CHAPTER II

ENGLISH AND HINDI PROBLEM PLAYS

Drama is a very significant international literary form of inter-cultural expression. As one of the most democratic types of all literary genres, it establishes a mental bridge among the various cultures of the world. Naturally, it receives impetus from the important events of both national and international spheres, and represents the life of mankind. In the beginning, it assimilates the foreign influences but, gradually, it develops its own robust tradition and native genius which start counteracting unhealthy alien forces. Naturally, a drama gives pleasure and instruction both as a reflection of life and character, and a presentation of man in conflict with the problems of life. The form of drama is thus determined by the individual temperament of the artist and the material conditions and limitations of the stage, and the age in which the artist lives. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity which play upon the 'refined sensibility' of


3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

the artist. Naturally, modern drama has become sophisticated and complex. This shows the direct association between the drama and contemporary social life.

The nineteenth-century England was strong and rich in other genres of English literature but it was 'peculiarly weak in the drama'.6 Being decadent, the nineteenth-century English drama presented day-dreams, sentiments and conventional surrogates in the imitation of 'the rags and tatters of Shakespeare and the cheap new feathers of Scribe'. There was no English playwright who could produce acting plays of any literary interest. The plays of this period were mostly unimportant as literature and drama. The drama had become mostly a formless mass of mediocrity which was dull, repetitive and lacking in literary quality and thematic significance. Having lost its greatness, tragedy multiplied its excesses. Romance had coarsened into elaborate make-believe. Comedy had turned into 'loud farce and boisterous horse play'.7 A few men of letters wrote tragedy but it was in the form of crude melodrama which was very sententious and unreal. Shadowy imitations of old comedies, shoddy tragedies, ranting melodramas, pantomimes and farces had debauched public taste.8

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6G.S. Fraser, Modern Writer and His World (Calcutta: Rupa, 1976), p. 139.
The nineteenth-century English drama was, on the whole, dissociated from reality, and unsuccessful on the stage. Most of the plays performed on the stage were mere entertainment. Literature and theatre were possibly never so removed from each other as they were in this century. It was therefore inevitable that a reaction against this decadent drama should have started so that a new life could be infused in both the content and the form of the drama. Continental writers like Ibsen and Wagner struggled against the tide and their endeavours were fruitful. Conditions in England by the end of the nineteenth century helped in the growth of plays that grappled with the social realities.

The changes in socio-intellectual spheres brought about changes in the literary taste of the dramatic audience. The Reform Bill of 1832 ushered the middle class to the halls of power and the second Bill of 1867 enthroned them there. The ideas based on middle-class idealism and prosperity began to dominate. Gradually, the literature of the period, in the main, became 'the literature about the middle class, for the middle

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11 LCEL, p. 257.
class, and by the middle class'.

There was a kind of relieving change in the riotous conditions of the people. Alfred Nobel invented dynamite and Edison and Bell conceived the telephone, the phonograph and the electric light also came by and by. The efficiency of labour was enormously improved with the introduction and utilisation of steam and electricity. Railways relieved the pressure of unemployment by creating a demand for both skilled and unskilled labour. The rapid extension of the railways broke down provincialism and completed the linking of England and Scotland into a single economic unit. Gradually, England developed to be 'the world's workshop'. But since the 'wages tended to the minimum of a bare living' with the increase of productive power, attempts were made to explain 'the connection of poverty with material progress' and to find the solution to the problems in the laws governing the distribution of wealth. It was noted that many a man died of starvation amid the greatest accumulations of wealth. The greed of gain and

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12沙滩和德布西, op.cit., p. 22.
14 Ibid., p. 135.
16 Ibid., p. 2.
the worship of wealth exhibited the threat of increasing wants. It created a paradoxical situation and made Henry George observe that 'material progress does not merely fail to relieve poverty, it actually produces it'.

Every contradiction in society was scrupulously covered with rationalizations. While the factory-owners rolled in wealth and luxury, an increasing number of workers was condemned to a life of poverty. Volumes of reports were published and a number of acts were passed. People anticipated reaction.

Technical learning continued progressing in commerce and industry. Science, which had made industrial civilization possible, gathered momentum. The exports of the United Kingdom were expanding fast. The hydraulic machinery, cheap steel and the labour-saving machines became the features of the economic landscape. But 'the landless labourer got little benefit from the rising prosperity' of the landlords and the tenants. The middle class began accumulating wealth slowly. Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* created awakening among

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17 Ibid., p. 11.
18 Ibid., p. 12.
19 Guy Chapman in Batho and Dobree, op.cit., p. 137.
20 Ibid., p. 140.
the workers.

Darwin's *Origin of Species* 'affected the thought of a whole century' and modified the outlook of both the scientists and the thinkers. The doctrine of biological evolution through the struggle for existence in nature was perverted into a social principle justifying the competitive laissez-faire economic system with its ruthlessness toward competitors and indifference to the conditions of the lower classes. But an awakening among the workers was created by Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. Socialist agitation made itself felt among the working-classes, and it found intellectual allies like William Morris and the members of the Fabian Society.

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22 St. John Ervine, *Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends* (New York: William Morrow, 1936), p. 124. "The leader of the group, Frank Podmore, originated the Society's name, which was based on the belief, never verified, that Fabius Cunctator was the author of the military injunction, 'For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently, when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes, you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be in vain and fruitless". E. R. Peace has written 'The History of the Fabian Society'. 
Agnostic societies were formed, and free thinkers published their views. Thomas Carlyle had earlier roared at the dismal science of economics which justified exploitation and materialism. He called for heroic leaders who would redeem mankind by the force of their will. Ruskin turned to the contemplation of the utilitarian ugliness of England's cities. Matthew Arnold turned from the study of literature to the study of society in the name of humanism and culture. John Stuart Mill championed personal liberty, the emancipation of women, and a utilitarianism which was primed for "the greatest good of the greatest number".

William Morris became an active socialist and dreamed himself into utopias with *The Dream of John Ball* and *News From Nowhere*.

The interest and force of the great men of letters and the new audiences, who were expanding in the community, were noticed in the new press and education. It was noted that art had turned much more problematic. The social situation of the artist was seen changing in the 'explicitly urban, industrial and massified society'. The whole new strata in society, with different reading-patterns, were broadening to be his audience. Thus, the very way of the life of the artist was growing different.

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When the Victorian synthesis seems to be losing intellectual and social cohesion, there runs through English writing from about 1880 'a mood of imaginative unease'. Therefore, literature produced at the time seems to 'respond to the spirit of unease and transformation in the culture'. The situation placed the artist under a unique obligation to innovate and bring about changes in the society. Men like H.G. Wells made fairly accurate predictions also about the types and directions of social development.

Education was more widely distributed and cheap editions of books and reviews served the cause of diffusion of literature. A humanist attitude to life developed gradually among a large number of literate men and women. A real English revival began at this time in the art of music also. Since the men of science attracted the attention of the people on the subjects of speculative thought, men were growing contemptuous of the old ideals in the fields of religion, social relations, politics and business. The Democratic (afterwards, Social Democratic) Federation, became 'the first modern English socialist body'.

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24 Ibid., p. XXXiv.
25 Ibid.
The Press-revolution caused vulgarization but produced much material for greater educational advances for which it may be termed as 'the dawning-hour of a new popular enlightenment'. It widened the comforts and relaxed the social and moral taboos. The mass 'no longer felt that church-going was the most central of their concerns'. A large number of men became trade-union officials or socialist agitators during the eighties and the nineties. Commercialism became the key-feature of the new journalism.

Divorce was still held unspeakably disgraceful. But 'a greater amount of coarse prostitution' prevailed at the bottom of society. There was 'a great army of prostitutes whose ranks had grown with the increase in wealth and population in the country'. A few of them were maintained as 'kept-mistresses' by the well-to-do classes. The economic condition of single women forced many of them to adopt 'the trade they abhorred'. The well-to-do Victorians would prefer

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27 Ibid., p. 304.
28 Ibid., p. 305.
29 Ibid., p. 310.
30 Ibid., p. 170.
32 Ibid., p. 491.
to go to Paris to indulge themselves in such vices. There was a white slave-traffic from England to Paris and Brussels, which was declared a criminal offence in 1885.

The temper of the nineties was 'explosive and quarrelsome'.

A number of books containing social investigations were published on larger scale. Charles Booth began immense inquiry into the conditions of life in London in 1886. His ninth volume completing the studies of Poverty and Industry was published in 1897. Sidney and Beatrice Webb brought out their monumental works like History of Trade Unionism (1894) and Industrial Democracy (1897). J.G. Frazer published a great study in comparative religion and folk-lore, The Golden Bough.

The men of letters initiated the socialist demand for a crusade against poverty. Samuel Smiles' Self-Help exhibited every robust and honest man the way to prosperity. John Stuart Mill attacked the bondage of convention and proclaimed the rights of the individual men and women to free life and thought. Carlyle worked to discern the centres of interaction between literature and society in the period. T.H. Huxley associated

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33 Ennor, op.cit., p. 170.
34 Ibid., p. 170.
35 Traveylan, op.cit., p. 322.
science with daily life.

The consciousness that a decisive crisis is at hand and that an unbearable degree of poverty is endangering public order stimulated the writers' interest in social problems. Therefore, the novel with a purpose became more daring and it grappled with the fundamental problems at issue. Charles Dickens, for instance, exposed the conditions in British prisons, workhouses and schools which provided a powerful incentive to reform. Charles Kingsley added moral passion to his exposures of slum and factory conditions in *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*. Samuel Butler played havoc with the sacrosanct Victorian home in *The Way of All Flesh*. G.B. Shaw respected this literature and found sustenance in it. In fact, he became a lineal descendant of the great Victorian writers. His belief in evolution, social reform and the superman was anticipated by them. But Shaw was to fulfill himself in drama.

The end of rural England was indicated in the 'change in the village' because 'even the countryman became a 'town-bird' at heart'. The result was that the agricultural labourers 'continued to flock into the towns or to pass overseas'.

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38 Trevelyan, op.cit., p. 355.
a new 'ethic of competition emerged in the towns which reduced man to the level of 'economic man'. His community relationships now were based at the mercy of the cash-nexus and his psychological motivations were thought of mostly in terms of self-interest. However, the progress of events like war, unemployment, and economic depression favoured the concentration on social and economic problems. 39

In the nineteenth century, the working-class reading public 'expanded and became more diversified'. 40 They tended to be 'overburdened with opinions and ideas' 41 - about revelation, evolution, determinism, nature and other large public themes. Therefore, the best writing showed a marked increase in the intellectual quality. A new form of dramatic art, had developed which was known as 'drame'. This found a new public during the last quarter of the century. It dealt with 'everyday problems' and drew heroes from diverse ranks. Therefore, it attracted large audience who 'wanted more action and discussion on the stage'. 42 Besides this, the 'drame', being a new art-form,

41 Klingopules, op.cit., p. 68.
occupied a place half-way between tragedy and comedy. As it lent itself to outward effect and to exciting plots and impressive spectacles, it became more suitable to the actors, many of whom were the authors of such plays. But when the stock themes were exhausted, the domestic 'drame' was becoming 'completely eccentric'. 43 Out of this French domestic and historical 'drame' 'melodrame' developed which dominated the theatre well into the nineteenth century. As a part of the heritage from the bourgeois 'drame' an attraction for social problems and reforms developed among the serious authors who transformed such plays into their 'contributions to the development of thought'. 44 Their works brought about changes in the public opinion and 'exercised an influence' 45 on it. Some of these bourgeois 'drame' allowed their characters to suffer a 'change of heart'. In this respect, even Ibsen is bound by tradition in his first social drama. 46

France produced no first-rate drama during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century but it set the dramatic styles

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., p. Xi.
45 Ibid.
46 Pillars of Society still remains much of bourgeois 'drame': Ibsen openly confesses his sins and receives absolution from the noble characters, Nana and John. Even in A Doll's House Krogstad is converted in an instant and becomes engaged to Nora's friend, Mrs. Linde.
for the remainder of Europe. In terms of the stage, romanticism was equivalent to 'melodrama' which was most practised in France of that time. However, while there were romantic plays and light dramas, the whole tendency of the theatre was steadily growing in the direction of greater socialization. Scribe, who wrote about four hundred plays and is known as the inventor of the 'Comedie Vaudeville', possessed little literary skill. However, he was an unusual dramatic technician and his plays were 'tailor-made in their perfection'. But Emile Augier was a 'sure artist' in the sense that he was equipped with knowledge of the theatre and possessed an uncanny understanding of men and women. A contemporary of Augier and Dumas, Victorien Sardou, was also a popular and brilliant writer of social comedy.

Under the influence of Zola, Henry Becque introduced naturalism into theatre. By doing so, he ran directly contrary to the carefully patterned plays of Scribe and Sardou. It was Eugène Brioux who brought to the Parisian theatre the element of discussion in the form of play. He discussed social topics with the purpose of informing the public of glaring evils in social, economic, and political life. Typical of his plays of this type are: The Three Daughters of A. Dupont, Damaged Gods and The Red Robe.

47 The 'Comedie Vaudeville' as a dramatic form had snappy dialogue, clever intrigue, and continuous movement.
Being 'the last European country to produce modern stage-
drama', the Victorian England 'contributed nothing at all
to the drama till it was almost at end'. Whatever their
opinion of the merit of the nineteenth-century drama, critics
have been unanimous in pronouncing it lower than ever before.
There was only the so-called literary or 'closet' drama which
was altogether unsuited to the theatre. The great poets of
the century - Byron, Shelley, Browning, Tennyson and Swinburne -
all wrote literary dramas which were poems, intrinsically
dramatic, but in no sense 'good theatre'. These Victorian
authors 'lacked dramatic passion, and sincere curiosity as to
people's motives, and conscious application to the psychology
of man's actions'. So they simply 'kept the stage warm until
a new great crop of dramatists was born'. The 'greater
Victorians' could not make their mark during the first fifty
years of the queen's reign and did not produce even 'a single
stage play that was literature', but the rays of a revival
of dramatic form were not absent.

48 Lamm, op.cit., p. 231. (Martin Lamm: Modern Drama
1852)
49 Fraser, op.cit., p. 48.
50 George Freedley, "England and Ireland", A History of
Modern Drama, ed. B.H. Clark, and G. Freedley (New York: D.
51 Ibid.
52 Ennor, op.cit., p. 328.
The decline of the drama to this point may be accounted for. There were changes in the theatre itself that hastened the decline of the drama. The actor-manager reigned supreme which helped the continuance of the theatrical hard times. The star actors received immense salaries but the authors did not get enough. The actors and managers treated the authors abominably. Later dinner-hour kept the fashionable people away and they did not attend theatres because the lower classes were too noisy. Moreover, since the theatre was superior as a means to illusion, it was 'divorced from the realities of daily life outside the building'. The theatre got the plays which suited it admirably. Therefore, good authors were not attracted to the theatre. Poets did not choose or were unable to write well for the stage. Many people preferred reading novels to going to the stage. Despite the immense value of the approval of the church to the theatre, the solid middle class did not come to the stage because of increased evangelical hostility to the theatre. The lower class absented themselves from the theatre because they liked mere entertainment and

33 LCEL, p. 258.
34 Ensor, pp.cit., p. 328.
35 LCEL, p. 239.
vulgar show.

The imitation of the Elizabethans brought into theatre 'a certain amount of good poetry but not good poetic drama'. The plays of Shakespeare were cut and mutilated at the actor-managers' pleasure from time to time. But money and fame were made 'in performing adaptations from the French or other melodramas'. However, the French adaptations were unworthy of the consideration of a true Englishman.

Government 'looked on the stage with suspicion'. This became unpropitious for the literary drama of the period. The talented writers chose more promising opportunities. The drama, naturally, lacked contemporary significance. The Lord Chamberlain and his subordinate the Examiner of plays presided despotically over the moral and political health of the stage and neither would allow its presentation and any serious experimentation with sexual themes as well. Therefore, most of the tragedies performed were not in accord with the new public taste. Moreover,

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37 Batho and Dobree, op.cit., p. 122.
38 Ensor, op.cit., p. 328.
39 CLEL, p. 239.

*Henry Fielding's dramatic satires on the political leadership of the time caused the government to impose the Licensing Act (1737) which restricted the theatres in London to two - Drury Lane and the Haymarket Opera House*. In the eighteenth century the government permitted musical drama.
the imitation of an imitation did not go far to strengthen
the drama.

The rebellious spirit of reform was struggling underneath
the apparent tyranny of conformity and convention. The artistic
pleasures of the working and lower middle classes, who comprised
the bulk of the new audiences, were becoming popular. When
romanticism exhausted itself on the stage, 'the drama with a
strong domestic flavour' became very popular. And, 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. It did not grow up independently, on the contrary, it
evolved as part of melodrama⁶⁰ which had already developed by
1823. Since the needs of the spectators primarily determined
the content and style of melodrama, and what they wanted from

⁶⁰By 1800 the pattern of melodrama was set, and the rest
of the century made additions and variations only. Even when
the French plays continued to supply plots, the melodrama was
not a French product. The main features of melodrama are
familiar: the concentration on externals, the emphasis on
situation at the expense of motivation and characterization,
the firm moral distinctions, the unchanging character stereo
types of hero, heroine, Villain, Comic man, Comic woman, and
good old man, physical sensation, spectacular effects, made
possible by improvements in stage technology, marked musical
accompaniment, the rewarding of virtue and punishing of vice,
the rapid alteration between extremes of violence, pathos,
and low Comedy.
the stage they obtained from melodrama, for the first time
in English dramatic history, the spectators themselves
figured as the heroes of a drama which was written specially
for them in a language and with simplicity they could
understand.

Thus, of all the nineteenth-century dramatic forms,
melodrama had the most relevance to contemporary life. Since
it reflected popular and radical feeling, it frequently
expressed the social problems of the day, and presented
a 'criticism of life'. Melodrama, thus, 'evolved to fit the
aid nineteenth-century audience'.

In the last half of the nineteenth century, the theatre's
approach to modernity was accelerated, and by 1900 both
theatrical practice and the content of drama had progressed
an immense distance from the early 1880s. Theatrical change
preceded changes in the content of drama. The traditional
repertory stock company broke down, and London companies
replaced the provincial companies. Closely related to these
changes in theatrical practice were changes in the composition

61 By 1848, the subject matter of melodramas included
slavery, the urban environment and a nostalgia for a lost
rural heritage, temperance and the problems of drink,
industrialism and the life of the factory worker, the gas
laws, the homeless poor, and class relationships.

62 FFM, p. 613.
of audiences and the nature of their taste. Queen Victoria's regular attendance at plays and her material encouragement of the drama by instituting command performances at Windsor Castle drew higher society back to the play house. Finally, the good taste and the great prestige of Irving's Lyceum management, and the respectable enterprises of other actor-managers, completed the transformation of a popular into a middle-class theatre, with a middle-class audience and a middle-class drama. The knighthood received by Irving in 1893 and Bancroft in 1897 was the ultimate seal of society's approval. The official church hostility to the stage was also lessening.63

The changes in taste effected by the middle-class capture of the theatre naturally determined the content and performance of drama written for them. As writing became less rhetorical and characterization less extravagant, settings and character types became socially more elevated. Realism, an enlargement and intensification of a previous trend, aimed at an exact reproduction of the details of ordinary daily life. The audiences hungered for even more realism and greater sensation. To touch

63By the 1880s the clergymen-hero was not uncommon in strong drama, and the clergy even came to the theatre. This social transformation was made easier and quicker by the spread of music halls also.
their emotions what they needed was not the 'imaginatively true', but "the physically real". They no longer enjoyed the representation of what was beyond their reach. They were satisfied best with 'the present and the near'. As in prose fiction, realism was wanted in the drama also.

This realism, though its roots can be traced to the earlier period, was now accentuated. Tom Taylor was a dramatist who understood theatre perfectly and developed the popular drama into more profitable paths by recognizing 'the desirability of mingling freely his humour and his pathos'. He wrote melodrama suitable for polite society and 'costume' dramas in a bolder and more realistic technique. Though his *The Ticket of Leave Man* illustrates best developments in the mid-Victorian prose drama, its structure is that of familiar melodramatic conventions. It put a suburban tea-garden and a workman's pub on the stage with scrupulous actuality. Since a wide range of contemporary issues had been dramatized since the 1830s, *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, chronologically in the middle of the Victorian drama of social awareness, may not be

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64. B. Donne, *Fraser's Magazine*, lli (July, 1885), 104.
considered a solitary advance guard of the social problem plays of Shaw and Galsworthy. Doucicault’s *Janet Pride* showed the central criminal court at the Old Bailey in full working order for a trial. Such realism of setting had harmony with natural acting and growing attention to detail in all aspects of costuming, furnishing, and decoration.

T.W. Robertson’s works made ‘the most valiant attempt to bring the drama closer to life’. The voice of reality was seen rising above a stage whisper in his works. A new kind of actor had to be found for what was called the ‘Cup and Saucer’ Comedy of Robertson. By producing *Society* in 1883, he brought the English stage into some relation with simple and normal life. Shaw wrote of this dramatic revolution in 1896. “I need not tell over again the story of the late eclipse of the stagey drama during the quarter-century beginning with the success of Robertson”. As Shaw’s remark shows, the effect of the Robertsonian revolution was on acting, style and matter of performance. Robertson was looked upon as the fountainhead in English drama of the movement which William Archer characterized

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as "that elimination of exaggerative and rhetorical conventions which was the predestinate line of progress". 69

Robertson's aim was to urge the public to bring their 'fireside concerns' to the playhouse'. 70 In order to achieve this he made his plots, characters and settings as realistic as he possibly could do. His basic creed was essentially Victorian but he 'set out to bring life into the theatre'. 71 He 'brought a breath of air into the theatre, dealt with human beings, and talked what the people of his day were talking about'. 72 He presented not only problems or moral truths but surveyed them impartially also. He realised 'the desirability of introducing a central purpose' 73 into his comedy dramas. His comedy, Society, is notable for its comparatively witty dialogue and blunt satire on the materialism of the period. Robertson's Caste evades rather than solves the problem of caste implicit in the story. However, it has genuine dramatic interest and feeling and

71 Ibid.
72 Bate and Dobree, op.cit., p. 124.
some excellent sketches of character. Despite its sentimental absurdities, it was hailed in 1807 as 'the last word in truthfulness'.  

Robertson's School troubled the domestic waters in 1809 with an assault on the doll's house convention when Lord Beaufoy shocked his interlocutor with the declaration that he did not want a regulation doll for a wife. Antiquated though his war may be today, it is definitely and demonstrably modern in its essential conception. The dialogues are the conversations composed of short, linked speeches in which each speaker picks up the thread from the one before. Though in style, too, Robertson 'struck a new note', he did not carry his work very far and his influence 'did not produce further Robertson's'.

Both Henry James Byron and James Albery, authors of The Two Boas, followed Robertson. Albery showed his dramatic skill at the gentle-gray-dusting of conventions. In Cyril's Success, H.J. Byron tried to create an almost problem-drama atmosphere by presenting a 'problem' in which the domestic happiness of a popular novelist is nearly ruined by the

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74 John Gassner, Masters of the Drama (Dover; 1934), p. 582.
73 Nicoll, British Drama, p. 232.
76 GCHEL, p. 615.
acclai with which his books are greeted by the public. In *Married in Naples* he followed the manner 'with a not ineffective study of artistic jealousy between husband and wife'.

The Robertsonian movement had its full accomplishment in the dramas of Jones and Pinero. A.W. Pinero noted about the temper of the eighteen nineties, "... it is now a period of analysis, of general, restless inquiry... it naturally permits to our writers of plays a wider scope in the selection of the subject, and calls for an accompanying effort of thought, a large freedom of utterance". T.W. Robertson's work in stage naturalism prepared the way for A.W. Pinero and M.A. Jones who, in the eighties and nineties, popularized the 'problem play'. Pinero's earlier plays were in the nature of pure tea-table drama, but with *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* he produced what has been called 'his great drawing-room version of Ibsen'. He endeavoured 'to deal with real situations', though most of them had an odd air of theatricality. In *The Weakler Sex* he turns on the movement for women's rights just as he had turned on philanthropy in the other plays. The importance of *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* lies in the fact that it was the best

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79 Evans, op.cit., p. 127.
conceived and most logically developed serious play of its generation. It was commonly felt that the play was not only an excellent piece of theatre and a vehicle for fine acting, but also a serious work of literature sharply different from the general run of theatrical entertainment.

In *Iris*, Pinero wished to draw the picture of a woman struggling in a situation. In *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, the conflict of wills furnished ready-made material; but in *Iris*, the lack of will, the drifting of the heroine, forced the dramatist at every turn to devise situations. Pinero extended his reputation as a serious writer with *Iris*, *His House*, *In Order*, and *Mid-Channel*, out of which *Mid-Channel* is one of the most successful of Pinero's serious social studies. Technically, it is superior to any of the plays that preceded it. It is a play every part of which aims at creating suspense, deep thinking and pity. Pinero preferred to be intellectual, rather than emotional; and wished his plays to rest upon logic rather than upon passion. Thus, he became a pioneer playwright who helped to build a foundation for the twentieth century

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80 A study of the degradation of self-indulgence in the life of a young widow.

81 An attack upon snobbery and intolerance in family attitudes.

82 A powerful portrayal of a broken marriage and its tragic consequences.
realistic theatre and who pointed out to others the virtues of the play of ideas. 83

Henry Arthur Jones was much more active in the cause of serious drama than Pinero. Pinero wrote his plays and kept his silence but Jones tirelessly lectured and cajoled the public on behalf of his favourite notions. Through sheer energy and persistence he succeeded in drawing the attention of the public to the idea that drama should deal with the serious issues of life. Jones brought the drama to a dignified position in the society and stressed that 'the author was a more important person in the theatre than the actor-manager'. 84 His The Silver King, which dealt with 'the real problems of real people'; 85 'created a furor'. 86 Similarly, we are confronted with a set of everyday problems in Saints and Sinners, which tells the age-old story of a village girl's seduction by a handsome villain. The Middleman is about a clever unmaterialistic worker in Porcelain exploited by his employer. At last, perfecting a marvellous new process, the inventor turns the tables on the capitalist and enriches

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83 Micoll, British Drama, p. 236.
84 Batho and Dobree, op.cit., p. 124.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
himself. The play Judah contains a satirical caricature of the 'new woman' and her objectionably intellectual lover, and concentrates upon the problems of men's spiritual life. Jones realized that if the drama were to advance, it must get beyond themes of sex to depict, in the largest sense, man's religious faith and spiritual life. In _Mesmerism_, an idealistic astronomer gambles with a nasty aristocrat for the latter's suffering wife. He wins her but leaves her 'pure' with her husband and carries his love unquenched on a scientific expedition to Africa.

_Michael and His Lost Angel_ is remarkable as the most sincerely outspoken drama of passion of its time. It presents Jones' 'serious style at its best'. 87 It is considered as a study of human relationships, and seems to be 'a genuinely sincere and moving play'. 88 The art of the play 'is in vital contact with the most passionate religious movement of its century'. 89 _The Liar_ portrays marital difficulties and love intrigues in society but firmly adheres to the moral and social status quo. It aims at the heart of society, its conventions and its petty evasions. The play is skilfully

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87 Nicoll, _A History of English Drama_, V, p. 164.
89 Ibid.
constructed and its dialogue is deftly told. It gives a realistic depiction of artificial life and displays the manners of society. Mrs. Dane's struggle, in *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, to win her battle and keep control of herself under great pressure, the mounting tension of the theatrically splendid cross-examination scene, and the author's artistic restraint all make this a 'problem play' and by far, the best of Jones's dramas.90

Jones's most popular play, *The Silver King*, was a melodrama but he did attempt 'problem' themes in his *Saints and Sinners* and *Mrs. Dane's Defence*. Pinero attempted to deal with real situations but most of them had an odd air of theatricality.

Sydney Grundy was able and thorough in technique but he lacked any power or originality of thought. His principal contribution to British drama lay in his translation and adaptation of certain French and German playwrights. He tried 'to relate playwriting to life' but his vision was so limited that he saw 'only certain of the most obvious facts of living'.91 His *A Pair of Spectacles*, based on a French play, is made into

90Barret H. Clark and George Freedley, op.cit., p. 166.
91Ibid.
'a rather mawkish commentary on contemporary social life'. Sowing the Wind deals with the problem of the illegitimate child but it treats its subject matter so delicately and with such refinement that it does not make any real impression on the audience. When he tackles a serious problem, he deals with wholly conventional ideas. The result is that his plays are rendered uninteresting.

The plays of Jones, Pinero, and Grundy were, on the whole, theatrical inventions in which theatrically conceived figures behaved, at the theatrical crises, in the expected theatrical manner. Therefore, English stage was shaken into recognition of its artistic ineptitude by the tremendous impact of Ibsen's relentless, unsentimental criticism of life and his revealing exhibition of the dramatic possibilities in the actual lives of common people in common place circumstances. William Archer translated the bulk of Ibsen's work. Founded in 1891 by J.T. Grein. The Independent Theatre produced his work on the English stage. Thus, when dramatists began to discuss 'serious social and moral problems in a calm and sensible way', the drama began to revive again.

Beginning as a romantic writer, Ibsen became the apostle of realism and originator of a new technique in drama. He took

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92 Nicoll, British Drama, p. 234.
93 Fraser, op.cit., p. 142.
his materials from everyday life and placed flesh-and-blood people in actual situations. He gave us 'not only ourselves, but ourselves in our own situations'.\textsuperscript{94} For his themes he chose to criticise social evils which it had become good form not to talk about in public. His aim was to write plays about the social problems of his day, and his typical dramatic manner was that of the conversational play.\textsuperscript{95} His satire stung hypocrites. He exposed the cancers of the society through his plays. He introduced the method of presenting the problem in plays with frankness of treatment.

Ibsen was a serious playwright. He recognized the main test of his highest powers in the discussion. He was an artist for whom 'communication of significant experience'\textsuperscript{96} was the primary concern. \textit{Pillars of Society} is an intrigue, and the consequence is an overall satire of the kind represented by the ironic title. \textit{A Doll's House} is a 'social rather than a literary phenomenon'.\textsuperscript{97} The new elements of the play are: discussion, unconventional ending and a conversational technique.


\textsuperscript{95}Raymond Williams, \textit{Drama from Ibsen to Brecht} (Great Britain: Penguin, 1981), p. 17.

\textsuperscript{96}Ibid., p. 25.

\textsuperscript{97}Ibid., p. 45.
The issues raised in Ghosts are more serious, and the playwright is more concentrated on their resolution. What is interesting and permanent in this play is the creative tension which is evident in its power to penetrate the nature of suffering. Moreover, the essential experience of Ghosts is 'not disease, but inheritance'.

Ibsen held 'an empire over the thinking world in modern times'. He used drama 'to ask questions rather than supply answers', and directed his condemnation against those aspects of contemporary living that stunted the personality and shut men off from genuine living.

Ibsen's first and distinct influence was social and political. He used drama and theatre as a means to bring into the open the main social and political issues of the age. He exercised revolutionary impact which showed that drama could be more than the trivial stimulant to awash sentimentality or shallow laughter. The popularity of Ibsen stimulated English writers. English psychological and 'problem' plays

98 Ibid., p. 40.
came into vogue. Edmund Gosse and Bernard Shaw contributed to spread the influence of Ibsen. That directed the younger writers towards philosophical and social drama. Not only the problem plays became numerous but social criticism also remained in the foreground. Love's Comedy was an unromantic study of modern marriage and Ibsen's first experiment with the problem play. In Brand, timidity, hypocrisy and rapacity became the victims of his attack. The League of Youth exposed the venality of contemporary small-town politics. An Enemy of the People proved a strong indictment of profit-seeking respectability.

The problem play, as it was developed by Ibsen, exercised a profound effect on the modern drama. Typical problem plays continued to be written well into the twentieth century also. Shaw, Galsworthy and others offered a variety of English problem plays.

The eighteen nineties saw the rebirth of English prose comedy in reaction against the 'shoddy and showy side of the Victorian theatre', and 'witnessed a revival of wit and a definite approach towards the establishment of an intellectual comedy'. Naturally, the very first years of the twentieth

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102 Fraser, op.cit., p. 144.
103 Nicoll, British Drama, p. 293.
century remained busy with development of the serious realistic drama. In The Liar, Jones had made experiment with the form of the comedy of manners. With his individual style, Shaw enriched the comic. Wilde gave a lead in the composition of polished and spritely dialogue.

In Lady Windermere's Fan, Wilde set the goodness of the people, who live according to the truth of instinct, in a favourable light but 'opposed to the withering artificiality of conventional virtues'. The play became as obvious an essay in the delineation of social life as any of the other plays about women. But its dialogue is 'finely polished' and its prose has a 'metallic ring'. However, the style reaches its finest expression in The Importance of Being Earnest. Wilde's An Ideal Husband shows the degrees by which the husband rises to the point where honour seems fairer than his career and reputation, and by which his lady realizes that it is better to be the wife of a real human being than to burn incense before an ideal. Wilde displays an Ibsenite quality when he holds the mirror up to the smart people in England as cleverly as Ibsen depicts the peasant folk of Norway. In this play, Wilde's 'message' is sounder; his wit more luminous; and

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104 Cazamian, op.cit., p. 1277.
his philosophy more profound.

The theatre of John Galsworthy was a supple and fine adaptation of the philosophical type to the concrete necessities of the stage. He put immediate social problems before his audience and compelled them 'to feel as well as to think about them'. His plays are built on a frame of ideas which develop spontaneously through situations. The Silver Box deals with the special problems of the servant class and its relations to its employers. Strife and Justice make notable and credible portrayals of the problems of labour-management. Strife did a good deal to humanise the class-conflict. The Fugitive is a study of a woman's personal problems and her effort to maintain herself in society. In The Mob, the playwright is concerned with the injury done to an individual man in war-time.

If Shaw put problems on the stage, Galsworthy put people there. The latter's sympathy for the suffering makes his 'message' compelling. He claims not to follow any other; and he has most often succeeded in keeping to it. On the whole, his plays are pervaded by a 'sense of pity and an overwhelming

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107 Cazamian, op.cit., p. 1347.
desire for social justice', and the theme of his plays is 'pressed home with a heavy emphasis'.

Harley Granville-Barker was a dramatist who 'explored contemporary problems with a brave and unyielding realism'. His plays are steeped in humanism, and uphold lofty values of life. They are concerned mainly with the conflict between public morality and private morality which Granville-Barker treated in different ways, tentatively but charmingly in *The M Cherrying of Ann Laster*; powerfully and subtly in *The Voysey Inheritance*. The latter deals with the problem of moral obliquity in business which is the central theme of the play. The Voysey inheritance is an inheritance of fraud. There is a veiled attack on capitalism in this play which has Shavian echoes. The play is a veracious representation of certain phases of middle-class English life, and a powerful denunciation of middle-class morality. The great merit of this play lies in its variety and reality of vividly-drawn characters also.

Granville-Barker’s *Waste* deals with the death through an illegal operation of the mistress of a promising young

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108 Batho and Dobree, op.cit., p. 126.
109 Evans, op.cit., p. 128.
110 Ibid.
111 Batho and Dobree, op.cit., p. 126.
politician.\textsuperscript{112} It is a problem play. The problem is whether the transgression of a social convention should demand the sacrifice of a man of outstanding ability and his work. The theme of the play runs like a motif throughout the play, and the entire matrix of human life is submitted to a scrutiny which expresses inherent drawbacks and pitfalls in the human situation. The \textit{Madras House} is a conversation piece which portrays the thwarted lives of women at the beginning of the century.\textsuperscript{113} The various scenes project the central theme — woman’s position in modern society and the relationship between the sexes. The Shawian influence is apparent in the technique of discussion adopted in this play.

Granville-Barker has no illusions about life. He sees life as it is and he presents it in his dramatic works as he sees it. His mode is intellectual, and it arouses thoughtful laughter at social evils and human follies. Social abuses and human weaknesses are pilloried by means of irony.

When the prolonged Parisian theatrical influence on English drama was reduced at the end of the nineteenth century, the latent strain of didacticism in the native drama\textsuperscript{114} came to

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\item \textsuperscript{112}Evans, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 128.
\item \textsuperscript{113}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{114}Martin Reisel, \textit{Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre} (Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 87.
\end{itemize}
the fore, and took a strong line over Ionesco's prose drama. This native element had received nourishment in the works of liberal thinkers also who questioned traditional institutions and conventional ideals. English problem plays found a suitable soil for emergence. They came to be written to deal with controversial social themes in a realistic manner in order to expose the social ills and stimulate the thought of the audience by giving them an intellectual discussion of the realities of their lives. Earlier native plays also discussed the problems of the contemporary life but their discussion was not as much critical, realistic and satirical as the typical problem plays, written by G.B. Shaw, John Galsworthy, Henry Granville-Barker and others. Every social question could be the subject of their plays. More intelligent and serious-minded audience felt themselves entertained through such plays, which created their own demand among them, because they wanted argument in lieu of trivial themes, and intellectual interpretation in place of idle entertainment.

115 Ibid., p. 86.
118 Ibid., p. 183.
119 Ibid.
By the end of the nineteenth century, English education had well established in India. Along with it came the western thought and the Indian mind became open to new ideas and perceptions. The English theatre had developed into a forceful medium of social and political satire. Its impact became visible in Indian literature. The Hindi theatre might not have been an absolute 'centre of intellect and artistic activity' but by 1920's, Hindi playwrights were returning to the depiction of social and political problems. A new type of audience, with rational and scientific attitude towards the problems of life, was growing up. To cater to the intellectual demands of this audience, satirical comedies and realistic plays were being written. It became part of the movement for the propagation of modern ideas in Hindi plays. Around 1930, it gradually took the form of 'problem play' (Samasya natak) in Hindi literature.

The Hindi writers of the satirical comedies and the realistic plays divulged and opposed the social, religious and domestic evils of the contemporary society by means of

120 H.V. Routh, English Literature and Ideas in the Twentieth Century (New York : Longmans, 1930), p. 34.
humour mixed with satire. These plays prepared the soil, to a great extent, for sowing the seeds of the Hindi 'Samasya-Natak'. But, in the beginning of the twentieth century, English education and other sources also were creating impact of western ideas of democracy, science, culture and literature on the Indian intelligentsia. The consequent emergence of liberal and free thought brought about changes in people's attitudes towards society and its values and helped the Indian intelligentsia to have a new look at the problems, customs, culture and religion of the society. But these ideas grew up gradually through the changing socio-intellectual texture of the contemporary Indian life which also contributed to the emergence of the Hindi Samasya Natak.

In spite of immense western inspiration and guidance, and an increasing flow of good dramatic models from outside, the contemporary theatre of India had been much behind the general European standard of dramaturgy and production. The existing conditions in the Indian theatres were 'deplorable'

124 Ibid.
on account of a number of causes. There was neither any
native dramatic genius who could stamp drama with native
attributes nor any robust tradition was developed to counteract
alien forces in the mid-nineteenth century. The actors failed
to create the 'illusion of reality'. The new class of Indian
intelligentsia desired 'nothing better than to model themselves
on the pattern of the west'.126 Degraded social evils attracted
the attention of 'light satirists and inferior caricaturists',127
but they were presented mostly in sordid and farcical forms.
Due to class barriers even the best and worthy actors on the
stage did not get any social recognition. Moreover, the
'Purdah' system made the women of higher class conspicuous by
their absence in theatre. Economic deterioration of the country
was also responsible for the deterioration in the Indian
theatre. The contemporary illiterate audience's demand for
sensational thrills of cheaper types told adversely upon the
demand for standard native plays.

The spread of western ideas in India is inexorably linked
with the British rule in India. The relationship between English-
men and Indians was that of a master and a subject, which
corrupted the British and demoralised the Indians. The economic

126 Ibid., p. 248.
127 Ibid., p. 230.
consequences of this relationship on the part of Indians were extremely deplorable. The Britishers in England and the bureaucracy in India thought that Indians were completely satisfied and fully reconciled to their rule over India. Therefore, the Mutiny of 1857 came as a rude shock to both of them. The result was the end of the East India Company's rule and assumption of control over Indian territories directly by the Crown. The Indians were assured equal opportunities and treatment with other subjects of the Queen. The need for developing India along modern lines was felt by the government. The production for home consumption was replaced by production for foreign factories; and the old cottage industry by new power-driven factories.

As soon as the shock of the Mutiny was past, India was soon covered with a network of public and private schools and colleges. This served the purpose of spreading western knowledge widely. The Universities were given the power of appointment of teachers and do all such things which would tend to the promotion of study and research. And not least important was the fact that England had supplied India with a 'common language for political purposes'. The new education brought about an electrifying contact with modern

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western culture.  

The modern means of transport became a powerful force in unifying the Indian people socially. Railways and buses made it possible to spread progressive social and scientific ideas among them. Scientists, artists, sociologists, philosophers and economists were enabled to bring their knowledge and delight to the people.

The soil for the growth of Indian nationalism was prepared by the socio-religious movements of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Swamy Dayanand saved Hinduism from the onslaughts of Islam and Christianity. The germ of the cult of 'Swadeshi' also can be traced to his teachings. Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda also contributed for the revival of Hinduism. Mrs. Annie Besant, the President of the theosophical society, adopted Hinduism and regarded it as better than all other religions. These socio-religious leaders breathed new life into the degenerated Hindu society. They attacked social and religious evils, brought about many reforms, and unfolded before the Hindus the pictures of their glorious past, ancient civilization and culture. With self-consciousness, the Hindus got self-respect which, in turn, engendered

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dissatisfaction against the British Rule. Freedom began to be considered necessary even for the achievement of social and religious reforms. 130

The British Rule was instrumental in the growth of nationalism in another manner also. The vast net-work of communications and transport made it possible for Indians to discuss together. Ideas of Milton, Burke, Mill, Macaulay, Herbert spencer, Ruskin, Shaw and many others became available to Indians through western literature. It also enabled them to go abroad and live among Englishmen and other western nations.

Trade was revolutionized by opening up of factories and industries. Jute industry made Calcutta an industrial city as Cotton industry made Bombay, Madras and Ahmedabad. Iron and Steel industry was developing by means of coalfields. Development of sugar industry was also undertaken. The result was that India was 'brought within the orbit of world economy and the range of world prices'. 131 But there were certain bad effects as well. The Indian handicraft collapsed. There was a rise in the general price-level. Excessive exports upset


The undeniable truth is that Great Britain ruled India for England's good. And, the striking thing about Indian nationalism was that it emerged under the conditions of the political subjection of the Indian people by the British. The diffusion of English influence was due to industrialization of England, her position of economic and political power and the stability of her society. Early in the nineteenth century almost half of the world's trade was with England. During the early years of the twentieth century also the Lancashire cotton industry was still a dominant force in the economy of the whole world, but India was its largest single market.

The Press in India had become fairly powerful by the eighties of the nineteenth century. It constituted a forum of discussion of Indian policy. It broadened the outlook of its readers. Gradually, it proved a great force through which the Indian nationalism derived its vigour and strength. The newspapers also performed an invaluable educative and cultural function.

132 Sir Joysen Hicks, the Home Secretary in Baldwin's Cabinet of 1924 said, "we did not conquer India for the benefit of Indians. We conquered India as an outlet for the good of Great Britain." Navayugan (Calcutta, April 7, 1927), p. 1.
So far the life of women in India is concerned, the evils like child-marriage, the plight of Hindu widows, purdah system, polygamy and temple prostitution were the darkest aspects of Hindu women. Girls' education still lagged behind owing to public apathy and orthodox opposition. But missionary movements brought about a number of improvements in the women's life. It was inevitable that women should seek to express their new ideals in the political as well as other spheres. The new ideal woman was neither Sita nor Mary, but rather one of the humanistic European tradition. She was a personality in her own right and upholder of grace and culture in society. She was a partner in the home and actor in public causes.

In 1900, Indian nationalism was still, in the main, a tendency among the middle class intellectuals rather than an organized political movement. The old middle class played a subordinate part in the affairs of India. It was divided by distance, language, caste-feeling, and occupation. It was

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133 During the mid-Victorian England, women's place continued to be the home and her 'Principal occupation was marriage'. Business life was not to be invaded by feminine trespassers. Poor women were much in demand for factory labour as well as for the numerous posts 'below stairs' in domestic service. Thomas Hood denounced the virtual enslavement of the seamstress in The Song of the Shirt, which appeared in *Punch* in 1843.

dependent on the intellectual aristocracy of the Brahmans and the landed aristocracy of 'Zamindars'. Gradually, there was a rush from the middle classes to learn English. The transition from Persian to English as the language of government business and the higher courts greatly increased the use of and the demand for English. With this increased demand new professions offered new scope and status to men of ability. The new education gave the middle class a common language and common stock of ideas and knowledge. The new press continued their contact with the new intellectual world and enabled their own reactions to circulate. Thus, the middle class became the newborn soul of modern India with its new sense of unity, hope and purpose.

The National Congress, in 1900, was a propaganda society rather than an organized political party. Gradually, it underwent the experience of all nationalist movements. The most outstanding contribution of the Indian National Movement was the civil disobedience on non-violent lines the credit for which goes to Mahatma Gandhi. The ultimate aim of nationalism was to lift the nation economically, socially and politically. In a slave country like India, nationalism was synonymous with patriotism which aimed at the achievement of national independence. The British gave Indians a European education, and with this
education came the demand for national independence'.

In the early years of the twentieth century, there were certain writers and thinkers who dominated intellectual circles and expressed their 'disapproval of the upper classes'. They wrote about tension between society and the individual taking the problems of love and sex as the issues that most often brought them into conflict. These were the 'bold new literary departures' which, to a great extent, shocked the readers who were 'concerned about the solidarity of society'.

But the immediate post first-war years constituted a period in which the dominant school of writers was not immediately concerned with the problems of man and society. However, in England, Karl Marx, Engels, Ruskin, Morris and Henry George discussed practical suggestions for the reconstruction of society. Young men and even women were no longer too gentle to earn money. Besides, there were more opportunities; and having once realized the prospect of financial independence, they quickly realized the burden of parental authority and domestic narrowness. Gathering hints from scientific discussions, they responded readily to the half understood promptings of sex. Love became much less of a romance. It became much more an

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experience. In an age of mass education these scientific thoughts travelled far and wide and left impact on the people of both England and India.

From 1901 to 1925, English literature was directed by mental attitudes, moral ideals, and spiritual values at almost the opposite extreme to the attitudes, ideals and values governing Victorian literature. The Victorian age was looked upon as hypocritical, and its ideas appeared 'mean and superficial and stupid'. This change in outlook was effected due to 'the growth of a restless desire to probe and question'. Shaw attacked the 'old superstition' of religion and the 'new superstition of science, because, in his view, every dogma is a superstition until it has been personally examined and consciously accepted by the individual believer. It was pleaded that the primary function of a play was to create a fuller 'reality' than was offered by common experience. But in India, the Hindu theatre did not experience any revival until the advent of the Bengali poet Rabindra Nath Tagore in the late nineteenth century. His *The King of the Dark Chamber* is a work of distinction. It describes how the people failed to appreciate the king who moved among them.

invisibly. For its own qualities, it can be compared favourably with the best plays of Masterlinck. In this way, Tagore became the ideal writer who 'mediated between the East and the West'. D.L. Roy, however, continued to produce 'blind imitation' of Shakespeare in his Bengalee plays which percolated down into other languages of India through translation. Lakshmi Narayan Mishra depreciated that 'blind imitation' and exhorted the Indian writers to understand the native drama and maintain a contact with it.

A spirit of enquiry compelled the playwrights to analyse the existing social order which led to the rise of realism in drama. Contact with the west gave birth to the spirit of renaissance in literature. As a result of a comprehensive scheme of education in the English literature, Indian students had to acquaint themselves not merely with the works of romantic poets but also with the writers of various social, political, religious, literary, intellectual and aesthetic movements on the continent. Gandhi extolled the value of action in life. People pinned their faith in reason and science. As a consequence of the scientific outlook, realism became a dominant tendency in literature especially in drama and novel. Realism was also a conscious reaction to romanticism. The impact of the western science and literature had a far-reaching influence on the life and literature of India. But the clash
between the two civilizations also provided rich material for the production of dramatic literature. People's reaction against the west expressed itself mainly in farce and melodrama which resulted in cheap entertainment.

Hindi literature reflected various levels of reaction to the issues and problems of the life in the later half of the nineteenth century. A raw realism characterized this new literature which had its roots in the contemporary social reality and was inspired by the actualities of real life.

In 1873, Bhartendu Harishchandra wrote his first farce, *Vaidiki Himas Himas Ma Bhavati* which gave a vivid picture of the spirit of the age, and ridiculed those 'progressive persons' who took meat and wine, and advocated the cause of widow-marriage. This play gave expression to the playwright's serious concern for the deteriorating state of affairs in Hindu society. Bhartendu seems to champion the cultural traditions of the past to safeguard the Indian society against social evils. His another social play, *Vishnave Vishakamshoham*, ridiculed the corrupt character of King Malhar Rao of Baroda who was a terror to the ladies belonging to the rich class.137 By dethroning such a king, the playwright believes that the Englishmen, who were foreigners, atrocious and poisonous, did

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well to remove the poison-king who poisoned the very stream of the social life. Inherently, the politics of the British Rule is the problem of this play.

As Bhartendu presented the evils prevalent in Kashi in his play Pran Japini, he did so in respect of the whole country in the fourth act of his important social play Bharat-Lurusha. Poverty, disease, indolence and drinking of wine have been enumerated symbolically. The playwright was shocked to see that his countrymen were taking in the evils of the British society, and they were taking no advantage of the contact of the western knowledge and science. Therefore, he was inclined to suggest that people should live in unity and learn arts in order to develop and strengthen educational upbringing. 138

Bhartendu's Neel Devi raised the social issue regarding the ideal of the Indian womanhood. English women were smart, alert and responsible but Indian women were ignorant, illiterate, quarrel-some, and liked to live in purdah. The playwright does not suggest for the blind imitation of the west, but an ideal compromise. Indian women should be patriots, economically independent, and they should fight for their rights. Andher K蓼eli was a social play of minor importance which is inter-

138 Ibid., p. 488.
spurred with ethical reflections and general comments on the sad plight of the country. The chief issue raised in this play was that of the corruption in the Indian bureaucracy who were too corrupt to make any distinction between good and bad.

The problems of the contemporary Indian society mainly found expression in the social plays of Bhartendu. In his preface to *Shatru Pancharatna* (Five Invocations), Bhartendu struck a note of solving the problems like prostitution, intemperance and non-vegetarianism which India was faced with. The British Rule in India itself was a great issue which he discussed in many of his plays. In order to propagate nationalism and set new standards for Hindi journalism, he published magazines like *Kavyaghati Sudha*, *Harishchandra Magazine*, and *Harishchandra Chandrika*. Besides his massive literary output, he left behind a group of writers, influenced by him and ready to carry forward his lead.

Pratap Narayan Maira knew Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Urdu, Persian, Bengali, Marathi and Punjabi, and devoted his life to the service of what he himself described as 'Hindi, Hindu,

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139 Ibid., pp. 840-41.

He provided an example of fearless journalism through his Brahman. He combined in his life and writing an air of devil-may-care with acute sensitivity and a feel for suffering. He expressed his view that the progress of the people of India depended on the pursuit of the country's heritage and preservation of self-hood and nationality. His Kali Keutuk Rupak is a naturalistic portrayal of contemporary urban life. It describes a variety of corruption and evils that had gripped the contemporary Hindu society. He suggested that people's unseaked faith in the country's cultural heritage, only if properly and adequately refurbished, would be able to sustain the vast and urgent cleaning operation to remove the evils.

In Pratap Narayan Misra's Bharat-Durdasha Rupak, the situation is tailor-made for bringing about the marriage of

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142 Ibid.

143 Ibid., pp. 60-61.

144 It was written in 1885 but reprinted in 1913 and published from Patna.

145 Pratap Lahari and Vijayshankar Mall, op.cit., p. 39.
The impulse behind the creation of this play was reformist. _Kali Kaotuk_ was another social play which discussed woman-problem and showed that the playwright's aim was to ridicule prostitution more than to present the husband's atrocities upon the wife as a problem.

Gul Krishna Shatav enumerates the evils of the contemporary society in his play, _Venu-Samhara_. The play discusses the ideas about democracy, and considers blind imitation of the English fashions detrimental to the welfare of the Indian society. The plot of play _Arjunala_ is taken from the _Mahabharata_ but it expresses the views against the fatal purdah system and unequal marriage prevalent in the contemporary society. Shatav's _Jaidee Kam Vaisa Parinam_ is a play with a purpose. It discusses the problems of purdah system and the evil of prostitution.

Pt. Shyam Bihari Misra and Pt. Shukdeo Bihari Misra wrote _Matrangilan_ which produced a realistic picture of the exploitation by government courts, police, pleaders, and the problems of widow-marriage and child-marriage. It presented a conflict

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147 Vinay Kumar, op.cit., pp. 38-59.
between the lender and the borrower also.

Pt. Bauthinath Bhatta was a link between the dramatists of the 'Herishchandra-school' and the 'Prasad-school'. His social play, Chunai Ki Uamidviri, was a satire on the contemporary system of election. Vivah-Vivavaran depicted the story of a widower, who wanted to resort to advertisement for his second marriage, and it cast a slur on the western ideal of artificial make-up. In Miss American also, the playwright ridiculed the western civilization.

Ganga Prasad Srivastava translated the plays of Moliere and received the latter's impact on his plays. Srivastava's Garhahala dealt with the sex of the old men; Santaghar, with the characterlessness of a lender who lends money on exorbitant rate of interest; Lakarbancha, with the problem of loan; Kafeen Akeef Bhave Darbhar, with the disadvantages of illiteracy; and Dunder Aadm, with the misery of a graduate with English education. School-Chauk supported the widow-marriage. Mut-far exposed the vices of the judicial system, and pointed out how it supported crimes in lieu of checking them. It held industrialisation as a remedy for social evils.

in India.

Bhuratandu, a periodical and the main contribution of Radha Charan Goswami as a journalist, gave remarkable pleas for the reformation of the Hindu society. Goswami wrote a fantasy entitled Yamlok Ki Yatra which expressed his scheme for bringing about reform. Laksanam Singh described the slavery of the country as well as the efforts made for getting independence in his play Gulami Ke Nasha. Premchand presented all main characters from the village in his social play Senora and made an attempt to raise the character of farmers, making it a realistic picture of the contemporary village society. Pap-Papinana, a social play by Jamunadas Ahra, presented the sufferings of the sinners and prostitutes, and pictures of other social evils of man's turning into frugal, evil-doer, hypocritical and anti-social. In Sanjai, Chananand Bahuguna gave a hard blow to untouchability and narrated the secondary themes of child-marriage, inter-caste marriage and begging also.

152 Ibid., p. 194.
The Victorian theatre had witnessed the death of English classical tragedy largely because its authors looked back to a former age and were cut off from the main springs of modern English life and thought. Similarly, Hindi dramatists, like Dvijendra Lal Roy in Bengalee, turned their backs on their own century and tried to bring history and ancient tragic subject matter to life. Their romantic tragedy was a mixture of fanciful exaggeration and indolent sensibility. They idealized innocence, goodness and love to the point of incredibility. In vain, the Hindi romantic poetry tried to synthesise elements of the nineteenth century western romanticism which denied the individual any role. The failure of the Hindi romantic poets to produce any great poetry of universal significance was responsible, to a great extent, in turning the Hindi writers towards socialist ideology after the first two decades of the twentieth century. But the nineteenth century Indian intelligentsia, almost negligible in number, had no free access to the philosophy of scientific socialism of Karl Marx and Engels. However, Jawaharlal Nehru's powerful advocacy of socialist ideas inspired the emergence of Progressive Writers' Movement and made the 'Chhayabadi' poetry almost look like a cry in the wilderness. Some of Mirala's poems like Radel-Raan (The Song of the Cloud) and Bhishhuk (The Beggar), written in 1920 and 1921 respectively, gave an apprehension of the element of socialist influence.
But though these poems represented departures from the general 'Chhayabadi' tenor and temper, they did not indicate that the socialist ideology had impinged on the poet's mind to inspire him to look compassionately at the plight of his people.

However, at best, it may be taken as a transitory impact. But Mirza's poem Voh Terati Patthar153 (She Breaks Cobble-stones), written in the later part of the thirties, certainly reflects the defiant mood of the class-conscious toiling people, which the poet has successfully captured. Joy Shankar Prasad had also displayed a positive and progressive attitude to socialism in his novel Kankeal.

Dvijendra Lal Roy's plays were translated into Hindi and other Indian languages. Though deeply stirred by the national movement, he was too genuine a realist at heart to be overcome by it. The Hindi translations of his plays exercised great influence on contemporary Hindi drama. Deeply influenced by Shakespeare, he started a significant cycle in drama with history as its central idea. But, in one respect, the historical movement was a continuation of the romantic tendency, with its characters emerging out of the vistas of the past.

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153 This poem betrays a genuine human compassion which the poet perhaps acquired after his dis-illusionment with the traditional, degrading attitude of pity and charity towards the poor. His poem Deen, written in 1935, gives an account of this disillusionment.
The Hindi versions of D.L. Roy’s plays were very popular when Jay Shankar Prasad began writing plays. Prasad tried to discover the solutions of the problems of the contemporary society in the pages of history. Dhruvaswamini, a historical as well as ‘problem’ play, has three acts undivided into scenes. Though the plot of this play is based on Vishakhadatta’s play, Davi Chandragupta, it presented an intellectual analysis of a problem of a modern woman in historical background. Besides, the play has two problems. The playwright has solved the main problem by liberating Dhruvaswamini from Raagupta and getting her married with Chandragupta, and the secondary problem, by removing Raagupta from the path of Chandragupta’s throne.

The reaction in Hindi drama developed against the historical and romantic plays of D.L. Roy and Jay Shankar Prasad, as it happened in Europe against the romantic plays of Shakespeare. Lakshmi Narayan Mishra depreciated the trend of emotionalism.

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134 Viney Kumer, op.cit., p. 82.
138 Lakshmi Narayan Mishra, Mukti Ke Rehav (Varanasi, et al, Hindi Pracharak, 1979), p. 19. Pref. All references to this play are to this edition only.
represented in D.L. Roy's plays, and declared Roy's whole
dramatic creation as based on illusion, falsehood and
improbability, hence detached from real life.\textsuperscript{159} He condemned
Roy as a blind and irrational playwright.\textsuperscript{160} Mishra rejected
the documentation of historical events as less real than the
actual observation of life. He professed to study man in the
new social conditions and tried to analyse the problems of
the real life. The realistic plays were written in Hindi by
the playwrights like Shartendu, Dhananand, Badrinath,
Chhavinath, G.P. Srivastava and others. But the plays and
farces written before Mishra wrote \textit{Sanvay}, presented a
satirical picture of the social realities. However, in due
course of time, they formed a background for the creation
of 'problem' plays in Hindi. Moreover, the new realistic and
intellectual plays of ideas, known as problem plays, had
appeared in Europe in the last part of the nineteenth century.
With the propagation of the problem plays by Ibsen, Shaw,
Galsworthy and many others, several languages of the world
received the impact. In fact, the production of 'Samasya
Natak' in Hindi literature began around 1930, and since then

\textsuperscript{159}Ibid., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{160}Ibid., p. 21.
many problem plays had been written by various playwrights.

The social plays written in Hindi before and around 1930 aimed at bringing about a reform in society but the 'problem' plays made the audience think about the vital issues of life. Unlike the problem plays, the social plays did not have intense intellectual revolt against the conventions of society. Like western renaissance, Indian renaissance was also the annihilator of conventions but it was hesitating in experimentation. Therefore, the tendency of indicating the solutions in Hindi problem plays is greater. However, the contribution made by the social and satirical plays written in Hindi during the later nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century had been immense in the emergence of Hindi Sansasya Natak.

_Samrat_, a social play by Chhavinath Pandey, raised the problem of untouchability. Anandi Prasad Srivastava dwelt upon the same problem in his social play _Adbhoot_ and gave a blow to the problem of untouchability to arouse the sympathy of the society for them. Seth Gobind Das suggested in his play _Dokha Keon_ (1921) that man's attitude of jealousy is the cause of unhappiness. It was submitted that _Nani Gopalsami_, a new kind

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161 Ramdhara Djha, op. cit., p. 89.
of play written by Kripanath Mishra in 1929-30, might be considered as the first problem play in Hindi because of its salient features of the naturalistic presentation of life, analysis of the individual's inner difficulties lying at the root of social problems and contempt for superficial idealism. It discussed the problem of the disintegration of family and quarrel in home, engendered by the blows of polygamy, in a psychological and realistic manner. *Kanti Goswami may be considered as the initial use in the genre of Hindi problem plays* but the glory for the effective use of this type of drama goes to Lakshmi Narayan Mishra.

In fact, the playwrights of the Bharatendu period were fully aware of the problems of their age. Therefore, even though they wrote mythological and historical plays, their plays were chiefly social, and reflected the problems of the contemporary life. After the death of Bharatendu, the Parsi theatre provided plenty of entertainment, but no correction of public taste. Joy Shankar Prasad appeared on the scene and wrote

a number of plays for the cultural rejuvenation of the society. It was in his last play **Dhruveswemini** that the problems of the contemporary life were dealt with in historical background. Like Prasad, Mari Krishna Premi and Uday Shankar Bhatta wrote historical and mythological drama but they also could not fight shy of the depiction of contemporary society and its problems.

The tone of the Hindi plays after the Prasad-period is seen changing. The national, religious and social movements, which had given blows to the political and religious unhealthy customs in the beginning of the twentieth century, influenced the Indian intelligentsia considerably. They became more alert and conscious towards the prevalent vices of their society, and their attitude became revolutionary. During this period, the problem plays of Ibsen and Shaw appeared and became very popular. The Hindi playwrights of the period could not insulate their plays against the foreign influence. The new type of Indian audience with their intellectual and scientific outlook towards the problems of life hungered more for the new type of plays. The problem plays appeared to satisfy the intellectual

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166 Ibid., p. 3.

demands of the society.

These problem plays in both English and Hindi literatures emerged as a revolt against the stilted and orthodox forms of middle-class drama\(^{168}\), which had been entertaining the majority of the contemporary audience. This break against emotions, romance and imagination was in part a break towards realism also because the audience wanted plays about 'the real people in real situations' as well as their 'new problems and new ideas'. The playwrights came to realise that to touch reality it is necessary to penetrate into real life. What they wanted as the basis of their plays was not romance, but 'a really scientific natural history', and that basis was to be arrived at by thinking. Their plays, therefore, presented the contemporary social questions and exposed the prevalent vices with the exaltation of intellect and insistence on thought and psychoanalytical technique. Though these plays amused, stimulated, exasperated and shocked the contemporaries with more pointed and eloquent dialogues, they exhibited great intelligence and immense seriousness of purpose. Their characters speak the language of their age which also reflects the condition of the society that spoke it. The dialogues in which they discuss

\(^{168}\) Viz. spectacles, melodramas, farces, sentimental comedies, domestic intrigues and romantic plays etc.
the ideas about society and politics and justice remain brilliantly clear. Their dialectical exposition elucidates the subject after the manner of dialogue. There is statement, counter-statement, and conclusion. The primary appeal is to reason. Moreover, these plays have done away with the conventions of the conventional drama. There is no hard and fast rule for the division of the plot into acts and scenes. Aside, songs and soliloquies have been discarded and long stage directions have been introduced. The audiences have come to like these plays because they get a rational discussion of the realities of their lives and intellectual entertainment as well. Naturally, the playwrights continued to write problem plays to stimulate the thought of their audience.