PART-III: SUMMARY & CONCLUSION
CHAPTER 9

SUMMING UP

9.1.0 SUMMARY

The research on the subject 'Comparative Study of Epic and Classical Indian Theatre' has three major parts. The first part deals with the introduction of the subject; the second, develops various aspects of comparison into five chapters; the third part lists the conclusions stating the summary of all chapters as well as further elaborations of the total study.

The fourth part of the thesis consists of four annexures, which offer comprehensive information about (1) the theme, structure, characterization and production styles of ten types of plays (Dasharoopakas) described by Bharata in his treatise on drama called Natyashastra; (2) analyses of Epic plays written by Brecht; (3) more information about the publications on Brecht's Epic Theatre and his productions and (4) bibliography.

The gist of each chapter would give the idea about the objective of this research.

Chapter one states the problem. The survey of the existing literature clearly shows the necessity and the significance of the study, since negligible research work
has been done in this field. Classical Indian as well as Epic theatre are two remarkably developed theatre practices. Both can be source for many other researches. Therefore, delimiting the study was essential to provide a focus to the whole exercise.

Second chapter deals with the subject of Classical Indian theatre. This tradition originated in antiquity and has continued till modern times in various forms. For thousands of years, it has directly influenced the theatrical developments, not only in India but almost the whole of Asia. The period of Natyashastra is considered by scholars to be around 500 B.C. i.e. close of Brahmanical period. Brahmanical thought influenced all arts, plastic as well as performing, and helped our ancient thinkers to develop a theory and technique in the fields of music, dance, painting, sculpture, architecture, literature and theatre. Bharata is probably a singular and the first theatre practitioner in those times who understood the need of a scientific training method for actors and imbibed already existing sciences of dance, music and literature for the benefit of the art of acting. The chapter elaborates on the play structures and their production styles along with a general discussion on style of acting in Sanskrit theatre.

The third chapter, Epic Theatre and Alienation Effect defines the other kind of Theatre, namely Epic Theatre
which developed in western tradition and sets forth the theoretical basis of this research. Epic theatre is a modern phenomena developed mainly in Germany between the two world wars. Rise of Capitalism, industrial revolution in Europe and the answer proposed by Karl Marx, were some of the major happenings which greatly influenced Bertolt Brecht, the theoretician/playwright/director of this highly significant theatre movement of the twentieth century. Theatre being the most important medium of communication, Brecht wanted to use it to ‘instruct and educate’ the masses, namely the working class. This was a medium he thought, that could entertain and at the same time educate the common people about their socio-economic problems and spurr them to a meaningful social action.

Brecht unlike his counterparts in rest of the western world, tried to develop ‘Epic’ (narrative) structure in playwrighting which presented a comprehensive world view rather than individual psychological problems of the middle class characters. He wrote original performance texts for Epic theatre as well as rewrote the dramatic texts of other playwrights for his theatre. From ancient to modern, occidental to oriental, he picked up stories, restructured them and infused them with his own modern, social and scientific thinking. He used mixed verbal patterns such as heightened prose, rhymeless verse with irregular rhythm, metered poetry mixed with simple prose. The use of choral as well as individual songs, which were
not emotional outbursts as used in German opera, but thoughtful diagnoses of the socio-economic conditions, and problems arising out of those conditions. Therefore, music played an important part in the Epic production.

Alienation Effect is a rough translation of the actual German word Verfremdungseffekt which is a distant cousin of 'befremden,' a Marxist term that refers to the need for any situation to be alienated socially. The concept of Alienation effect provides the theoretical base for this research. The investigator has made certain observations as to how A-effect is created in Epic theatre. The various aspects of actor's art such as special preparation of the actor in the rehearsal situation, innovations in rendering of the text, the use of music as a gest and carefully developed physical attitudes, equally complimented by suitable stage design, were the means Brecht used, to create A-effect in his productions. The methods applied by Brecht are examined in the second part of the thesis against the backdrop of Classical Indian theatre.

The second part of the thesis consists of five chapters which inform about the various methods through which Brecht developed A-effect in his productions. The investigator has tried to find elements of similar nature in the production of classical sanskrit plays. Fourth chapter deals with the problem of actor's training in both the practices. Brecht demanded acute awareness of the
socio-political situation from his actor. The reading of the play would start with telling the story of the incidents portrayed in it. The actual play was read in third person and in past tense by the actors. Sometimes Brecht wanted the actors to translate the text into their individual dialects to achieve innovative and indigenous intonations and nuances in the delivery of the actor. Sometimes the roles were swapped and actors could get a chance to look at their characters from different point of view.

The preparation of the Classical Indian actor, on the other hand, was quite rigorous where he was supposed to master the arts of classical dance and classical music in the preparatory stages. The training of the classical dance imparted grace, balance, stamina, beautification of the body through postures/gestures, with the complete concentration of mind. During the performance, therefore, the actor could easily translate and underline the word with already developed and codified gesture. Classical music and various verbal patterns (dialects) trained the actor in Vāchikābhinaya (verbal expression) at the preparatory stages.

The first part of the fifth chapter deals with the Brechtian methods of rendering the text, which are focused at bringing A-effect in the performance. Some of them are strictly observed during the rehearsal sessions such as, using the native dialect of the actor instead of
high German of the text, and reading the stage directions etc. by the actor. The construction of the text itself offered a variety of speech patterns and at times demanded good knowledge of music from the Epic actor. To break the effect of empathy, the character (according to the textual requirement) addressed the audience directly to destroy the illusion of Realism. In fact, the actor presented the character to the audience and simultaneously, judged its actions. The separation of the text and emotions presented the familiar in the most unfamiliar manner.

In Classical Indian theatre, the dialects or Prākrits are used in the final text which offer a distinctive flavour to the characterization. Similarly, the pure prose interspersed with metered poetry (Mātrāvrittas) help to elevate the aesthetic experience of the spectator. The multiple methods of using the spoken word (Nātyokti) such as Sarva- shrāvya, Niyata- Shrāvya, Ashrāvyva and Ākāshabhāshita, offer interesting variety in conveying the story to the audience. The use of Arthopakshepakas (the methods to provide important links in the story) underline the narrative structure of the text.

The sixth chapter elaborates on the use of music in both types of theatre practices. Music, a fully developed classical art in India as in well as Europe, plays an important yet subordinate role in both theatres. But there
is difference in the purpose and the function in using this art in both theatres.

Epic music was meant to encourage political education and activate the workers to struggle. A play would have satirical critical songs, to be sung by the actors as well as the audience, and the actual dramatic text of Brecht’s didactic plays formed a choral montage to set forth the theoretical content. Brecht’s music directors used every kind of music, from Lutherane chorale to folk songs, ballads, even jazz, to emphasize the words which generated logic and reason in the minds of the audience. Placing the orchestra in the full vision of the viewers and lighting it during the song sequences, destroyed the empathy element and forced the spectator to grasp the content in a new light.

Music in Classical Indian theatre, based on the Rasa theory, enhances the emotions. Beautiful poetry, sung in suitable melody (Rāga) and rhythm pattern (Tāla) elevates the quality of emotional experience of the spectator. It does not take an intellectual position as in Epic theatre, but offers luminosity to the action and the spoken word of the actor. It is an essential element in the over-all stylization of the total performance.

The seventh chapter continues the discussion, comparing the actor’s contribution in developing the physical attitude in Epic theatre with the methods of Āngikābhīnaya.
(physical expression) described in Natyashastra by Bharata. The comparative study here shows that Bharata on one hand, uses an extremely well-defined language of classical dance as the basis of actor’s physical expression whereas Brecht who accepted the basic principle of actor-character duality in his style of production, could not develop a complete grammar for actor’s training. Perhaps, it was too early for him to devise one or, that may not have been his objective. Epic style of acting is governed by four major factors; a) Brecht’s ideological beliefs, b) his aversion to the then prevalent Realistic theatre in Germany c) his constant experimentation with the presentation technique, and d) his openness to other traditions, most notably Eastern theatrical traditions, for his own purpose.

The eighth chapter deals with the principles of scenic design observed in Epic as well as Classical Indian theatre. Though the principle of suggestivity in designing the set, is common to both theatre practices, the vast time gap (of few centuries) and the socio-historical purpose of theatre in their respective social milieu, place the two design styles poles apart. In Sanskrit theatre, the costumes were the symbols of the social and psycho-spiritual status of the character whereas in Epic theatre, the costume design predominantly reflect the class differences. In Classical theatre, the use of props is multifold. Realistic, artificial, and sometimes even
mimed props help to convey the story through a variety of methods. In Epic theatre, props are carefully chosen to represent class and they are quite realistic in character.

Epic theatre was performed in largish though old auditoriums where more than thousand people could sit and watch the performance. The dimensions of the classical Indian theatre (Vikrishta Madhya) clearly inform that it was meant for selected elite audience, the most cultivated and aristocratic people. Brecht had to turn the existing proscenium stages into a story-telling device and therefore he used old theatre architecture to set forth a new content. The classical theatre had in-built permanent characteristics which helped to maintain actor-character duality. In an ancient Indian theatre building, it was impossible for the spectator to forget theatricality of the event.

9.2.0 CONCLUSION:

The first point that needs to be noted is that this investigator has endeavoured to deal with the totality of two theatrical traditions which originated not only in two different times but also in entirely different cultural streams. The original ritualistic impulses may have been similar in a certain sense, but the transformation has taken place in widely different socio-cultural historical situation. The creative impulses which formulated the
concept and form of the two traditions under investigation here, were moulded, shaped and formed by philosophical precepts, beliefs and value systems, deeply ingrained in the genius of the people in society, responsible for this development.

In not limiting the study to dramatic literature or theoretical work, the attempt was to keep in focus the whole performing tradition, and that is why, the actor-training procedures, approach to scenic design, mental and spiritual aspects of actor's preparation along with the details of theatre architecture and practical accessories like even the sources of light and stage-property used in Sanskrit classical and the Epic theatre are also discussed. There is a complete chapter which discusses speech patterns and the music systems which supported the two kinds of dramatic performances. These details are part of this work so that the reader can get an over-all and complete audio-visual idea of the actual performances and their inter-relationship with the conceptual aspect. This is an effort to show that the manner in which the performances approached the senses of the spectator, is closely associated with the thought that set forth the picture in both kinds of theatre.

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), the German poet/ playwright theoratician and theatre director was a product of Europe under turmoil. The convulsions, erruptions, upheavals
marked the dramatic developments in Germany and other neighbouring countries. The political and social earthquake which eventually shook the world, had its epicentre in Germany.

Indeed I live in the dark ages!
A guileless word is an absurdity.

.............................
He who laughs
Has not yet heard
The terrible tidings.

.............................

I came to the cities in a time of disorder
when hunger ruled.
I came among men at a time of uprising
And I revolted with them.

.............................
I ate my food between massacres.
The shadow of murder play upon my sleep.
And when I loved, I loved with indifference.

.............................

In my time streets lead to the quick sand
Speech betrayed me to the slaughterers.

B.B.: "To Posterity"
The Sanskrit classical theatre, on the other hand, is a product of abundant leisure, economic abundance and
spiritual tranquility which was conducive to an active, calm and profound contemplation. The anguish felt by the ancient Indian thinker was not so much a result of historical convulsions, but a product of deep uneasiness he felt regarding his inner relationship with the cosmos.

His thought processes were not dictated by the exegencies of social brutalization and the acute problems of day to day survival of humanity. He was on the other hand, free to face the ultimate question, the meaning of man’s existence in, and with, the total space. The most dramatic break-through that the ancient Indian sage made was heed to enquire into the ‘inner’ and the ‘phenomenal’ simultaneously. This required a degree of spiritual consolidation, courage and freedom to think unprecedented in human history. This adventure into the unknown led him to a philosophy whose cardinal principle was unity of matter and all life. It was surely not just a moment of ideological fantasy, but a profound and discreet insight into the nature of undivided reality. The oneness of the entire cosmos, all forms of life and matter, was realised perhaps through means and tools of thought which were totally different from the West. An alternative route to knowledge! This single thought pervaded all meaningful activity in ancient Indian civilization. The performing arts were no exception.
"At the advent of Silver Age, people became addicted to sensual pleasures. Under the sway of desire and greed, they became affected with jealousy and anger and thus found their happiness mixed with sorrow. The great Indra, the God of Gods, approached Brahma and spoke thus, "We want an object of diversion, which must be audible as well as visible and accessible to the shudras. Be pleased to create another Veda which will belong equally to all color-groups (varnas)."

The above quotation is to illustrate that it was not as though there was no social or political worry in the origin of sanskrit classical theatre. But it was of relatively much milder nature than that which informed Brecht’s guest for a revolutionary theatre form. It was a kind of ‘diversion’ which Indra was seking and not a total revolution, a complete and perfect overhauling of the system. The practicality of the Hindu mind prevented it from indulging in pure fantasies. With worship, rituals, passionate rigourous debates and profound meditation, there was also a tremendous sensitivity towards man’s frailties. The lighter, anecdotal nature of Indra’s discourse should not deceive anyone into the belief that the creation of the fifth Veda was a mere joke or just pure simple pleasure seeking mentality of the ancient Indians.
Undoubtably, the objective was to seek some form of diversion but the pleasure sought here was not of ordinary kind. It was surely tempered with a social concern, but like everything else in those days, it was a celebration of knowledge and enlightenment of cosmic proportions. No theatre can afford to be bereft of enjoyment. Bertolt Brecht made his works in traumatic social conditions, yet emphasized humour, sportsmanship and a kind of naughty cynicism which brought out the ironies of his time.

"The problem of the German actor is that you ask him to think and he becomes morose." — B.B. in a rehearsal.

The pleasure that was sought by creators of classical Indian theatre was not a form of cheap escape but a profound acceptance of total reality which, to them, was a source of abundant joy. The experience of Rasa was the experience of earthy as well as divine pleasure, as the mind did not see them as two conflicting and mutually hostile ideas! The separation and even opposition between the two is an Aristotelian concept rejected by both, Brechtian as well as Indian Traditional theatre as purely arbitrary. This is the point of intersection and the investigator seeks special attention of the reader to it. Brecht’s theatre was revolutionary if seen in the context of Western tradition.
The second most important characteristic of Brechtian theatre is the so-called Alienation Effect, a theatrical device borrowed from the Chinese theatre which is not dissimilar in aesthetic appeal to Indian or, let us say, the entire Eastern tradition. The overtly didactic nature of Brecht's earlier plays seem to be clearly diluted by his interaction with the Eastern tradition. The Alienation Effect or Verfremdungseffekt is in this investigator's opinion, not a similarity but a dissimilarity, a point which in fact differentiates the two forms of theatre. The traditional theatre of the East is alienated, or not alienated, with anything. It springs from the life of those times naturally and is abstracted to an extremely high degree from day to day life and therefore, it is a continuity on another level of human existence. It falls as gently on the senses of the spectator as the rains from heavens. The minor devices like satradhāra or Vidushaka, Arthopakshepakas and even Bharatavākyya are all part and parcel of the over-all performance and not alienating devices as seen by Brecht. Alienation or separation from, or in relation to, what? When the performance itself was a repetition of the cosmic dance, then the question of alienation cannot, and in fact does not arise. Brecht's instinctive rejection of the Aristotelian concept of conflict between mind and the body, brings him closer to the Eastern tradition, but removes him further away through the conscious use of the
Alienation effect. It is a finding of this investigator that Brecht, while aiming at a certain intellectual appeal and awareness, found Eastern stylization separated and so far removed from the Realistic that he thought it could be used to differentiate the didactic from the normal narrative. The cool, non-sentimental nature, tempered by scientific information and human capacity to reason, somehow brings him closer to the over-all temperament of the Eastern mind. His theatre was unmistakably a forceful innovation for the conditions which prevailed in Europe and now persist in much worst form in developing societies, where people need to separate their own social conditions from themselves, in order to see, perhaps temporarily, as an outside reality meant to be altered. Therefore Brecht's Epic theatre, though still relevant in the Third World, need not be confused with the traditional.

9.3.0. AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.

While conducting the survey of the existing literature on the concerned subject, this investigator repeatedly felt the need of further research work to be done on related subjects, hitherto left untouched by the Western as well as Indian scholars.
Following is a short list of proposed subjects which can be useful for the research student of theatre studies.

* The comparative study of Shakespeare and Brecht with specific reference to text-performance relationship.
* The influence of Brecht on modern Indian theatre.
* The post-independence theatre in India: Experiments and innovations.