CHAPTER 3

EPIC THEATRE AND ALIENATION EFFECT

3.1.0 EPIC THEATRE

Epic theatre is a modern phenomenon, a break-through that took place in twentieth century German theatre\(^1\). Epic is originally an Aristotelian term for a form of narrative that is not tied to time, whereas the tragedy in classical Western theatre tradition is bound by the unities of time and space\(^2\). In German, Epic means a particular narrative form\(^3\). The major propagator of the philosophy of Epic theatre was Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) who developed a new theory of theatrical presentation which for the first time in 2500 years of Western theatre history, effectively challenged Aristotle’s poetics as a basis of all arts.\(^4\).

3.1.1. THE PERIOD

Epic theatre is very close to the movement known as Neue Sachlickeit (New matter-of-factness). This was the sober

\begin{itemize}
  \item John Willett. (1959) \textit{THE THEATRE OF BERTOLT BRECHT}. Eyre Methuen. London. p. 168
  \item ibid.
  \item Brustein \textit{op. cit.} p. 232
\end{itemize}
functional aesthetic associated with Bauhau's, with painters like Grosz, Schilichter and Bechmann; with Hindemith's early music, with reportage and documentary, and in typography with the abolition of capital letters. According to G.F. Hartlab, who had coined the term, it was a new realism baring a socialistic flavour.

Though the Epic theatre is singularly considered as the contribution of Bertolt Brecht, the seed of anti-Aristotelian drama was already sown in Germany by earlier playwrights such as Lenz, Buchner, Hauptmann, Grabbe and Wedekind. In contrast to the ideal world of Realists, the anti-Aristotelian dramatists set a world with open windows through which external reality could penetrate; they preferred their characters from among those individuals in whom the awareness of the forces that shape the world was acute; unheroic, average mortals with an inadequate understanding of their predicament. These playwrights anticipated Brecht in relating the fate of their characters to the socio-political situation in which they were placed.

It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the industrial revolution swept through Germany providing entrepreneurs with unprecedented wealth and furthered the

6. ibid. p. 88
ascendancy of capitalist-imperialist second Reich under Bismark. While the misery of the proletariat grew, the middle classes prospered, readily obeying the conservative regime and often supporting its resistance to socialist reforms. In fact, the years after World War I saw the German theatre in a period of great flowering. There were quite a number of prominent regisseurs (directors) such as Reinhardt, Jessener, Engel who produced all classics, from Oedipus to Les affaires sont les affaires, from Chinese Chalk Circle to Striendburg's Miss Julie.

Yet, many younger writers as well as directors who sympathised with the workers proved increasingly hostile to this rich middle class bourgeoisie. The development of the neo-romantic drama followed the progressively deteriorating human condition - the gradual stripping away of morals, ideals, individualization and civilized veneer until the human being was revealed in all his naked cruelty and insignificance.

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7. Hayman op. cit p.88
8. Brustein op. cit. p. 235
11. ibid.
German neo-romanticism culminates in the early works of Brecht where it takes the form of extreme antipathy to the social and natural world. "In the city of Jungles" powerfully suggests the madness Brecht perceived in the nature. Communism, according to Martin Esslin, dissolved the nightmare and absurdity for Brecht and dispelled the oppressive feeling that life was ruled by vast impersonal forces. Communism offered Brecht a human system of regimentation, it represented a tide with meaningful direction.

Bertolt Brecht died in 1956. This research would be particularly focused on the plays written by Brecht himself which are accepted by the scholars and theatre people as the true models of Epic theatre. Also, it would be interesting to point out the inter-relationship between the theory and practice of Bertolt Brecht. For Brecht was not only a Scholar but a practitioner of theatre as well.

3.1.2. THE PURPOSE AND FUNCTION OF EPIC THEATRE

"The theatre of the scientific age is in a position to make dialectics into a source of enjoyment. The unexpectedness of logically progressive or zigzag developments, the instability of every circumstance, the joke of the

12. Willett. op. cit. p. 70
13. Brustein op. cit. p. 249
contradiction, all these are ways of enjoying the liveliness of men, things and processes, and they heighten both our capacity for life and our pleasure in it.

Every art contributes to the greatest of all arts, the art of living—Bertolt Brecht.

Dialectical materialism, the new social scientific method of Marx, was used by Brecht in the representation of Epic theatre which not only released the feelings, insights and impulses, possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action took place, but employed and encouraged those thoughts and feelings which helped transformed the field itself.

The basis of Brecht's theoretical writings was his strong dislike for the orthodox theatre, especially the rantings and pretentions of German classical stage. Certain of Brecht's theoretical recommendations can only be understood in terms of particular German (and the Austrian) tradition against which he was revolting. According to him, from America to Russia, the realistic theatre had designs on the spectator's emotions which tried to prevent him from using his head. The audience was drawn into the plot and made to

15. Willett. op. cit. p. 77.
16. Ibid. p. 165.
identify itself with the characters. Such were the means by which the so called realistic theatre falsified the picture of reality; and the audience was too contendedly hypnotised, to see that it was false. A synthetic emotional tension wrecked the senses, and incidents proper to the play disappeared like "meat in a cunningly mixed sauce with a taste of its own".

In his poem written in 1934, Brecht wrote -

"Exhausted
By the unceasing struggle of their daily life,
they await with greed
Just what repels the others, a little massage
For their flaccid spirits. A little tautening
Of slackened nerves. Easy adventure,
a sense of magic hands
Bearing them off from a world they cannot master
And have to give up".

Brecht’s early essays on conventional Realistic theatre are fairly aggressive. He attacked the established German Realistic theatre on behalf of the younger generation. His interview in ‘Die Literariche Welt’ in 1926 reflected on his preference for determinedly rationalistic and anti-emotional attitude in theatre. Empathy—the whole process of actor’s identification with the part, and the audiences’

18. ibid.
with the actor—seemed to him to confuse the public understanding of the play.

Epic theatre was for the man of new scientific age\textsuperscript{19}. Amazing developments in the sciences affected the modern man immensely such as industrial developments or advertising world. Fate was no longer a single coherent power, rather there were fields of forces which could be seen radiating from opposite directions\textsuperscript{20}. Man had to be understood in his role as man’s (the spectator’s) own fate.

The industrial revolution threw up a large worker-class in the whole of Europe. Most intellectuals, writers, poets, dramatists were sympathetic to this class as it was that of the loosers’. This was the audience for Epic theatre whose endeavour was to communicate the new information, knowledge to the working class\textsuperscript{21}. In the article "Theatre for Pleasure or theatre for instruction" Brecht wrote

"Learning has a very different function for different social strata. There are strata who cannot imagine the improvement in the condition. Whatever may be the changes,

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\textsuperscript{19} Brecht op. Cit. p. 67 \\
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid p. 30. \\
\textsuperscript{21} ibid p. 72
\end{flushright}
they will benefit from them. But there is another strata who is waiting for its turn, who, since discontented with the present conditions, wants to know more and wants at all cost to know where they stand\textsuperscript{22}. Powerful institutions had long prevented this 'folk' from developing fully. It had been artificially and forcibly tied down by conventions. The concept of 'Volkstumlich' had been stamped as a static one, without background or development\textsuperscript{23}.

In opining his views on 'The popular and the Realistic'. Brecht had mentioned that the ruling strata was using lies more openly than before. "Telling the truth seems increasingly urgent. Compared with vast sufferings of the masses, it seems even trivial and despicable to worry about petty individual's sufferings......It is in the interest of the people that theatre should give them truthful representation of life.\textsuperscript{24}

The new subject-matter threw light on the new relationships which were immensely complexed and could only be simplified by 'formal' means\textsuperscript{25}. The form in question could be achieved by a complete change in the purpose of theatre. The new purpose of Epic theatre was called Pedagogics.

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\item 22. Brecht \textit{op. cit.} p. 73
\item 23. \textit{ibid.} p. 108
\item 24. \textit{Ibid.} p. 107
\end{itemize}
In 1927, Brecht appealed to the establishment for a great epic and documentary theatre. The essential point of the Epic theatre was perhaps that it appealed less to the feelings than to the spectators' reason. Instead of sharing an experience, the spectator came to grips with things. At the same time, it would be quite wrong to try and deny emotions to this kind of theatre.

The original Aristotelian term 'Epic' was gradually redefined in the process of history, the term as used in 18th century German writers Goethe and Schiller and later by Lenz, and Romain Rolland in France referred to the Revolutionary drama instead of knitting together loosely linked scenes.

The working out of a new apartus on the basis of a new society is something not covered by the Aristotelian use of the word Epic and with Brecht it is a good deal more radical than the particular technical methods for which Piscator-the contemporary German director/designer-had adopted the term. The formal separation of Epic from Dramatic (Realistic) theatre came in the form of a table Brecht wrote (number II of his new Theatrical Volumes) in a note on 'Mahagonny.'

27. Willett. op. cit. p. 168.
29. ibid. p. 37.
DRAMATIC THEATRE

1. Plot
2. Implicates the spectator in a stage situation
3. Wears down his capacity for action.
4. Provides him with sensation.
5. Experience
6. The spectator is involved
7. Suggestion
8. Instinctive feelings are preserved
9. The spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience
10. The human being is taken for granted
11. Eyes on the finish
12. One scene makes another
13. Growth
14. Linear developments
15. Evolutionary determinism
16. Man as fixed point.
17. Thought determines being
18. Feeling

EPIC THEATRE

1. Narrative
2. Turns the spectator into an observer but
3. Arouses his capacity for action.
4. Forces him to take decisions.
5. Picture of the world
6. He is made to face something
7. Argument
8. Brought to the point of recognition
9. The spectator stands outside, studies.
10. The human being is the object of enquiry
11. Eyes on the course
12. Each scene for itself
13. Montage
14. In curves
15. Jumps
16. Man as a process
17. Social being determines
18. Reason. 

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In the essay 'Modern theatre is epic theatre', Brecht suggested the separation of the major elements of the play such as text, music and sets. According to him, music in the Epic theatre, should be communicative, it should set for the text, should take up positions. It should provide an attitude towards whatever is happening on the stage.

Brecht adopted various methods to put the text into inverted commas; like play within the play in *Chalk Circle* is one example. He introduced written word as a theatrical visual. The title of the scene hung from the top of the stage presented the gist of the scene, thus any kind of surprise was removed and the spectator was provided time to think about the action and 'adopt attitude'.

Neher’s projections of film on the back screen reminded the audience of the actual happening of near past or contemporary times. Some of the slides were Neher’s own drawings. When the real glutton sat in front of the glutton whom Neher had drawn, the audience was forced to see the similar situation in their own life.

Thus Brecht was developing certain theatrical methods to alienate the audience from getting swayed by the emotions of the play. His association with Erwin Piscator in early days, and Casper Neher and Kurt Weill, the designer and the music composer respectively, helped him to translate his ideas of Epic theatre into necessary visual and musical terms. But introducing a new system of acting i.e. to change the habits and mental attitudes of the actors, proved difficult. Brecht, in his interviews, often expressed his dissatisfaction about the performance of the actors. For him, characters ought to be presented in a cold, classical and objective manner.

While in exile (during the Nazi regime in Germany) Brecht saw the performance of the eminent Chinese actor Mei Lan Fang in Moscow. Brecht was at once impressed by the ‘cold, classical and objective’ performance of the Chinese thespian. A minor incident—watching Mei Lan Fang demonstrating and explaining his art in Western clothes in a casual meeting—proved to be a turning point in Brecht’s discovery of tools for Epic theatre. The aesthetic distance that the oriental artist created between him and his character was later termed as Verfremdung, roughly translated in English as Alienation Effect.

To achieve this 'effect' Brecht completely changed the rehearsal process. To emphasize the narrator's role, the actors, during the rehearsal had to read their parts in third person as if they were telling an already happened incident. They were also asked to read stage directions aloud so that they had no chance to create the 'atmosphere' or to feel empathy with the character.

On October 7, 1949 German Democratic Republic was proclaimed and the Berliner Ensemble was founded in May 1949 with following main objectives of the Epic theatre productions:

1. To portray society as alterable.
2. To portray human nature as alterable.
3. To portray human nature as dependent upon the class to which it belongs.
4. To portray conflicts as social conflicts.
5. To portray characters as genuine contradictions.
6. To portray the development of the characters, situations and events as discontinuous, full of leaps and bounds.
7. To make the dialectical method of looking at things pleasurable.
8. To capture the achievements of classics in a dialectic sense.
9. To establish unity between realism and poetry.

34. Brecht, op. cit. p. 145
3.1.3 THE TEXT IN EPIC THEATRE

The half-romantic, half-satirical anglo-saxon literary world forms the background of nearly all Brecht's plays between 1921 and 1928. The violent poetry of Brecht's early works emerges even from the shortest account. Crime, drinking, murder, prostitution, rape, mob violence, nothing is spared. An exaggerated lawlessness grips the theatre, an embittered and an anarchic reaction against the shortcomings of orthodox morality. In Germany of 1920's, the vivid experiences of war, revolution and economic collapse gave relevance to Brecht's theatre. A spurious anglosaxon mythology grew up and Brecht embraced it in his plays. Boxing, wrestling, racing became the symbolic form of struggle; Whisky and ale, the drink; Virginia, brand of cigar. Brecht himself presented "In the Jungle of Cities" as a wrestling match and advised readers to judge the competitors impartially and concentrate on the finish. From "Jungle" to 'Mahoganny' one finds many inaccuracies in the references of the situations and characters. But according to Brecht, "incorrectness and improbability is hardly or not at all disturbing so long as the incorrectness

37. ibid. p. 68
38. Willett, op. cit. p. 71
has a certain consistency... Along with this crazy logic, Brecht had passionate despair, personal as well as political.

'Lindburgflug' and 'Badener lehrstück', produced in 1929, mark a new stage in Brecht's work, the starting point of his unmistakable didactic style. The wild mad world drops away and more rational purposeful approach is clearly discernible. "Saint Joan of the stockyard" is an illustration of a serious anti-capitalist and anti-Nazi thesis. It was beginning of a new, enquiring, critical theatre which substituted the old anglo-saxon exoticism, a detachment of a more oriental kind. If six out of Brecht's eight major plays upto 1929 have the anglo-saxon background, three of the next seven are more or less, oriental. With the shift of setting, plays became less like a story, more and more like a court of investigation. Brecht was again and again disturbed by the cruelty of the social system which would freeze all human feelings.

By 1929, Brecht was convinced by the Marxist system of dialectical analysis and the conception of the class war. Many writers and producers were now supporting what seemed

39. Willett. *op. cit.* p. 73
40. *ibid.* p. 74
41. *ibid* p. 76
an increasingly clear political struggle. Producer/designer Erwin Piscator, poets like Erich Weinest, Kurt Tucholsky and Erich Arendt, who were writing political poems, Kurt Weill, Hindemith and Hanns Eisler setting them to rousing music, Brecht became an inseparable part of this movement even during his exile from Germany.42.

Yet, what he wrote cannot be specifically called 'Communist', barring 'Mother' and 'The Decision'. He identified scientific thought in the social field with Marxism, but that did not lead him to talk party jargon.43 Propaganda in favour of thinking, whatever form it may take, helps the cause of the oppressed, he believed. The essence of all science for him was scepticism, refusal to take anything for granted, since everything is alterable. Since nothing can be taken as fixed outside its context and its time, a shifting system of social ethics began to take shape.44 Goodness and friendliness are positive instincts, but in a competitive society, goodness is often suicidal. (Good Woman of Setzuan). Double characters in 'Man Equals Man', 'Good Woman', 'Puntila' and even in 'Mother courage', represent

42. Willett. op. cit. p. 77
43. ibid. p. 79
44. ibid p. 84
their ever changing social basis. These characters put forward two extreme and conflicting sides. Brecht used it to clarify his dialectic conception and his own instinct for sharp oppositions.

Detailed study of Brecht’s articles, compiled and translated by John Willett, informs about the steady growth of the idea of Epic text as well as the various influences that Brecht imbibed from varied sources of contemporary literature. They do appear in his playwrighting not in their individual capacity but as selected tools to scientifically develop the subject matter and its dynamic structure in the production of Epic theatre.

In his early writings Brecht seems deeply impressed by G. Bernard Shaw, especially his brand of humour. He admired the fearless quality in Shaw’s writing which was totally devoid of any conceit. Brecht in the article, ‘Three Cheers For Shaw’ addresses the writer as a terrorist using an extraordinary weapon of humour. Shaw also taught him that nothing in the world needs to be feared so much as the ordinary man’s calm and incorruptible eye.

Brecht inherited the strain of satirical writing from his regional predecessors and contemporaries like Frank Wedekind, Kurt Tucholsky, Walter Mehring, Joachim Ringelnatz and Erich Kastner. The element of commenting on the social

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45. Brecht op. cit. p. 10
46. Willett. op. cit. p. 112
disturbance, upheaval and change, formed the basis of his early plays and remained unchanged till his last contribution. Francois Villon was another poet whose attack on the bourgeois 'from a beggar's point of view' offered another dimension to the social criticism in Brecht's plays. Brecht in fact used some of the poems of Villon in the play "Threepenny Opera".

Around 1930, Brecht's collaborator, Elisabeth Hauptmann translated four Japanese Noh plays from a collection titled as 'Noh plays of Japan' translated in English by Arthur Waley. Waley's poetry had many of the qualities Brecht was aiming at; especially the quality of heightened prose and rhymeless poems with irregular rhythms. Extremely economic, dry, chopped-off style of the oriental poetry purified his language and showed him the practical and aesthetic value of what one really means and no more.

Irregular unrhymed verse fitted his notion of "Gestus", the essential attitude which underlies any phrase of speech. Even the prose in Epic play is carefully examined "with the care of an advertising man weighing a slogan". Language demanded pointed writing so that it could follow the attitude of the person speaking.

47. Willett, op. cit. p. 112
48. ibid. p. 98
Real essence of Brecht's writing lies in the continually varying resourcefulness; parody, pseudo-Shakespearean blank verse, classic hexameters, pantomimic rhymed couplets, formal prologues and epilogues, popular songs - old and new, and all this had an uncanny clarity which communicated his ideas and attitudes to the audience. There is nothing in Brecht's writing that is obscure.

Brecht often wrestled with Shakespeare from the early years of his playwriting until late in his life. The preoccupation was in the fields of both dramatic theory and creative writing. In 1939, Brecht in a lecture given at Stockholm's 'Uber Experimentelles Theater', mentioned the word 'Verfremdung' (Alienation) as a conscious slogan or a technical term. In this paper, he chose "King Lear" to illustrate this point. A traditional performance of the play, he said, would show the anger of Lear at his youngest daughter's ingratitude as mental and human. An alienated approach however would present Lear's actions as peculiar and remarkable, as a social phenomenon not to be taken for granted. If King Lear tears up a map when he divides his kingdom between his daughters, the act of division is alienated. Not only does it draw our attention to his kingdom, but by treating his kingdom so plainly as his own private property, he throws some light on the basis of the feudal idea of the family.

49. Willett, op. cit. p. 104
50. Waidson and Homes The German Theatre. [The Shakespearean strain] p. 49.
Major plays of Brecht can be seen having various shakespearean features, such as the presentation of the biography of an out-standing personality (Life of Galili, Mother Courage); multiple actions (Caucasian Chalk Circle); abrupt transition from high seriousness to comedy; the apparent discontinuity of a single episode within an overall unity; the justaposition of verying styles (prose, blank verse, folk song, ballad); a widely ranging diversity of setting; and a use of a stage that dispenses with detailed realism of decor.

Much of the interest of Brecht’s theatre lies in the combination of barely reconcilable features; lesson and entertainment; individualism and collective; scepticism and myth; the fake world and the real. They all tug the audience in different directions, and in every work the proportions of the mixture vary. There is a continual feeling of movement and life, this is partly due to the consistently beautiful language in which they are written, partly to Brecht’s elaboraion over the years of suitable theatrical methods which he was able to shuffle into an apparently coherent theory. But ultimately their force is due to a profound obstinacy which allowed Brecht to weather

51. Waidson & Homes op. cit. p. 50.
52. Willett, op. cit. p. 74
all changes in political climate or artistic fashion and develop steadily along his own lines.

Thus there are three main categories of Brecht's theatre, half nostalgic artificial world of early plays; the very clear didacticism of his early thirties; and, arising out of this, the more complicated, less schematized moral-social arguments of the plays from 1938 onwards. Yet, these categories overlap in almost every work, e.g. Chalk Circle combines the old romantic attitude towards blood and sweat, rags and tatter, with almost undiluted argument and a ramblings of an ethical parable.

3.1.4 STYLE OF ACTING IN EPIC THEATRE

The job of Epic theatre, as it has been explained in the theoretical work, is not so much to develop action to represent conditions. Just the Epic theatre developed a new form to suit its new subject matter, similarly in acting, it demanded new approach from its actors, who were trained and accustomed to the techniques of old Realistic acting.

In Epic theatre the actor's training consisted in acting in such a way that he appeared oriented towards knowledge; and this knowledge in turn, determined not only the content but also the tempi, pauses and stresses of his whole performance. In the programme note of 'Man Equals Man' Brecht wrote ___
"In Epic theatre, actor has several functions, and according to the particular function he is fulfilling, the style of his acting will change."

Therefore in Brechtian approach this plurality of possibilities is controlled by a dialectic to which all stylistic considerations need to bow.53

To make gesture quotable is the actor's most important achievement. To imprint certain situations, conditions in the minds of the audience, actor need to develop a technique which would on one hand make him a part and parcel of the whole picture and on the other, make the people see and think what he is seeing and thinking. Like Mayerhold, Brecht demanded from his actor, a world view of socio-political conditions to which he belonged to in real life.54 The whole thrust of Epic theatre to make it a theatre of much wider canvas and its aim to relate itself to the common masses compelled the actor of Realistic theatre to shed his preconceived notions about society, to think anew about the character he is playing and to weigh in his performance the rights and wrongs of the character while actually playing it.


54. Benjamin, op. cit. p. 12
The general educational approach of Marxism is determined by the dialectic at work between the attitude of teaching and that of learning; something similar happens in Epic theatre with the constant dialectic between the action which is shown on the stage and the attitude of showing an action on the stage\textsuperscript{55}. In this situation, the Epic actor demonstrates the social significance and the applicability of the dialectics. Just as each scene in the Epic play speaks for itself, similarly the actor needs to develop gestural elements suitable for each individual scene, the process quite different from that of the Realistic acting where a steady progression of climaxes and crescendos create dramatic effect as well as help the actor to achieve empathy (one-ness) with the character. Also, due to the breaking up of the apparent continuity to which a realistic actor is so accustomed to develop through his inner line\textsuperscript{56}. Epic actor needs to keep his 'center' intact, so that in spite of various breaks in the progression of the play, such as choral singing, individual singing,\textsuperscript{57} the use of fragmentary suggestive sets or 'each scene for itself'.

\textsuperscript{55} W. Benjamin. \textit{op. cit.} p. 11
\textsuperscript{56} S. Stanislaski (1937) \textit{An actor Prepares}. (Trans)
\textsuperscript{57} Annexure II.
construction, he keeps certain inner continuity in his performance. Here, he uses his knowledge of Stanislavski method of building the role through detailed observation and goes further in developing necessary 'physical attitudes' to underline, reflect and comment on the socio-political conditions he is showing, inspite of the occasional 'breaks' he faces in the scene sequences.

Brecht was an ideal teacher, and an uncomfortable teacher\textsuperscript{58}. He nagged away so long at self-evident facts, ready solutions, perfections and other agreeable things so that the actor would reject them and look at them uneasily with a fresh eye; thus the solutions, perfections and self-evident facts would become probable problems. Brecht demanded from his actor differentiated observation of the conduct of man. "The term psychology should be interchangeable with knowledge of human nature in theatre", he said.

Another important element that the epic actor uses is mime\textsuperscript{59}. According to Brecht, this is a field that brings one up against almost inextricable tangle of style of our period of a sell-out, which exhibits plays of every period and every country and events in the most disparate styles.

\textsuperscript{58} Manfred Weckworth. (Article) Brecht as they knew Him. Seven seas Publishers. Berlin. p. 150.

\textsuperscript{59} Brecht op. cit. p. 230
without having any style of its own. Brecht extensively used mime in the production of Caucasian Chalk Circle which helped the action in maintaining certain flow as well as conveying the story to the audience in a picturesque physical compositions.

The 'Blocking' - the movements and groupings of the actor/s on stage - is an extremely important medium to convey the story. Designer Casper Nehar, during the rehearsal sessions used to draw the groupings while listening to the reading of the play. These sketches visually explain the gist or Gest of the incident. The basic idea of the set and necessary furniture, their particular height or design, helped the actor to take up right physical positions, thus showing 'attitude' towards the incident. Separate constellations with particular distances had dramatic effect. The episode in performance would almost appear like a series of paintings, which ran like a film on stage. To remember these movements, groupings, postures during all the performances was an important exercise for the actor.

Brecht used songs of various genres in the script which demanded recitational and singing capability from the

actor. In most Epic plays major characters had to perform singing (Mother, Mother Courage, Grusha, Shen The, Johana Dark, Antigone and many more). Knowledge of singing was a pre-requisite for Epic actor, which mostly came natural to him being a German and an ardent lover of music.

In certain plays, like Caucasian Chalk Circle or Good Woman, Brecht used masks to denote different meanings. In Chalk Circle, the masks of Governor, his wife, Fat Prince, Shava were used to represent particulars class of the society; in ‘Good Woman’62, it was a device to change the personality - Shen The, disguising herself as Shui Tq, her cousin brother. Such situations posed different kind of problems for the actors. Using mask in a play demands a particular kind of training of using the whole body to show attitudes since the face is covered with a permanent yet stylistically developed mask design.

In short, the Epic actor was faced with more challenges than a Realistic actor. The knowledge of contemporary socio-political conditions, their relationship to the play in which he is acting, the minute observation of the alike

characters in the real life, were some of the important points which helped him to develop his role. The long rehearsal sessions - one play would take six months to reach the performance level - helped him to gradually assimilate the necessary 'Gest' in his performance. Also the song sequences, the use of masks, and/or the use of mime were other important fields, mastery of which offered an artistic as well as ideologically meaningful quality to his performance.

3.2.0. ALIENATION EFFECT

Verfremdungseffekt, roughly translated in English as estrangement or disillusionment or alienation effect, was to make the spectator adopt an attitude of enquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident shown on the stage\textsuperscript{63}.

The coining of this word has been a gradual process. Brecht, in his talk on Berlin Radio, introduced the word in a broadcast of 'Man Equals Man' on 27th March 1927. It seems to mark the first stage in Brecht's social views of the art and particularly, the idea of individual identity which underlay much of his work till 1933. The word used in the

\textsuperscript{63} Willett, \textit{op. cit.} p. 177.
talk by Brecht was 'befremden' an odd cousin of the term Verfremdung which occurs so often later and is translated as 'alienate'. 64

Sometime in 1936, Brecht wrote an essay "Theatre for pleasure or theatre for instruction" where, while mentioning Doblin's views on Epic theatre he wrote: "The production took the subject-matter and the incidents shown and put them through a process of alienation - the alienation that is necessary to all understanding.

The term here translated as alienation is 'Entfremdung' as used by Hegel and Marx. The same word also occurs in a short note (Schriften Zum Theater 3 P. 196-7) called 'Episches theater, Entfremdung' which refers to the need for any situation to be alienated socially.65

Brecht's continuous quest to develop the theory of Epic Theatre and to find suitable tools for it, helped him to coin the word particularly after watching the performance of the great Chinese actor Mei Lan-Fang, while he was in exile. In the article on this subject "Alienation effect in Chinese

64. Brecht op. cit. p. 19. (Notes by J. Willett.)

65. ibid p. 71.

92
acting" Brecht discussed the A-effect, as he saw in Chinese performance in the use of painted make-up, suggestive properties, performer's self-awareness/observation, as an artful act of self-alienation that stopped the spectator from losing himself in the character completely, and lent a splendid remoteness to the events. The audience identified itself with the actor as being an observer, and accordingly developed his attitude of observing and looking on 66.

The Western actor in a Realistic play does all that he can, to bring his spectator into the closest proximity to the events and the character he has to portray. Stanislavski put forward a series of means - a complete system what called 'creative mood' which can repeatedly be manufactured afresh at every performance 67.

Brecht's dislike for contemporary Realistic German theatre and over emotional opera, together with his urge to develop a frankly theatrical way of putting forward social information in a 'Scientific' manner, brought him closer to this 'oriental element' in acting which was apparently "cold, formal and classical" in its representation and carried all the passion and significance of the act. In

67. ibid. p. 93.
other words, the aesthetic distance that the oriental artist created between him and his character was termed as 'Verfremdungseffekt' by Brecht. This concept eventually became the cornerstone in the theory of Epic theatre.\textsuperscript{68}

The A-effect cannot be implemented in the acting until the element is incorporated in the text itself. The Epic text is a narrative, it does not create any illusion as if the act is happening for the first time. Here Brecht gives an example of a narration of an eyewitness at a street corner who has seen the near-collision between a truck and a young boy crossing the road inadvertently.\textsuperscript{69} The person who narrates the story is neither the truck driver, nor the young boy, nor the people who are scolding the truck driver, nor the people who are taking care of the injured boy. The eyewitness imitates these various characters as much as to give necessary impression of them as characters, in such a way that the other bystanders are able to form an opinion about the accident. Such narration would also enable the narrator 'to adopt an attitude' towards the incident which has taken place in the past.

\textsuperscript{68} Brecht \textit{op. cit.} p. 96

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{ibid} p. 121.
Alienation effect in one way can be termed as breaking up of the Realism for a particular purpose. This purpose is the pedagogics; to instruct the audience by providing them the information to which they do not have access, therefore the entertainment is achieved not only on emotional level but on the level of learning, thinking, knowing more about the forces which are determining the fate of the human beings. The means through which the instruction is possible are the actors. Therefore, it is the actor who has to change his old approach of realistic acting and confront the role in an Epic production by adhering to a slightly different discipline. In other words, the aesthetic distance that is created by the actor-character duality is termed as A-effect which helps the actor to adopt attitude towards the character he is playing.

Apart from the rehearsals of regular productions, it seems that Brecht used to train his actors by giving them ‘Bible’ ‘Hamlet’ or ‘Romeo-Juliet’. They were used by Brecht in very much the same way mentioned as ‘practice scenes’.  

Following are the instructions Brecht had penned in his various articles regarding the achievement of A-effect in Epictheatre.

3.2.1 Intellectual preparation of the actor

To safeguard against an unduly 'impulsive', frictionless and uncritical creation of the characters and incidents, more reading rehearsals were held than usual. An important step in this process was to memorize one's first impressions and not so much the lines. Before memorizing the words, the actor must remember what he felt astounded at and where he felt impelled to contradict. For, these opposite forces helped him to create dynamism in his character. 71.

The actor should not allow himself to 'completely transform' in the character he is showing. He should not become 'Lear' or 'Schweik' but 'show' them, by putting forward 'their' way of behaviour to the best of his abilities. Once the idea of total transformation is abandoned, the actor speaks his part as if he is improvising a character like a story-teller.

71. Brecht op. cit. p. 137.
Yet he has to render all the dialogues with full substance of a human gesture to achieve certain credibility in his performance.

Brecht introduced three aids to stop the complete transformation of the actor into the character.

i) Transposition into the third person
ii) Transposition into the past
iii) Speaking out the stage directions loudly.

This composite process led to 'alienation' of the text in the rehearsals which generally persisted in the performance too.

Brecht, though remarks against the empathetic relation created in Realistic acting, approves of certain preparation methods of Stanislavski. "Observation is a major part of the acting. The actor observes his fellowmen with all his nerves and muscles in an act of imitation which is at the same time a process of mind", he believed. 

Choice of viewpoint is also a major element of the actor's art and it has to be decided outside the theatre. For this, the actor needs to know the socio-political and economic

73. ibid. p. 138.
74. ibid p. 196.
pressures/forces of his times. This knowledge would offer the contemporaneity to his performance. At the same time, his process of learning cannot be singular, since theatre is a group activity.  

3.2.2 Methods to bring out A-effect in verbal expression

Prose can be alienated by translating into actor's native dialect during the rehearsals. The actor paraphrases the verse's content into vulgar prose using the same gesture designed to be enacted at the time of the performance.

Speaking out the stage directions loud in the third person results in a clash between two tones of voice, alienating the text proper.

The delivery of various verbal patterns such as heightened prose, rhymeless verse with irregular rhythm, and metered poetry, alienates prose from the other patterns.

Addressing the audience directly breaks the illusion of empathy and unwanted hypnotic tension. It provides a good opportunity to the actor to establish direct communication with the audience and sharing one's views with them.

75. Brecht, op. cit. p. 191.
76. ibid. p. 139.
77. ibid. p. 138.
78. ibid. p. 115.
79. ibid p. 136.
The separation of emotion and the text.

Time lapse.

Narrative element.

Information through dialogues.

The actor masters his character by paying critical attention to his manifold utterances, and also to those of his counterpart\(^{80}\).

### 3.2.3 A-effect through Music

In Epic theatre, music Words, and setting must become more independent of one another\(^{81}\).

The music should communicate the meaning\(^{82}\).

It should set forth the text\(^{83}\).

It should take up positions. The singer becomes the reporter\(^{84}\).

While doing so, he can adopt attitude.\(^{85}\)

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81. \textit{ibid} p. 38.
82. \textit{ibid} p. 38
83. \textit{ibid} p. 38
84. \textit{ibid} p. 85
85. \textit{ibid.} p. 38
The use of music alienates the prose dialogues automatically. Placing the orchestra on the stage in the full vision of the audience and lighting it during the song sequences. The titles of the various song numbers projected on the screen at the back. Brecht uses the word 'Gestic' music for the musical compositions in an Epic production.

3.2.4 Methods to achieve A-effect in Physical expression

Everything to do with the emotions has to be externalized i.e. the emotional expression should be developed as a physical gesture. The actor has to find a sensibly perceptive outward expression for his character's emotions. (Here Brecht gives the example of Chinese acting.)

86. Brecht op. cit. p. 38
87. ibid p. 85
88. ibid p. 85
89. ibid p. 104
90. ibid p. 139.
The use of gestures should appear as a finished and rehearsed one. The final impression should be that of ease and complete mastery over the technique. Special elegance, power and grace of the gesture brings A-effect.\textsuperscript{91}

The performance completely omits the show of sponteneity as prevalent in Realistic theatre as if the action on the stage is happening for the first time\textsuperscript{92}.

The actor shows the alternatives or the other possibilities in his behaviour. Whatever he doesn’t do, is contained and conserved in what he does\textsuperscript{93}.

The actor should thus check the complete transformation of himself into the character. At the same time, his portrayal has full substance of a human gesture\textsuperscript{94}.

If necessary, certain actions can be mimed on the stage. It is essential that stylization should not remove the natural elements but should heighten them. Elegant movements and graceful grouping can alienate the action and innovative miming can greatly help the story\textsuperscript{95}.

\begin{flushright}
91. Brecht \textit{op. cit.} p. 139  \\
92. \textit{ibid} p. 136  \\
93. \textit{ibid} p. 137  \\
94. \textit{ibid} p. 137  \\
95. \textit{ibid} p. 205
\end{flushright}
3.2.5 Methods to achieve A-effect through Set Design, Lights and Properties

Abolition of the realistic set struck at the root of creating atmosphere and empathy for the audience. Suggestive design of the set gave opportunity for the imagination of the audience and raised the level of aesthetic enjoyment.

The use of film strips as well as slides reminded the audience of the actual historical happenings in relation to the actor's presentation.

The titles of the scene written on the banner hung at the top removed the suspense about the action on the stage and the audience could get the chance to judge the process of happening, in a detached manner.

The division of the stage, by which a room is created in one corner of the stage while the rest is considered as another place or a road. Some time the second milieu can be made up of documentary material like news papers etc. or a picture or a tapestry.

96. Brecht op. cit. p. 136
97. ibid p. 231
98. ibid p. 44
99. ibid p. 43
100. ibid p. 231
The realistic costumes and properties in contrast to fragmentary set, written banners or film strips alienated the character yet made it aesthetically credible on the stage.\textsuperscript{101}

Bharata, in Natyashastra, does not mention any particular word which conveys similar meaning as A-effect. Yet, the negation of realism, mixed use of prose and poetry, elaborate movement and verbal training of the actor, are some of the important elements of classical Sanskrit theatre which confirm the existence of actor-character duality in the acting style. The use of Kaksha-vibhaga (stage division), various methods of performing 'private-personal address', the moulds of hills, palace, cave, carts, mechanically manipulated animals, disallow the spectator to feel so-called Empathy as in the realistic Western theatre.

This research studies A-effect in the three Brechtian texts, Namely; 'Mother' 'Mother Courage and her children,' and 'The Caucasian chalk Circle,' along with the study of similar elements in Classical Indian theatre with specific reference to three Sanskrit plays namely; Bhasa's 'Svapnavasavadattam,' 'Kalidasa's Vikramorvashiyam' and Shudraka's 'Mrichhakatikam,'

\textsuperscript{101} \textbf{Brecht} \textit{op. cit.} p. 232
CONCLUSION

The philosophy and theatrical practice of Epic theatre has been singularly developed by Bertolt Brecht who not only wrote plays and directed them in this style, but most importantly, theorized the concept by writing various articles from time to time as well as explained his views in interviews and brochure-notes of his productions. That's how, to-day, the theatre student can work with the invaluable material he has left in the form of journalistic writings and model books of his classic plays.

Epic, an Aristotelian term, means something that which is not tied to time, yet it basically stands for an anti-Aristotelian concept of theatre. In fact, Brecht's significant work 'Short Organum for theatre' again reminds the original use of the word by Aristotle and at the same time, sends similar signals as those of the 'Novum Organum' of Francis Bacon, an anti-Aristotelian scientist of the middle ages.

Brecht's theatre was for the man of new scientific age. Dialectical materialism, the new social scientific method of Marx, was used by Brecht in the representation of Epic theatre, which not only released the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action took place, but also employed and encouraged those thoughts and feelings which
helped to transform the field itself.

The new subject-matter discovered new relationships which could be communicated through 'formal' means. The form mainly indicated the purpose of theatre - Pedagogics.

To illustrate the points which the investigator has made regarding the nature of the text and the style of acting in Epic theatre, Annexure II and III are worked out. Annexure II gives the detail account of Epic plays written by Bertolt Brecht, discussing the subject-matter, plot structure, scenes and songs. Annexure III gives the chronology of the publication on, and the productions of, Epic theatre directed by Brecht himself. This information provides an instant understanding about the characteristics of Epic text and how they are different in choice of content and form, from the Realistic plays.

The new content and structure demanded new style of acting. The main aim of Epic or narrative theatre of Brecht was to change the attitude of the actor and through him, that of the spectator towards the text, so that he (the spectator) understands the issues pertaining to his life and future better. Brecht could achieve his aim by bringing Alienation effect in the style of acting.

Verfremdungseffekt or A-effect as it is termed in English, provides the theoretical base for this research. A-effect could be achieved in the production of Epic play through...
various methods. Special preparation of the actor during the rehearsals, highly developed physical attitudes, use of music, special ways of rendering the text as well as the special designing of the sets and lighting, were the means Brecht used to create A-effect in his productions. The methods applied by Brecht will be examined against the backdrop of classical Indian theatre in the second part of this research.

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