization by alien colonists or conquerors' (Redfield and Singer, 1956). But in spite of this initial culture contact and influence, the further development of Bengali theatre indicates a synthesis of great traditions and little traditions, the combination of which in parenthesis became the Bengali theatre. Another important point to be noted is the social structure of this theatre. The two components of this structure are the creative-people or the theatre makers and the viewers or the audience. However, the members of this structure are only a miniscule part of the larger structure, i.e. the Bengali society. In this sense, this theatre-structure may be considered as a sub-structure; but the similarities, akinness and sense of belonging to the mother society can not be overlooked. The analytical study of the creative people behind theatre-making, both in pre and post-Independence period shows in great detail their perceptions and understanding of the prevailing Bengali society. However, these perceptions are widely divergent in the two sets of period i.e. pre- and post-Independence era. The criteria of form and content selection in relation to Bengali theatre in above-mentioned two periods shows this divergence of view quite pointedly. But both sets of producers, though unconsciously, followed the principles of 'induced action' and 'pre-supposition' while producing a theatre. Thus in the pre-Independence period, the above two principles sometimes yielded the desired results and sometimes not; but in the post-Independence period, the desired results were by and large uniform and positive.

In relation to form and content, a synoptical perview shows the exact categorisation of theatres attempted to in relation to the time frame. This also indicates the demand for certain categories in certain periods. When this is correlated to social, economic and political events of the corresponding period, a general understanding behind such demand and choice is observable. Thereafter an identification and estimation of social change becomes easier. ‘The trends’ identified in this manner became social markers which sometimes yielded positive influence but in certain categories, as in the case of adult theatres of the post-Independence era, a negative influence is noticeable too. However, the purpose of categorisation is quite fulfilled because it indicates the historical genesis of Bengali theatre as well as its demand and choice curve at a glance.

Another important observation is the correlation between economic and political struggles with dramatic performances in the pre-and post-Independence era. Theatre being a social function, it is naturally expected to depict major socio-political events in the dramatic
performances. Notwithstanding the dramatic regulation act of 1876, the historicals and mythologicals before first world war i.e. 1914, performed admirably the role of a social opinion-maker and helped to elevate the spirit of patriotism and nationalism unmistakably. There, of course, were elements of induced actions in these production. The same may also be inferred in relation to social pride and self-respect with regard to the mythological plays of the period between 1876-1912. The concept of religion and Hindu revivalism in these productions played a major role in satisfying the Bengali ego which was itching for a show-down with British imperialism in so far as self-respect and national pride were concerned. The mentality of ego-satisfaction is equally visible in the period between 1924-1933 when the historical plays in a symbolic way eulogised the concept of individual terrorism which was appreciated and lapped up by the audience in a significant way. This correlation between social and political ideas became more pronounced in the post-Independence era of West Bengal. The marxian philosophy of contradictions between the haves and the have-nots became a prominent ideology on or about the time of attainment of Independence. And just like their counterparts, in the pre-Independence era, who supported the concept of patriotism, nationalism and individual terrorism, the group-theatre producers of the post-Independence era began to assert themselves in favour of socialism, communism and the marxist doctrine of contradictions between the haves and have-nots of the society. The social acceptance of these ideas led the creative people behind the group-theatre movement to establish alternative cultural symbols hitherto unapproached by the professional theatre-makers of the Bengali theatre. This is a significant proof of divergence of ideas and perception amongst the two sets of producers in the pre-and post-Independence era respectively. The same divergence is also visible in the suburbs and the districts where in the pre-Independence era, the theatre producers followed the cultural symbol of anti-imperialism and produced many a historical and mythological plays of professional theatres of Calcutta. And in the same vein, most of these districts and suburbs resorted to producing the successful plays of the Calcutta group-theatre circuit in the post-Independence era. The anthropological concept of ideas flowing from the city to the country and hinterlands (here the districts and the suburbs), thus has been proved adequately. However the ideological concept of heterogeneous cities dominated by colonialism going back to their original rural and traditional culture after being liberated from the imperialist yoke, could not be pursued to its logical end due to lack of incisive data. But this is a subproblem and as mentioned earleir, is beyond the grasp of the present writer due to a lack of larger infrastructure not available to him.
The second component of the social sub-structure mentioned earlier is the audience. Theatre as a social function requires two basic components. One is the theatre-maker and the other is the theatre-viewer or the audience (Southern, 1968). The significant observation in this regard is the male-dominance in the audience strata. The average theatre-goer, as the queries revealed, likes to see a theatrical performance once or twice in a month. The theatre viewing thus may be identified as male-oriented and urban in nature. In a limited way it also reflects the choice, taste and attitude of a section of the people of both sex belonging to different tiers of the Bengali society.

In view of the above observations certain interpretations are obvious. These are put below before a final conclusion is arrived at.

The main problem in the study under consideration is the estimation and understanding of 'social change' deemed to have been reflected or revealed as the case may be, in a broad spectrum of Bengali drama and theatre spreading over a period of 118 years beginning with the year 1872 when the first professional theatre was staged in Calcutta. Thus it will be seen that Bengali theatre from its very inception followed a role model where theatre as an art-form assumed a kind of social responsibility. The early plays of Dinabandhu Mitra and Ramnarayan Tarkaratna were classic examples of this. Progressively the assumption of this social responsibility found greater expressions in the plays of Girish Chandra Ghosh which ultimately became a 'great tradition' of Bengali theatre. Bypassing the prohibitive Dramatic Regulatory Act of 1876, Girish Chandra and his likes stuck to the dual role of social reformers and entertainers without being parochial and non-secular. In fact the period between 1872-1912 is the gestation period of Bengali theatre. All emerging social ideas like the concept of one-nation, secularism, patriotism, nationalism, religious pride, self-sufficiency etc found their expressions in the dramatic texts and performances of the aforementioned period. The central contradiction throughout the pre-Independence era was anti-imperialism. Not all the dramatic texts, however, were produced to this aim. This was perhaps due to the non-uniformity of economic and political struggles launched against the British rule. But perhaps the more convincing reason behind this was the role of 'intelligentsia' and the social changes that took place in the Bengali society between the period 1928-1947 which was the last phase of political struggles for achievement of freedom and Independence. But it was not the political struggles that should attract one's attention in regard to the dramatic performances of the aforementioned period. Rather the outlook of the
society and very many social changes that occurred after the first world war were equally significant for evaluating the dramatic performances of the period.

In the social sphere, the participation of Bengali women and youths in the political struggles of the period increased considerably. The literary writings in the field of novels, short-stories and poetries dealt with socio-political subjects hitherto unattempted (Sengupta, 1990). Thus side by side, with the philosophy of emancipation from the yokes of imperialism, a concrete effort was made to understand the complexities of the Bengali middle-class society within the framework of traditionalism. This was perhaps the conception that led the professional theatre makers of Bengali theatre to fall back upon the literary works of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and Tara-Shankar Bandyopadhyay as well as of a host of female novelists such as Nirupama Debi, Prabhabati Debi Saraswati and Anurupa Debi. The dramatic versions based on these literary works were, categorywise all socials and indicative of change of outlook towards the emerging social problems on the part of the producers. That these efforts were none too wasted, was proved by the audience acceptance of these plays during the forementioned period. But the more important aspect in relation to social change was the birth and progress of the philosophy of socialism which ran parallel to the main stream of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence during the last phase of forementioned freedom struggle.

The marxian concept of emancipation of the society from the evils of hunger, poverty and imperialist exploitation through armed revolution began to assert itself forcefully amongst the intellegentia of Bengali. It gave birth to alternate cultural ideas which was vigourously pursued by a section of the educated middle-class of Bengal from the early thirties of the twentieth century. This was kind of a ‘blue-print of action’ (Nanda, 1994) that grew rapidly in West Bengal during the post-Independence period. As a philosophy and guide to action, marxism became an alternate political philosophy and was embraced upon by the producer-directors of group-theatres in the post-Independence era. Right from the staging of ‘Nabanna’, this new concept has been time and again reflected in the productions of group-theatre. As one proceeds towards the culminating point i.e. 1990, it will be seen that with the passage of time many new twists and turm, many new interpretations, many new normative values have been discovered in relation to culture and society. But the basic dependence on marxian concept of class contradictions remained intact. Therefore as in the pre-Independence era-when theatre created cultural symbols to encourage the struggle against Birital imperialism by virtue of interpreting
history, mythology and hindu religion, in the post-Independence era such cultural symbols were created to expose the character of the new ruling clique or the bourgeoisie as well as to highlight the plight of the toiling masses, i.e. the workers, the peasants, the women and the youth in short, the downtrodden and the exploited masses of the society.

Thus in the total spectrum of Bengali dramatic performances during the period 1872-1990, a change in attitude towards the society is well reflected though there were distinctive differences amongst the two sets of producers operating in pre- and post-Independence era. In the leisurely, semi-urban, semi-feudal society of Bengal, such problems as unemployment, plight of the peasantry, capitalist exploitation of the working class etc. seldom found expression in the dramatic performances before Independence. Here the growth of culture and cultural symbols were purely confined within the traditional cultural syndroms of the Bengali society. The social change revealed in these performances did not dare to touch the social ethos which though outwardly fought a pitched battle against British imperialism, inwardly remained insular and within the confines of joint-family conservatism, whereby adherence to western education outwardly, and adherence to traditionalism inwardly, persisted. This perhaps was the reason behind the motives of the theatre-makers of pre-Independence period. Notwithstanding the birth of Bengali theatre due to a foreign culture-contact, they did not venture to produce any meaningful cultural symbol touching the social fabric excepting the anti-imperialist protest symbols. But these also remained within the limits of religion and Indian mythology which were the hall-marks of traditionalism. But looked into from a different angle, when Calcutta is described as a premature-metropolis (Bose, 1965), it focusses one's attention to the incomplete urbanisation of Calcutta which also is responsible for the forementioned halting cultural growth. This is clearly visible in the pre-Independence dramatic performances which by and large remained within the limits of this semi-urbanisation. The failure of Sisir Bhadury inspite of his modernising efforts in dramatic techniques and his trial and tribulations with the Tagore texts all point out to this semi-urbanisation of Calcutta and its halting cultural growth. The social texts that were produced between 1930-1950 could at best go upto the novels of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay who dealt with the unorthodox man-woman relations without attacking the very fabric of the society which was full of orthodox taboos and traditional conservatism. Thus between 1872-1950, excepting the protest symbols visible in the historicals and mythologicals, no other significant cultural changes is noticeable. But one may argue that this was the central problem affecting the society and therefore removal of this was the primary task. Even accepting
this logic, a pertinent question remains. The common man, irrespective of class, creed and religion, had to equally shoulder, if not more, the burden of imperialism and colonialism. But excepting such writers as Dinabandhu Mitra, Michael Madhusudan Dutta and Girish Chandra Ghosh, no later generation writers, in the professional circuit did dare to write a dramatic text depicting the plight of this average common man. The two exceptions were Digin Banerjee and Manmatha Ray who did not belong to the professional genre in spirit. Their subsequent writings for the group-theatre movement proves that resoundingly. Even the later generation writer-director-producers of the professional circuit barring the forementioned two remained within the confinement of middle-class society and did not try to understand the implication and role of a common man such as a muslim peasant, a hindu worker or a tribal woman in relation to anti-imperialist struggle. The onus of this, however, does not lie entirely with the individuals; rather it is the semi-feudal, semi-urban structure of the society and nurturing of the remnants of traditional rural values that coloured the vision of these producers. The prematureness of the city of Calcutta as a metropolis and its unfulfilled secondary urbanisation perhaps gave birth to this dichotomy of perceptions towards Bengali society.

The marxist ideology of class contradiction and its successful application in the post-Independence era has to be understood and explained in this context. What Dinabandhu Mitra’s ‘Nildarpan’ failed to achieve, interalia, the fartherance of the conception of social injustice which was the central theme of the play, Bijan Bhattacharyya’s ‘Nabanna’ achieved excellently. Just like the former, the latter was a cultural symbol but with a difference. ‘Nabanna’ as a play broke the shackles of conservatism, established a ‘little tradition’ in relation to theatrical performances and forced the theatre-makers of all shades to look back at their conservative traditionalism. It opened a flood gate of new ideas, new cultural symbols and attacked radically the semi-urban, semi-rural base of the society. This was in a sense a true ‘blue-print of action’ following which in the post-Independence era a vigourous effort was made to establish an alternate cultural path. Though euphemistically it was called the peoples culture, in effect it was the culture of the educated Bengali middle-class radicals who adopted marxism as their ideology. The spread of this culture particularly in the field of theatre was possible because of the new economic and political alignments that took place in the state of West Bengal after Independence. The Bengali middle-class began to support more and more the militant struggles of the workers, the peasants and the white-collar job-holders. But not only in the economic and political sphere, changes also took place in the social sphere. Though the spirit of the joint-family system still
existed, an increasing number of people began to establish molecular units, giving rise to new social forces as against the traditional ones. In the same vein, the concept of western education no longer remained an outward expression. The medium of English language along with its dress, food habits and speech now crossed the forementioned outward barrier and entered right inside the traditional Bengali families. If one adds to this the general problems of unemployment, refugee re-settlement, price-rise and youth unrest, the volatility of the Bengali society after Independence can be easily understood. One may also point out that the number of factors destabilising the Bengali society in the post-Independence period were much more in number and magnitude than these were in the pre-Independence era. And the process of this destabilisation accelerated rapidly during the sixties of the twentieth century particularly in the city of Calcutta, giving rise to sharper conflicts and division inside the Bengali society. In fact this is quite compatible with the idea that the ‘urban way of life’ ... is primarily a consequence of secondary urbanisation and of that in a particular critical stage when personal and cultural disorganisation are greatest” (Redfield and Singer, 1956). The birth of the group-theatre movement in post-Independence era should be understood in this backdrop. The search for alternative culture symbols, the rediscovery of Tagore’s universal human values, the contact and adoption of the ‘great-tradition’ of the European theatre, and a desire to express forcefully through political and socio-political theatres—all were the consequences of the forementioned secondary urbanisation which was yet to be completed. The variations and experimentation in the group-theatre performances appear to have picked up the momentum in keeping with the rate of acceleration of this secondary urbanisation.

In fine, it may now be CONCLUDED that social change is definitely reflected and revealed in Bengali drama and theatre between the period 1872-1990. However, the nature of this change varies in the two sets of period, i.e. pre-Independence and post-Independence. While in the pre-Independence era, social change revolved round the concept of anti-imperialism, in the post-Independence era, it revolved round the political philosophy of marxism. But these conclusion should not be taken in blanket forms. Rather with the anti-imperialist protest symbols in the forementioned pre-Independence era, there were also reflections of social problems indicating social change in outlook and perception, particularly in the period between 1928-1950. And also as against this, inspite of the predominance of marxian concepts of class-contradictions, a projection of universal human values is noticable in the period between 1977-1990 amongst the group-theatre productions. Therefore, it may be concluded that inspite of
variations and differences in social outlooks, the spectrum of theatre productions in the city of Calcutta within the time frame of 1872-1990 convincingly proves:

That social change did reflect and reveal itself in Bengali drama and theatre. And it is continuing to do so.

That it produced and established culture-symbols in commensurate with economic, political and social problems;

That it generated enough number of induced and pre-supposed actions which gave birth to new cultural concepts.

And finally, Bengali drama and theatre proved its existence as a culture trait and a medium of culture change.

With these conclusions, the present study is ended with the fond hope of acceptance.