CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The condition of English drama during the early nineteenth century was deplorable. Both comedy and 'serious drama' were rendered unconvincing for the most part by the production of irregular spectacle, melodrama and farce. The romantic poets who attempted drama could get little success. The theatre was unrelated to the life of the time. Drama as an art did not hold any genuine appreciation of the prosperous middle class. The public liked to be thrilled by melodrama and tickled by crude humour.

The drama, which presented the household and family relationships, continued refining itself as time passed. It culminated in the 1890s in the works of Henry Arthur Jones, Pinero, Wilde, and Shaw. But it did not grow up independently, on the contrary, it evolved as part of melodrama. By 1850, the subject matter of melodramas included slavery, temperance, problems of drink, industrialism, the life of the factory worker, the urban environment, the game laws, the homeless poor, and the class relationships.

In the last half of the nineteenth century, the theatre's approach to modernity was accelerated. By 1900, both theatrical practice and the content of drama had covered an immense distance from the early 1800s. The nature of the audiences'
dramatic taste also underwent a change. The audiences represented all classes. Now, this change determined the content and performance of drama written for them. Language of the drama became less rhetorical; characterization, less extravagant; settings and character types socially more elevated.

Realism, as an enlargement and intensification of a previous trend, became common to all theatres. It aimed at reproducing the details of ordinary daily life. What the audiences wanted was not the 'imaginatively true', but the physically real. Gradually, English drama refined itself from melodrama and headed toward a late-century sophistication and complexity. The more intellectual play-goers and critics responded to the new seriousness of Ibsen. The audiences began to care for thought in the theatre. The movement which led through Tom Robertson to Sir Arthur Pinero, H. G. Wells, and G. B. Shaw was, thus, not without its embryonic beginnings in the first half of the nineteenth century. The theatre of 1900 represents the final and assured culmination of an organic growth. The more intellectual play-goers changed the drama, and became responsible for the upper-middle-class settings and themes of Jones, Pinero, Wilde, and Shaw. Prose dramas with working and middle-class settings, and dialogues with regional working class dialects and accents came in demand.

By 1896, the theatre was growing in importance as a social organ, like a school or a church. In this English native
background, a new drama developed during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Henry James Byron had already created an almost problem-drama atmosphere in *Cyril's Success*. T.W. Robertson made a valiant attempt to bring the drama closer to life. The Robertsonian movement had its full accomplishment in the drama of Jones and Pinero. They made their plots, characters and settings as realistic as they could. They realised the desirability of introducing a central purpose into their plays, and introduced problems and surveyed them impartially in witty and satirical dialogues. The dramatic works of Robertson, Pinero and Jones popularized the 'problem play', where social criticism remained in the foreground. In this context, English problem plays are typically western in characteristics.

Iosen's plays provided new subject matter, frankness of treatment, and fresh technique. They discussed problems of conduct and character of personal importance to the audience. Discussion was made the test of a serious playwright. Iosen exercised revolutionary impact on English drama which came to Hindi drama filtering through the English plays. However, the return of intelligence and the element of mockery to the theatre can be seen in the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan whose works seem to prepare the audience for Wilde and Shaw. Shaw reacted against the romantic and emotional dramas of Shakespeare and popularised the plays of Iosen by writing *The Quintessence of Iosanism*. He wrote a number of
problem plays and discussed the issues and questions of society.

The impact of western thought, culture and literature came to visibly influence the Indian intelligentsia at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The contact with the west gave rise to the spirit of renaissance in literature. Realism became a dominant tendency in Hindi literature, especially in drama and novel. But this realism was also a conscious reaction to romanticism presented in the literature of the time.

The impact of the western science and literature brought about a revolt against the institutions of the old social order. But a reaction against the western mode of life also set in. The clash between the two civilizations became the subject matter of dramatic literature. National drama was felt essential. The Hindi playwrights expressed the people's reactions in farces and melodramas. These farces and melodramas had inconsistent characterization, episodic plot and exaggerated portrayals of life. So the Indian intelligentsia wanted realistic presentation of life in drama.

In the later half of the nineteenth century, Hindi drama was characterized by a raw realism which had its roots in the contemporary social reality. Inspired by the actualities of life, it reflected various levels of reactions to the issues and problems of the day. Shartendu Harishchandra suggested the possibilities of a break-away from the traditional dramatic
forms without completely breaking away from the Indian tradition. A number of dramatists, concerned with specific reforms essential for society, wrote dramas advocating widow marriage and female education, and elimination of early marriage and polygamy. They attempted the theme of the rigours of caste-system also.

The increasing dominance of the British rule appeared as a serious problem to the Hindi playwrights of the Bhartendu age. A number of playwrights presented the gloomy picture of the Indian life. Woman problem also appeared in their plays along with other social evils. In the Preface, written in 1882, to *Stotra-Pancharatna* (Five Invocations), Bhartendu is very much concerned with remedying the problems of prostitution, intemperance, and non-vegetarianism. It is important to note that he made use of the traditional moral sensibility of Hindu to produce humour in his plays. Under the influence and imitation of Bhartendu, a number of dramatists presented social problems in their plays. But their impulse remained reformist. Shyam Bihari Mishra and Shukdev Bihari Mishra wrote *Matronmilan* which produced a story of the exploitation of government courts, police pleaders, and others.

On close examination, it is revealed that the problems, dealt with in the playwrights of the post Bhartendu age, are the continuation of the problems depicted in the social dramas of the Bhartendu age. Only the style of presentation is different. Under the influence of the Hindi plays also came to be written, which presented a satirical picture of the conventions of the society.
In the early years of the twentieth century, the Parisian drama was very popular. This drama was removed from life, and provided mere entertainment. The Hindi playwrights, therefore, turned toward D.L. Roy who produced blind imitation of romantic dramas of Shakespeare. Many Hindi playwrights including Prasad wrote plays in imitation of Roy. It was Lakshmi Narayan Mishra who vehemently reacted against romance and sentimentalism in the contemporary drama, and wrote a number of problem plays with a view to awaken the new generation. The country was not free. The country’s slavery moved his soul. He liked the woman emancipation, and women participation in the freedom movement of the country. His problem plays reflect the social and political problems of the age.

Mishra’s problem plays grew naturally in continuation of realistic plays which were written in Hindi by many playwrights before him. However, a little influence of Shaw is noticed on his technique, dialogues and language. But that is not imitation, on the contrary, like every drama, Hindi drama, including the problem plays of Mishra, continues assimilating what is best in other drama, but without losing its own originality.

Shaw’s contribution in the field of English problem play is immense. Problem plays were written on account of the liberal ideas which questioned the validity of conventional institutions. But even the sophisticated English problem
plays of the nineties were neither critical nor realistic, but conventional like the plays they succeeded. Ibsen gave artistic maturity to them but their characteristic attributes were popularised by Shaw. In contrast to Shakespeare, Shaw considered Ibsen as an acute and consistent thinker who examined the structure of society with the penetration of a social reformer. But Ibsen does not display Shaw's gifts for intellect, wit and humour. Shaw's satire is directed against humanity in general, and English humanity, in particular.

Shaw's first three plays are realistic. They present dramatic pictures of middle class society. The basis of that society is exhibited as rotten both economically and morally. Both *Widowers' Houses* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* are Shawian attacks on modern capitalistic society. They display Shaw's knowledge of economics and socialism, and his dissatisfaction with the existing social order. The three unpleasant plays exploit similar intellectual strategy. Though solutions have not been suggested, the necessity of social transformation has been indicated indirectly. The construction of these plays is a departure from the conventional dramatic construction.

The exploitation of the poor in slums by the middle class is the theme of *Widowers' Houses*. *The Philanderer* is his attack on the Ibsen cult and feminine emancipation. Prostitution, which is caused due to economic reasons, is the theme of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. These themes are the
unpleasant facts the contemporary society was faced with. Shaw has discussed these social questions with serious intellectual concern. The characters are enamoured of talking about their problems. Their dialogues are true to life. Both Sartorius and Mrs. Warren advance arguments in their defence which produce serious comic effect.

Like Shaw in three unpleasant plays, Mishra has also discussed the unpleasant themes of corruption in the law court, educational and religious institutions, medical practice, and in family. Murarilal, in Sindoar Ki Holi, can go to the extent of committing two murders by taking bribe. He is overcome by the greed for money. The college-teachers, who are appointed for the education of students, have no interest in student welfare, on the contrary, they are working against the institutions. The reformers of Matri-Mandir are busy in the fulfilment of their own selfish ends. Doctor Tribhuvan nath is not interested in the treatment of their patients but in something opposite to his profession. Moti and Champa are the illegitimate children who expose the social evils of the existing society.

Both Shaw and Mishra are concerned with exposing the hypocritical conventions of the society. But Mishra does not imitate Shaw, on the contrary, he discusses the problems in the context of the Indian society. His zeal is to bring about a reform whereas Shaw aims at cleansing the society. Moreover,
Mishra follows Indian technique of discussion which is based on its principles inherent in the Vedas and the Puranas. This displays the originality of Mishra's dramatic creations and his capacity for assimilation of foreign influences.

Pleasant plays like Arms and The Man and Candida deal with the romantic follies of the people and their individual efforts against those follies whereas unpleasant plays deal with the 'crimes' of society. The primary stuff of comedy in Arms and The Man is created with the encounter of romantic infatuation and prosaic realism. The seriousness of unpleasant plays is not there in pleasant plays. It is like a shift from effect to cause when Shaw shifts from social crime and public institution to romantic folly and private imagination. The folly of romance of love and romance of war has been discussed in an interesting manner in both Arms and The Man and Candida. In addition to this, Candida discusses the problems of love and marriage. A love triangle has been created with Candida, the wife; Morell, the prosaic husband; and Marchbanks, the romantic lover. Candida is the new woman in home who, though attracted by the love of Marchbanks, is held by her domestic duty to 'the weaker of the two'. Bluntschli is unheroic but a practical man. He carries chocolate in lieu of bullets. The dialogues of both the pleasant plays are brilliant, witty and suited to the characters. Sergius, the romantic hero, is sent to the maid servant Louka. Such is the method of ridiculing the romance of love.
Nishra has also ridiculed the romance of love through the characters of Malti, Kiranmayee, Lalita, Aashadevi, Chandrakala and Mayavati. All these female characters do not like romantic love. Moreover, they do not like to marry the persons they love. Love for them is a spiritual thing whereas it is a transitory thing in Shaw. Here also, Mishra shows originality.

Major Barbara anticipates the coming of a welfare state by enlightened capitalists. It presents a conflict between the religious and the economic outlooks on life making the economic point of view, finally, victorious. Like Mrs. Warren's Profession, Major Barbara is concerned in direct way with money. Andrew Undershaft is a powerful character. He knows that poverty is the worst of our crimes. Naturally, the dialogues he speaks, are assertive, and display his authority. Major Barbara exposes the hypocritical structure of the Salvation Army Centre like Bakshas Ka Mandir who exposes the reformers working in Matri Mandir.

The Doctor's Dilemma is a delightful satire on doctors, and poor criticism upon the artistic temperament and the place of artist in society. Shaw presented the artist as a lover in Candida, but he presents him as a husband in The Doctor's Dilemma, Since the artist is an alien creature in Candida, the idea of happy domesticity functions there. In The Doctor's Dilemma, he is presented as an ordinary citizen. Similarly, the artist has been presented as a lover
in Mishra's *Rakshab Ke Mandir* and as a husband in *Nachi Raat*,
But their treatments are different. Moreover, there is a
satire on the modern medical treatment in Mishra's *Sindoor
Ki Holi* also. The dialogues spoken by the doctors in a
conference display healthy humour. The dialogues between
Manorma and Manojeshanker about the medical treatment are also
witty and interesting.

As *The Doctor's Dilemma* discusses the institution of
medical profession, *Getting Married* does that of marriage.
The theme of the play is that marriage is made essential but
the couples who enter in it do not know the risks they are
undergoing. The reform in the marriage laws is indicated to
keep this institution adapted to the changing needs of the
society. The play is a long conversation about marriage which
shows Shaw as a consummate dialectician and master of dialogues.
The characters sit and talk ceaselessly. But their conversation
is not monotonous, on the contrary, it is made lively and
attractive by virtue of Shaw's gift for wit and humour. The
technical novelty of the play lies in the discussion which
continues continuously. Mishra also has discussed the theme
of marriage in his plays. The pangs of unequal marriage are
exhibited in the marriage of Kiranmayees and Professor Dinanath.
Marriage based on practical considerations is represented in
the marriage of Malti with Professor Ramashanker. The marriage
between Aashadevi and Doctor Tribhuvan nath is the result of
the consummated adultery and consequent changes in both of
Champa is married against her will by Shatrusudan Singh. So she has been suffering from mental conflicts.

Manorma was married in early childhood and is a widow after two years of her marriage. Chandrakala dislikes slavery of a wife and decides to remain independent by becoming the widow of dying Rajanikant. Nayavati has married Prakashchandra to nurse him and enable him to discharge his responsibilities as an artist. Mishra's characters condemn romantic love and go for marriage based on the practical needs of life. When they discuss this problem, their dialogues become animated with emotion. The discussion is logical and witty. But Mishra has not written a complete play on marriage alone like Shaw's Getting Married. Moreover, he wants a little readjustment, not overhauling like Shaw.

Shaw the dramatist opened his career with satirical attacks on social abuses: Slum-landlordism and rack renting in Widow's Houses; doctrinaire free love and the Ibsan-theme of the marriage market and woman's enslavement in The Philanderer; and financially organised prostitution in Mrs. Warren's Profession. Then he tried the anti-romantic conception of love, militarism and marriage in his two pleasant plays Arms and The Man and Candida. Major Barbara dealt with current politics, individual character, paradoxes of conventional society and questions of religion, morality and conscience. The Doctor's Dilemma presented the delusions of medical profession and artist's place in the society. Getting Married
discussed marriage, husband-hunting and paradoxes of conventional institutions. Mishra has presented the social questions of love, sex, marriage and woman emancipation in Sanyasi, Rakshas Ke Mandir, Mukti Ke Rehseva, Reivoo, Sindoor Ki Holi, Aadhi Reast. Besides these, the problems of co-education, defects of educational institutions and illegitimate issues have been raised in Sanyasi, Rakshas Ke Mandir, Reivoo, Sindoor Ki Holi and Aadhi Reast; the problems of corruption prevailing in reformist institutions, in Rakshas Ke Mandir; those of law courts and partition of property in Mukti Ke Rehseva and Sindoor Ki Holi; and the issue of the protection of race, Indian ideals and the superiority of Indian culture in Sanyasi, Mukti Ke Rehseva and Aadhi Reast. Thus, both Shaw and Mishra have dealt with the problems of contemporary life. But Shaw sticks to socialism as one remedy to the problems of civilization, and to equalitarian socialism as the foundation of morals whereas Mishra maintains his attachment to the Indian values and ideals and looks into the problems in their light. Mishra is more concerned with the future generation who would work for the independence of the country from political slavery as well as develop their pride for culture and history.

Discussion is the main action of the plays of Shaw. It is based on continuous intellectual debate which runs into paradoxes and witty expressions. Mishra’s discussion is
logical and near to Indian life. Naturally, it displays both intellect and sentimentality. When Shaw discusses frustration in love on the part of characters, he, too, makes his dialogues emphatic with emotions. However, both Shaw and Mishra use 'retroactive' action also to impart precision to their dramatic art.

Shaw has presented a variety of types. He has given them his own power of expression to discuss clashing points of view. So, even when they are talking about the gloomy state of the world, their glorious intellectual high spirits go on creating lovely gaiety. Mishra's characters are mostly educated. Therefore, they are alert to social situations. They talk logically but they know that intellect may not give rise to wisdom, on the contrary, it may lead to further grooves of intellect. Therefore, they talk wisely and maintain their deep attachment to the Indian culture and ideals. This is the reason for which they react against the English systems of education, sex and free love. Thus, Mishra's characters represent educated class of India. So, they do not possess the exceptional variety and vividness of Shaw's characters.

Dialogues of both Shaw and Mishra reveal psychological observation that the stuff of human nature is much the same in everyone. But they have a kind of distinctness which differs from the distinctness of the dialogues of old school of psychological dramatists. As the plays of Shaw and Mishra are the dramas of ideas, their dialogues are closely linked
with social conditions. While dealing with sexual emotion, their dialogues exhibit explosive arguments, violent protestations and agitations. However, abstract and philosophical dialogues are logical and rational. Since both of them reckon on moving the human nature, their dialogues preserve wit and good humour. Sexual attraction is stripped bare of all the accessories of poetry and sympathy in the dialogues of Shaw but Mishra has not adopted the extreme course. The amorous experiences of philanthropists, of Blanche and Trench, of Frank and Vivie are treated in similar manner, but those of Malti and Vishwakant, Kiranmayee and Muridhar, of Raghunath and Lalita, of Ashadevi and Umashankar, of Champa and Narendra, and of Manojshankar and Manorma, have been dealt with differently.

As philosopher-artists, both Shaw and Mishra dislike 'art for art's sake'. But their approaches to both art and life are different. Shaw exaggerates the stupidity of mankind unlike other writers. Mishra displays faith in the goodness of mankind. Therefore, the follies and evils are remediable. Shaw shows what love is scientifically. Mishra idealises and sentimentalises love. Shaw's constant prejudice that ordinary view must be hopelessly beside the point, leads him to ignore emotional complications. Mishra, unlike Shaw, glorifies what is best in human nature. Shaw makes men scrutinise their pretensions, their emotions, and their conscience.
The technique and dramatic devices adopted by both Shaw and Mishra attempt to make the audience believe that real things are happening to the real people. Their stage-directions are analytical and prefaces, philosophical. But Shaw's prefaces are not indispensable to the comprehension of the plays themselves. However, as the writers of problem plays, both Shaw and Mishra are primarily concerned with ideas which have been expressed forcefully, lucidly and directly.

As a means of inter-cultural communication, drama is bound to influence ideas and forms of their expression. But the foreign literary and cultural influences of the west on the literature and culture of India reveal limitations of such influences. Hindi drama also exposes the limitations and possibilities of influences of English drama. Hindi drama has been drawing its life directly from Indian culture which is still a powerful influencing force. Naturally, what the English problem plays could do to their Hindi counterparts was to influence the technique and the form of expression of ideas, leaving the cultural spirit of India unaffected. This is the reason for which, though ideas acquire pre-eminence in the problem plays of Mishra, they are not devoid of cultural consciousness of India. Taking the problems of society, Mishra has attempted to portray the eternal learning spirit of mankind, because his plays go beyond the discussion of problems only. Therefore, later in
life, he has chosen Indian culture and history for the
themes of his dramatic works. Moreover, Shaw's technique
and ideas are characteristic of his own individual genius.
He could influence his contemporaries also. But his
imitation demanded a stern rejection of many Indian values
which might disturb the whole being of Mishra. That Mishra
was influenced by Shaw cannot be denied. But it must be
borne in mind that Mishra's problem plays near the mark of
originality in the handling of this dramatic form in the
sense that the stamp of Indian mind is clearly visible in
his approach and treatment.