Chapter V
A Comparative Study of the Dramatic Art of Sri. Aurobindo, Nissim Ezekiel and Gieve Patel

In the present chapter a comparative assessment of the dramatic art of the playwrights: Sri. Aurobindo, Nissim Ezekiel and Gieve Patel is taken into consideration.

5.1 Observations on Dramatic Art of Sri. Aurobindo, Nissim Ezekiel and Gieve Patel:

Sri. Aurobindo wrote all his poetic plays probably between 1893 and 1917. This was the period when in England the cause of poetic drama was being championed by such great writers like Stephen Philips and W.B. Yeats. One feels surprised to note how Sri. Aurobindo, an Indian writing in Indian environment and at the same time performing myriad other functions of a leader, freedom fighter, an editor and a college Principal could turn out to be a very successful verse dramatist. His plays not only incorporated elements in the English verse drama like the introduction of Indian and Arabian plots, and of spirituality chiefly based upon the principle of evolution but also brought blank verse to utmost perfection. Above all, his plays opened up a new vista by displaying an element of optimism about the future of mankind.

Nissim Ezekiel wrote all his plays probably between 1969 to 1993. In writing the plays, Ezekiel enriched the content of Indian English drama. By performing experiments in various fields, he extended the range of possibility of making innovations in new forms. He not only wrote a fine-sketch in Indian English but also wrote a comedy, a tragi-comedy, a farce and a tragedy. Nissim Ezekiel’s plays explore a wide range of gender related issues like power relationships in the family, sexual politics, gender inequality and men’s inability to accept rejection by women.

The Three Plays were written by Gieve Patel between 1968 and early 1980. Most remarkably these plays (tragedies) situated within the Parsi community of Mumbai as well as the rural gentry of South Gujrat, a region that Patel has had close family ties with. In a set of interviews accompanying the plays, Patel confesses it was very important for him to avoid these stereotypes. He succeeds in showing a world and a-way of life built around a single ethnic identity but by universalizing their triumphs and failures.
5.1.1 **Dramatic Forms Used by the Playwrights:**

Sri. Aurobindo tried several forms of drama-dramatic romance, tragedy and the allegorical play. *The Viziers of Bassora*, *Eric* and *Vasavadutta* are dramatic romances. *Rodogune* is a tragedy and *Perseus the Deliverer* is an allegorical play. All these plays written by Sri. Aurobindo are of five-act poetic plays.

Nissim Ezekiel says that from time to time people want to do different things (hence) he took to the writing of plays. While writing plays, Nissim Ezekiel tried several forms. They are; *Nalini*-Three Act comedy, *Marriage-Poem*- One-Act tragi-comedy, *The Sleepwalkers*-An Indo-American Farce and *Don’t Call it Suicide*-A Two Act tragedy.

Concerning about the dramatic technique about Gieve Patel’s plays as they are all tragedies *Princes* is a Five-Act tragedy, *Savaksa* Three-Act tragedy and *Mister Behram* is a Four-Act Tragedy.

5.1.2 **Sources Used for the Plays:**

The myths, legends, folklore and history are the favourite sources for Sri. Aurobindo. Each of the plays of Sri. Aurobindo has a different source. The plot of *Viziers of Bassora* owes its origin to numerous legends, most of which are collected in *The Book of Thousand and One Nights*, about Haroun al Rasheed, the fabulous King of ancient Baghdad. The Scandinavian mythologies about Thor, Odin, Freya and their offspring’s and Eric forms the source material of *Eric*. Udayan-Vasavadutta and Perseus-Andromeda myths form the source of *Vasavadutta* and *Perseus the Deliverer* respectively. Similarly many stories prevalent round the legendary figure of Cleopatra are the source material of *Rodogune*. But Sri. Aurobindo picks up only brief outline and relevant points out of these different sources and builds-up a new structure with their help. This structure bears the stamp of his voracious reading.

Nissim Ezekiel doesnot take the plot from any ancient tales, fables, mythologies and other sources. All the plays are written from his own experiences, of the urban life. Plays like *Nalini* and *Don’t Call it Suicide* are based on real life experiences of Nissim Ezekiel.

Patel’s plays like *Princes*, *Savaksa* and *Mister Behram* are derived from his own life experiences and the stories heard by him from his community members. For the play *Princes*, Gieve Patel has chosen the incident of death of a cousin, for the play *Savaksa* he
draws a comic event that took place at Nargol. The story is of bride and groom to lead a procession through the village with their marriage bed carried behind them. The source for the play *Mister Behram*, Gieve Patel got from a woman and her personal tragedy in her life…

**5.1.3 Structures and Styles:**

In case of Sri. Aurobindo’s plays *The Viziers of Bassora, Eric Vasavadutta, Rodogune* and *Perseus the Deliverer*, all are five-act poetic plays. They, by and large, follow the Greek structure, consisting of Rising Action, Climax and Falling Action, of Exposition, Rising Action, Climax or Crisis, Denouement and Catastrophe. The principle of three unities has been largely followed in *Perseus the Deliverer* and *Rodogune*. The plot structure in all these plays is compact and unified. All the actions incidents and events are integrated in the main body of the play. The plot structure of these plays, gives an impression of being an organic whole.

Comparing to the plays of Sri. Aurobindo, Nissim Ezekiel’s plays carry their structures in their titles, *Nalini*—Three-Act comedy, and *Marriage Poem*—One-Act tragi-comedy. *The Sleepwalkers*—An Indo American Farce and *Don’t Call it Suicide*—A Two-Act tragedy stand apart. These plays have followed only the principles of unity of place and possible of time whereas the playwright ignores unity of action. Generally, these plays followed Rising Action, Climax, and Falling Action pattern.

In Gieve Patel’s three plays *Princes, Savaksa* and *Mister Behram*, unity of place and of time are observed. In *Princes*, conflict is introduced in the very outset in Act I, followed by Rising Action in Act III, whereas Falling Action, Climax is observed in Act V. In the play *Savaksa*, Exposition is observed in Act I, II whereas Act III, describes Rising Action which is also called as Complication. From Act III and onwards Falling Action, Climax is observed. In Act III, it comes to utmost position, whereas in *Mister Behram* conflict starts from beginning Act I then it is observed Rising Action, Falling Action whereas Climax is observed in Act IV when Mister Behram gets paralyzed.

**5.1.4 Diction Used in the Plays:**

The plays by Sri. Aurobindo, are verse plays. In modern times verse drama has successfully emerged as a literary form. Sri. Aurobindo may be given the credit of reviving English verse drama in the East.
Sri. Aurobindo also brought blank verse as the medium of drama to utmost perfection. His blank verse is born out of an inspired consciousness and is remarkable for the forcefulness of its expression and adaptability to various situations and characters.

Although blank verse is the chief medium of expression, prose, too, has been used here and there in these plays. The principal characters generally speak in blank verse while the secondary characters in humble position such as servants, maids, jesters mainly use prose, as per their status.

Nissim Ezekiel admits ‘I used Indian English heard all over the country, with minor variations.’ In case of it, A.K.Raju comments that *Don’t Call it Suicide* is a play that grows on the reader. The low-keyed pitch, the unpretentious style, realistic in its avoidance of flourishes and declamatory passages, strongly creates an impression of the reader or auditor in a theatre witnessing an actual performance, with the fourth wall removed (introduction, xiv).

In *Marriage Poem*, Ezekiel is successful in employing gestural language. Mala “picks-up a magazine” and flips over its pages nervously to relieve herself from the mental tension. The play is also rich in aphoristic statements like “only his wife knows a man”. (74) “The genes are Gods”, (71) “Husband and wife always think differently.” (75) These aphorisms are woven to the texture of the play thereby intensifying its meaning whereas the play *Nalini* lives on dialogue. The language of the play is light, easy, racy and sparkling.

**5.1.5 Influences on the Playwrights:**

From the point of view of the medium of expression, particularly blank verse, characterization and plot structure, Sri. Aurobindo’s plays seem to have been influenced by the Elizabethans. Shakespeare’s influence is visible almost everywhere, particularly in the dramatic romances of Sri. Aurobindo. Marlowe’s and Ben Jonson’s influence also may be discernible in as much as Smerdas of *Perseus the Deliverer* has the same lust for wealth as is displayed by Barabas of Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* and Shaikh Ibrahim of *The Viziers of Bassora* is a great hypocrite like Sir. Epicure Mammon of Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist*.

Greek influence is also discernible in Sri. Aurobindo’s plays. The Furies that form an essential part of Aeschylus’ play *Eumenides* play an important role in *Rodogune* as well. Furthermore Cleopatra in *Rodogune* reminds us of Clytemnestra in Aeschylus’
"Agamemnon. Herseus the Deliverer" is based upon the Greek mythology of Perseus and Andromeda and is full of classical and mythological references.

Oriental influence is, the prevailing influence in Sri. Aurobindo’s plays, by putting stress upon the display of the former qualities i.e. gentleness, patience, self sacrifice, purity show the mark of oriental influence over them. Though Sri. Aurobindo’s wide sympathies prompt him to choose themes of various countries and climes Arabia, Scandinavia, Greece and India his art gives a universal colouring to each of these themes.

Nissim Ezekiel wrote his plays under the influence of Alkazi. In an interview to P. Bayapa Reddy, he said: “I became interested in the theatre through E. Alkazi and his work in Bombay Theatre Group. Later we formed the Theatre Unit. To write plays at that time was a dream for me and to some extent it is still a dream” (14). In the late 40’s he developed a fondness for seeing and reading plays under Alkazi’s expert guidance. He admitted that he could no real influence in plays as in poetry but a reading of his plays show the influence of Bernard Shaw. Influenced by Bernard Shaw, he wrote plays on social realism. His plays portray a cross section of contemporary society, the hollowness of urban middle class, the institution of marriage.

Gieve Patel has a strong influence of Jean- Baptiste Racine while writing the plays. In one of the interviews by Priya Adarkar, he accepts the fact that “Racine is always on my mind right through from the very first play, I may move away in every other direction, but I always come back to him. I mean that in a certain kind of way, to me, in the representation of pure human passions, no playwright comes anywhere near Racine. He is just the distillation of human passion. (Jan 31,1989).

5.1.6 Themes in the Playwright’s Plays:

The vision gives in Sri. Aurobindo’s "The Viziers of Bassora" is one of a bright future for mankind and of the ultimate victory of the forces of good over the forces of evil. This play also visualizes the evolution of man. Sri.Aurobindo ‘showed that this evolution of consciousness from Matter to Life, from Life to Mind cannot stop with mind …’ (A. B. Purani, 40-41). And man must attain truth consciousness. The ultimate destiny of man is presented through the evolution of Nureddene from the state of being a ‘wild handsome roisterer’ and ‘hunter of girls’ to the state of becoming the righteous King of Bassora. In this evolution, love is the guiding force. Through the story of Nureddene,
Caliph, Almuene bin Khakan, Anice, the play shows that when pure love and God’s grace combine satanic forces are bound to be vanquished.

Bassora, as a battleground of the forces of good and evil, presents the vision of our world. Baghdad, as the seat of harmony, peace, justice and power presents the vision of an ideal world. Love is born in the world of conflict, that is Bassora, but the inspiration for its fulfilment comes from the ideal world i. e. Baghdad. A movement from the lower levels of existence to the higher levels is inherent in mankind and life’s natural tendency is to progress from the material world towards the divine world. These two visions are beautifully projected in the play.

In *Perseus the Deliverer* the playwright presents his vision of an ideal world where men will have ‘broader mind’ (145) and kindlier manners (145) and where they will ‘grow human, mild and merciful’ (145) and will be led to ‘greater heights’ (145) nearer to the gods. The dramatist depicts the vision of a world moving forward through evil and anarchy though slowly yet certainly towards the attainment of a blissful state.

The theme of *Eric* is that the ‘trinity of glorious manhood’ (58) can be completed only when ‘strength in nature’ (58) and ‘wisdom in the mind’ (58) are combined with ‘love in the heart’ (58) Love is the evolving force in *Eric* and the evolution in this play takes place according to the Aurobindonian process of evolution i. e. ‘from the evolution in the Ignorance to a greater evolution in the knowledge’ (*The Life Divine*, 811).

It is noteworthy that the process of evolution continues in the world of *Eric* even after Eric has achieved perfection, to work towards the transformation of the personalities of Aslaug, Hertha and Swegn. Thus, the vision observed in the play is the vision of a blissful state not only for individuals like Eric, themselves but for all those who come in contact with them directly or indirectly.

The theme of *Vasavadutta* is that if we allow ourselves to be guided by the impulses of our deeper heart we will surely be led to the world of progress, peace and perfection. Reason may be a good thing but it often leads us to bitter conflicts and clashes. The victory of the cause of Vuthsa Udayan and Vasavadutta, who obey their hearts over the cause of Chunda Mahasegu, who is guided by reason, proves this fact.

The purification of the human soul through, suffering is the theme of *Rodogune*. Such a purification is necessary for the attainment of Truth –consciousness which is
linked with the spiritual evolution of the suffering soul. The protagonist of the play, Antiochus though killed at the end, wins a kind of spiritual victory.

The plays of Sri. Aurobindo, thus, present the dramatist’s vision of the evolution of man. Two factors which are emphasized in this evolution of man are suffering and love. Each of Sri. Aurobindo’s plays lays stress on the harmonizing power of love ‘strength in nature’ and ‘wisdom in the mind’ need ‘love in the heart’ to complete the ‘trinity of glorious manhood’ but of the whole society.

In Nalini—a three act comedy, social satire, Ezekiel tries to show the immaturity of a whole class through the portraiture of two young men. They are the types one can meet anywhere in urban India. The play presents a lot of wry commentary on the current art scene in India. The success of the exhibition seems to depend more on the way the publicity is arranged than on the intrinsic worth of the paintings. That is why Bharat explains to Nalini at length the art of getting practical success by coming into limelight by extra artistic methods. In sum, Nalini is a play with satirical vein: It is a play of gestures and reactions, an exposure of hollow, morbid, hypocritical city man.

Ezekiel’s second play Marriage Poem is a one-act tragi-comedy which reads more like comedy than tragedy. The play tries to depict the light and shade that comprise the social institution called marriage. The play represents the dull and drab life of a couple, Naresh and Mala, who quarrel and compromise, love and hate, and finally strike a helpless reconciliation with life itself. The drama also presents the drudgery of a middle class family in a typical Indian situation.

The next play The Sleep Walkers is a hilarious, rollicking farce. It creates an impression of a study in the contrast of American and Indian attitudes. Mr. Edward Morris, an American Magazine publisher, is interested more in the social life than in literature. Mr. Morris edits Blank, a magazine without thought and utterly suggestive in its name having much of irony and satire in the situation as well as dialogue. The Indian way of getting in to anything by wrong means is exposed bitterly. Sleep Walkers is a satire on excessive Indian fascination for everything that is American and Western.

The next play of Nissim Ezekiel is Don’t Call it Suicide. It is a domestic tragedy of guilt, remorse and atonement. The play centres on the isolation of a hypersensitive individual in a rough world where success is measured by achievement and those who fail to rise are relegated to an unimportant place both by the society and the family. The
breakdown of social relationship and support from the family leads to a state of loneliness and emptiness, try as he will the individual is doomed to frustration. And the final stage is an over powering awareness of the tragedy of existence from which the individual seeks release. The over discipline maintained by Mrs. Nanda has not only distanced the father and son but resulted in the development of only one part of the children’s personality and leads to the suicide of the eldest son as well as the father.

Thus, Nissim Ezekiel’s plays not only mirror the realities of the Indian situation and feelings, but also reveal the author’s desire to make them different. His artistic aim is to project a vision of the desired world as he would like to conceive it, and herein lies the artist’s sincerity, his hidden motif (Indian Writing in English, 61).

Gieve Patel’s first play is Princes. It is a play about a conflict between two families for the possession of a young male child of eleven years old. The play Princes is about human strife for possession.

The next play Savaksa is about the use of power between human beings, in intimate human relationships, in society and in politics. Power masked as love, affection, bribe, blackmail, power as perversity of emotion, used as sadistic emotion in every possible way.

The play Mister Behram based on the theme of power and colonization. The problem discussed in the play is disintegration of Mr. Behram. There is other theme discussed in the play is the position of women, another important strand in the play complementary to the main theme, is of whether one human being can entirely be looked upon as a means to another human being.

In short, the play Princes portrays a bitter fight between two halves of a family for possession of the last male heir; in Savaksa, the head of the family is so obsessed with a younger woman and his wish to disinherit his son that he loses the estate; in Mister Behram, a reforming landlord is so infatuated with a young warli man that he rejects his own family. These are plays of passion, of conflicts between duty and desire. Indirectly Gieve Patel through his plays dealt with post-independence impacts on their own community. These impacts are indicative of broader social changes affecting other communities throughout India. (Karen Smith, 70).
5.1.7 Other Aspects of the Plays:

Regarding other aspects of the plays, Sri. Aurobindo makes imaginative use of music and songs, humour, imagery and symbolism in his plays *The Viziers of Bassora, Perseus, the Deliverer, Vasavadutta, Eric* and *Rodogune.*

Whereas Nissim Ezekiel purposefully uses music, wit, satire, contrast, humour and irony in his plays to make them impressive and realistic. He uses the aspects like irony and satire as powerful weapons thereby presenting a chillingly realistic picture of contemporary India.

Gieve Patel also uses in his plays the other aspects as music, humour, Imagery and symbolism in the plays *Princes, Savaksa* and *Mister Behram.*

Comparing Sri. Aurobindo’s use of aspects in plays, to Ezekiel and Patel, songs are absent in the plays of Nissim Ezekiel and Gieve Patel, whereas the aspects like wit and satire, irony are not present in plays of Sri. Aurobindo and Gieve Patel, and symbolism, imagery are not found in Nissim Ezekiel’s plays. As it is earlier stated that Sri. Aurobindo belongs to pre-Independence period, and writes his plays under the influence of Elizabethan model, William Shakespeare whereas Nissim Ezekiel and, Gieve Patel belong to the post-Independence period and writes their plays under the influence of E. Alkazi, Bernard Shaw and Racine, such type of different aspects of plays are found in their dramatic art.

5.1.8 Characters in the Plays:

In his plays, Sri. Aurobindo mixes human, divine and supernatural beings which make his plays as interesting as folktales. For instance in the play *Perseus the Deliverer,* Athene the Greek goddess of wisdom and power gives Perseus the divine sword Herpe, winged shoes, her shield and the cap of invisibility, Poseidon, the mythical sea-monster, is also a divine being whereas Perseus, Princess Andromeda, Prince Iolaus, Cydone, Cepheus, Cassiopea, Diomede, Pheneus, Tyranus, Smerdas, Therops are human beings. In the play *Eric* mother Freya, the Scandinavian goddess of love and beauty is a divine being.

In case of Nissim Ezekiel and Gieve Patel, such use of supernatural beings absent.

Sri. Aurobindo in his play *Perseus the Deliverer* has staged a host of characters in three sets-good, bad and indifferent. Athene the goddess of wisdom; Perseus the deliverer; Princess Andromeda; Prince Iolaus; his beloved Cydone; Cepheus, the King of
Syria; Cassiopea, his queen; Perissus the butcher, Andromeda’s maids Praxilla and Diomede all belong to the good side of humanity. In contrast, the sea monster Poseidon; the cunning priest of Poseidon’s temple, Polydaon; King of Tyre, Phineus; the local leader, Therops represent the bad side. The rest such as the foreign merchants Tyranus, Smerdas; the Syrian captain, Dercetes; the Chaldean Guard, Nebassar; Polydaon’s servant, Cireas etc. are the indifferent set of characters. All these characters with their virtues and vices blow the trumpet of Aurobindonian philosophy of divine life as well as the symbolic voice of Indians from cross section of society crying for peace, social justice, freedom and divinity.

Sri. Aurobindo’s play *Vasavadutta* presents some memorable characters, namely Vuthsa Udayan, the King of Cowsambie, Yougundharayan, his shrewd minister; Alurca and Vasanthaca, his companions; Roomunwath, Captain of his armies; Chunda Mahasegn, King of Avunthie; Gopalaca and Vicurna, his sons; Ungarica, his Queen; Vasavadutta, their proud and egoistic daughter; Umba and Munjoolica, her maidens.

In *Eric*, Eric is the elected King of Unified Norway. Another prominent character is Swegn who is Eric’s kingly rival for being an heir of his late father. Aslaug and Hertha have been presented as their female counterparts. There is no villain in the play. However, Swegn and his adventurous sister, Aslaug initially show villainous intentions. Love hate relationship between Eric and Aslaug dominates the proceedings.

*The Viziers of Bassora* has a galaxy of characters divided in two groups-good and evil. Alzayni, the tyrannical King of Bassora; Almuene, his second vizier; his hunchbacked and spoiled son, Fareed; Ajebe, nephew of Almuene; belong to the evil side. On other hand, Haroun Al Rasheed, the Caliph of Baghdad; Jaafer, his good vizier; Alfazzal Ibn Sawy, first vizier of the King of Bassora; Ameena, his caring wife; their affectionate son, Nureddene; Anice Aljalice, the Persian slave-girl and his beloved; niece of Alfazzal, Doonya; Murad, a Turk Captain of Police in Bassora; Balkis and Mymoona, the slave girls; Khatoon, wife of Almuene are the good individuals.

In *Rodogune* there is a galaxy of characters Cleopatra, widow of King Antiochus of Syria; her twin sons Antiochus and Timocles; Phayllus, the Chancellor of Syria; Cleone, his sister; Nicanor, a prince of the house of Syria; Eunice, his daughter; Theras, a Captain of Syrian army; and above all, Rodogune, the Parthian princess under the
captivity of Cleopatra. These major characters have been assigned the dominant roles to perpetrate the tragedy of women belonging to royalty.

Comparing to the number of characters of Sri.Aurobindo, Nissim Ezekiel’s plays has less number of characters. Nalini has only three characters. Two men Raj and Bharat the advertising executives and Nalini a young painter. These characters are not fully developed in the psychological sense. In the play Marriage Poem, the characters are six in number. A couple Naresh and Mala who quarrel and compromise, love and hate, finally strike helpless reconciliation, with life itself. The other characters are Mrs. Lall, a neighbour; Leela, a friend of Naresh and a couple of Malti and Ranjit keep visiting Naresh. In The Sleepwalkers, there are 13 characters in the play including a bearer. They are Mr. and Mrs. West Americans; Mr. Edward Morris and Mrs. Olga Morris-an American magazine publisher and his wife whereas Mr. Raman, Mrs. Raman, Prof. Shah, Mrs. Shah; Mr. Kapur, Mrs. Kapur; Mr. Varma, Miss. Ganguli, a bearer all are guests at a reception for Mr. and Mrs. Morris’ arrival. In the play Don’t Call it Suicide, there are 8 characters. The characters in the play can be broadly divided into three groups; the humanitarians Mr. Nanda, Mr. Sathe, Shielma and Gopal; the insensitive autocrats, Mrs. Nanda and Hari and the victims Meeta and Malti.

Comparing to the number of characters from Sri.Aurobindo’s and Nissim Ezekiel’s plays. Gieve Patel’s only play Princes having large number of characters.

The play Princes has seventeen characters They are Pappa (Sorabji), Mamma (Homamai), Ratan-1st daughter, Kali -1st son -in-law, Tehmi- 2nd daughter, Rumi -2nd son-in-law, Nergish – 3rd daughter (unmarried), Khushrow-only son, Shireen-daughter-in-law, Noshir-grandson, Piloo, Kumi-Khushrow’s daughters, Navzar-Noshir’s father, Khorsedmai – Navzar’s mother, Banoo-Navzar’s second wife, doctor, Schoolmaster, Sheroo-pauper, Lahnu-servant, Tribal doctors, Parsi villagers. All the characters except Banoo are complex. As far as the characters of the play Savaksa concerns, they are eight in number. Savaksa (a landlord in Southern Gujrat ), Dorab (his elder son), Adeser (his younger son), Kermina (his daughter), Jer (Dorab’s wife), Khorsedmai ( mother of Perin and Hutoxi), Perin (his younger daughter), Hutoxi (his elder daughter). The characters of Perin and Hutoxi both are multifaceted and multidimensional. Concerning with the characters of the Play, In Mister Behram they are Mr. Behram-influential landowner and advocate, Rati his wife, Dolly- age 26, Behram and Rati’s daughter, Naval a Warli youth
married to Dolly, Mr. Watts-the District Collector, an Englishman, Mr. Bharucha and Mr. Hegde-Senior advocates, Lawyers and Warli servant. Except Dolly and Rati, all are complex characters.

5.1.9 Actability of the Plays:

In case of Sri. Aurobindo, except the play Eric, none of the plays of Sri. Aurobindo was ever staged or is being staged. The play Eric was directed and staged by Aryamani. The play Eric was performed on the 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st of March 2006 at Bharat Nivas Auditorium, Pondicherry by Auroville Universal Township.

The first fact is that, except in the big cities, it is not customary to perform English plays on the popular stage in India, whether they possess stage worthy qualities or not. If, at all Sri. Aurobindo’s plays deserved to be staged in any country, it should have been England. The second fact is that no dramatic troupe has so far taken interest in Sri. Aurobindo’s plays for the purpose of producing them on the stage. As a result, their stageworthiness has not been properly realized. So, the fact except the play Eric Sri. Aurobindo’s plays have never been performed exposes them to the charge of being ‘closet dramas’. Lastly, the author’s indifference to having them staged or published, his adherence to self satisfaction as the due reward of a creative writer and the consequent absence of interest of actors and producers have forced Sri. Aurobindo’s plays to be closet dramas in spite of the fact that they possess stageworthiness.

Nissim Ezekiel’s two plays Nalini, and Marriage Poem were performed for 5 times in January 1969 by the Theatre Group. The play The SleepWalkers was performed on the stage by Theatre Group for 8 times. The play Don’t Call it Suicide was first staged by the British Council, Bombay in 1989. The plays of Nissim Ezekiel were enacted in Mumbai, Delhi and London also. The plays were enacted at Delhi in Aksbara Little Theatre by the Theatre Group. Ms. Toni Patal is the director of his first plays consisting of Nalini, Marriage Poem, and SleepWalkers, whereas Patrick Bell directed the second of these plays consisting of Don’t Call it Suicide.

As the performance of Gieve Patel’s plays concerns, the play Princes was first performed by Theatre Group at the Bhulabai Desai Auditorium, Mumbai in March 1970, produced by Kersy Katrak and directed by Pearl Padamsee. The play Savaksa was first performed at the Max Muller Bhavan, Mumbai on 6 November 1982, directed by Pearl Padamsee. The third play Mister Behram was first produced by Stage Two Theatre
Society for the Bombay Arts Festival, 1987. It was performed at the Nehru Auditorium, Nehru Centre, Mumbai on 17\textsuperscript{th} November 1987. The play was also enacted at the Tilak Smarak Mandir, Pune on 30 Jan 1987, produced by Sujata Chabra and directed by Toni patel.

In case of Sri.Aurobindo’s actability of plays, only his one play, *Eric* was performed on the 28\textsuperscript{th}, 29\textsuperscript{th}, 30\textsuperscript{th} and 31\textsuperscript{th} of March 2006 at Bharat Nivas Auditorium, Pondicherry by the Auroville Universal Township. Aryamani who directed and staged the play *Eric* first. The actors performed in the play are Aurevan, Chris, Ruslan, Martin, Surya, Gandhi, Srimoyi, Rajaram, Samuel, Anandamayi, Jivatman.

The producer and director of the play *Eric*, Aryamani in his web article *Putting, Sri. Aurobindo’s Plays on Stage a Research* mentions that:

Compared to “*Perseus*”, “*Eric*” has much less characters and almost no action. It has long monologues, mostly between the two main actors. So the two worked intensively almost everyday for 4 months. We concentrated on the relationship between gesture, word and space, how to make it true and one, the voice the movement and the space.

The deep meaning of the words was a challenge for the actors that were trying to incorporate it in themselves. The language’s high level and message is inspiring but not easy to express. At the same time it is exactly because we are working with a text by Sri. Aurobindo that everything at the end falls into place and we are carried… We choose to have an intimate performance with the actors sharing the stage with the public.(http://archive.Auroville.org/art & culture/theatre/Auro’s/Plays/Eric.htm).

About Nissim Ezekiel, Anisur Rahman in his article ‘Technique and motif in Nissim Ezekiel’s Three Plays’ comments as “Nissim Ezekiel’s plays do not present any philosophical, historical or psychological problems but are basically theimaginative reconstructions of life as it is lived. The playwright is more interested in exposing the vices rather than highlighting the virtues. The themes are derived from the Indian life; the scenes are common, the characters and situations being the types we confront quite often in real life. The plays represent the high and at times, low tension of living in the contemporary Indian situation. The participants in this drama are presented with a
psychological insight. There is little action or tension in the plays and the scene is also laid in a single room. Such a situation is presented with a technical proficiency on the stage. The playwright appears to be fully conversant with the problems of stage as is shown in his emphasis on scene and setting, sound, light, music, mask and vivid stage directions. He also explains within parentheses and gestures and moods of the actors on the stage and presents thereby a scene in all its fullness.”

The three tragedies *Princes, Savaksa* and *Mr. Behram* written by Gieve Patel, directed and performed by a generation of talented theatre persons including Pearl Padamsee, Nosher wan Jehangir, Roger Pereira, Shernaz Patel and Rajit Kapur.

Pruthipal S. Vasudev calls Gieve Patel as the most effective playwright presently writing in English. The two plays of Gieve Patel reveal a greater concern for the immediate local world. Patel has carefully chosen incidents which clearly reveal the attitudes behaviours and responses of contemporary Indians, particularly in times of stress. The playwright is able to project something of the life quality the country gives these people. His plays relate directly to the country and to the present (Karen Smith, 63).
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