CHAPTER - II
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PERFORMANCE THEORIES OF THEATRE
FROM PRE-DRAMATIC RITUAL TO AVANT-GARDE

The present chapter explicates the performance histories and theories from pre-dramatic rituals to the avant-garde in theatre realm.

The emergence of the performance approach and performance analogy in human life shows the divergent trends in the study of theatrical performances, methods and theories in which anthropological studies contribute in tracing the origin and development of a theatre. However, some theatrologists, practitioners and directors have done an extensive study of the theatre and their findings on performances threw some light on performance theories. Among them, Grotowski (1968), Eugenio Barba (1982), Peter Brook (1980) and Richard Schechner (1988) are prominent. Directly or indirectly, some scholars have been influenced by Asian theatrical tradition and rituals. Thus rituals have become the main turning point to go back again to the roots of theatre.

All over the world, rituals existed in different cultures and played a dominant role in establishing a dynamic relationship between humans and their environment (physical and social). These rituals of society began as mimesis, and in a later period extended to performances - theatre, games and events etc.

2.1. BACK GROUND OF PERFORMANCES

Performance is to 'act'. Any action requires two persons or groups of persons to exchange their feelings through actions. In theatrical parlance, it requires actors and spectators. These two bodies share the event, participate and get involved in occasions to derive entertainment. This phenomenon is called 'Performance'.

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Performance is a communal art involving a group of performers and audiences belonging to the same community. Communal performances are related in their remote origins to primitive fertility rites and other religious observances. Writing on the origin of theatre, Sir James Frazer, an anthropologist, said: “All cultures go through the same evolutionary stages; consequently, those primitive societies still in existence supply reliable evidence about the origin of the theatre thousands of years ago” (quoted in Brockett 1977:3). He further explained the nature of rituals, their origins, existence, etc. According to Frazer (Ibid.:3):

In the beginning, people gradually became aware of forces that appeared to control their food supply and the other determinants of existence. Having no clear understanding of natural causes, they attributed them to supernatural or magical forces. Next, they bring to search for means to in the favor of there powers. Over a period of time, they perceived an apparent connection between certain of the devices they have used and the outcome they have sought to bring about. These devices are then repeated, refined and formalized until they became rituals. Thus, the entire group usually performed the rites, while the audience is the supernatural forces

The above description throws light on the origin of rituals.

2.2. MEANS IN RITUAL

Though rituals that existed in primitive societies are no longer considered as entirely reliable evidence of the theatre's origin in antiquity, they continue to be helpful in other ways. A ritual in primitive society had certain features (Brockett 1977:4) (a) ritual is a form of Knowledge - to understand the universe, (b) ritual may be didactic - though it does not have language it serves as a means of passing on tradition and Knowledge, (c) ritual is intended to control events, (d) ritual is often used to glorify a supernatural power, a hero and (e) ritual may entertain and give pleasure - ceremonies which provide
pleasure through spectacle, the repetition of a formal pattern, or the skill of performers. The above conditions are strictly adhered to in the survival of rituals of the past.

Hence performances originated from primitive people's rites- stories and myths. A myth contains elements based on real or imaginary events or persons. The performers impersonate the mythical characters or even supernatural forces in rituals. This impersonation is one major sign for the development of theatrical performances.

Ritual performances of primitives included all devices that were used in the theatre performances - music, dance, speech, masks, costumes, acting space, performers and audience. Though ritual performances are pantomimic dances, accompanied by rhythmical, musical sound speeches and dialogues are less. Vocal sounds are common while masks and costumes are means of attracting the spirits to enter into rapport with them. Make-up is in the form of paint, ashes and juice. Actors are highly skilled and disciplined. There is no confined stage for ritual performances; where ever space is found they will perform. Acting space is circular and surrounded by spectators. Hence this kind of performance explores more the actor-audience participation in the event. While relating the ritual performances to theatre, Panikker (1983:7) pointed out certain characteristic features of such an alliance: (a) the elements of cruelty and violence, are often kept out of classical theatre, (b) the idea of theatre as therapy, whereby a patient devotee may be cured of illness or demoniac possession through theatrical exorcism, or a performance is arranged as an offering to the deity to propitiate him, or as a form of ancestor worship; and (c) the use of surrealistic devices so as to produce dreams or nightmares.

2.3. TRANSFORMATION OF RITUAL TO THEATRE PERFORMANCE

The transformation of pre-dramatic ritual to theatre is a prominent turning point in theatrical performance history. Therefore transformation is the heart of theatre, and there appear to be only two fundamental kinds of theatrical transformations. One is the displacement of anti-social, injurious disruptive behavior by ritualized gesture and
display and the other is the invention of characters who act out either fictional events or real events fictionalized by virtue of them being acted out. The above transformation causes the ritual act to modify theatre performance. All ritual enactment has become the model for the birth of theatre in the history. Therefore theatre is now acquainted with all the devices that were already present in the ritual performances. However, due to socio-cultural changes that occurred in society, the theatre performance forcibly went through changes into many stages. But the essence of the performance is still absorbed from the ritual performance. From this point, the real history of theatre starts.

2.4. EMERGENCE OF THEATRE

*What is theatre?*

Theatre seems "like" something else. To English critic Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) the theatre was like an "echo of the public's voice"; to the French playwright Jean Giraudoux (1882-1944) it was like a "trail"; to Swedish playwright August Strindberg (1849-1912) it was like "a lay preacher"; for English actor-playwright William Shakespeare (1564-1616) the stage was like a "mirror" held up to nature. German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) liked this metaphor so much that he exclaimed that "not going to the theatre is like making one's toilet without a mirror".

Today artists and scholars have gone so far as to discard the "like" altogether. A supper, a trail, a public echo, a morning shave, and a lay sermon may all be considered forms of theatre. American composer John Cage (1912-) insists that "theatre takes place all the time wherever one is; an art simply facilitates persuading one this is the case". An American critic Bernard Beckerman defines theatre as occurring whenever "one or more human beings, isolated in time and or/ space, present themselves to another or other .... Theater is a potpourri. It can contain anything that man offers to others in his person". (Kurtz 1988 :1)
The above metaphorical answer about the theatre was given by George Farquhar (1678-1707), an English playwright. The history of such theatre would include most human activity, right from the beginning of time in theatrical history. Besides rituals, games, matches of all kinds, lectures and talks, personal appearances, nightclub acts, the circus dance, concerts, sporting events, every presentation of oneself to another isolated in time and or /space will be termed as theatrical performance. So rituals and myths are the bases for the originating of theatre in performing arts. This made historians look back at theatre to investigate and to distinguish theatre from rituals and myths.

2.5. MYTH AND THEATRE

Rituals, myths and legends form the basis for the organization of theatre. While writing on myth, Marcia Eliade opines (quoted in kurtz 1988:3)

Myth narrates sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the "beginnings". In other words, myth tells how, through deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence...

Myth, then, is always an account of a "creation"; it tells how something was produced, began to be... In short, myth describes the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the "supernatural") into the World.

According to Malinowski (Ibid.:3) an Anthropologist:

Myth is not simply a piece of attractive fiction which is kept alive by the literary interest in the story. It is a statement of primeval reality which lives in the institutions and pursuits of a community. It justifies by precedent the existing order and it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values of sociological, discrimination and burdens, and magic of belief. Therefore the origins of theatre performances are embedded in the myths and ritual enactments of a given society.

Theatre is one of the performance genres (Ibid.:4). It has a vitality to draw human life and experience through religious and social life. Though theatre may change under
social pressures and be inspired by individual interests which hide emotions within the community, it uses human emotions as the raw material of human experience, shaping it and rearranging it to secure for human beings happier relationship with life.

In a word, theatre has become a form of self-realization in the broad social sense, one form of participation in life in its social and cultural dimensions. Therefore it has become a shared activity to a greater extent than other forms like story, novel, etc. The nature of theatre is to make the spectators forget the author and implicate themselves in the situations conceived by him. Therefore, theatre gives more importance to spectators than other art forms, since it is a communal art involving both the group of performers and the spectators. However its relationship to myths, legends and folk observances of a particular culture in the world is the major source of its power. The remarkable period in world theatrical history is the classical period. Classicism in the theatre began from the Greek theatre performance tradition.

2.6. GREEK PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND THEORY

History of theatre and its theory begins with the fifth century B.C. Even though the Egyptian theatre was older than Athenian drama, it was the theatre of the Greek that came to light first.

The first record of Greek theatre and drama dates from 500-400 B.C., when the first actor-playwright, the Thespis (468 B.C), appeared on the scene. He introduced the one actor tradition in theatre performance history. The performance was presented in huge amphitheatres, which could accommodate as many as fifteen thousand spectators; the audience sat on tiers about sixty or seventy feet across around the stage. It is noticeable that the stage conventions of Greek theatre are very much nearer to the environmental spatial concept of Avant-garde theatrologists. Performance development started from the Aescylus period. Before that, it was rich with rituals. Chorus was predominant and music, rhythmic movement and huge costumes are the other elements known to this
The performance space was dominantly circular in shape. Soon this Dionysus lost religious association. Thereby, theatre performances lost their ritualistic quality. And playwrights have emerged. The dancing chorus dominated, and two or three actors are placed in the performance. Music and dance are the heart of the performance. Action was exaggerated and actors wore conventionalized garments based on everyday life. Costumes usually reflected characters in the play, masks covered the faces and the entire head of all actors except the flute player, while the chorus has identical masks. The stage was circular and had no stage barrier as in proscenium theatre of the modern times. Therefore the Greek theatre performance explored the actor-audience participation during the performance (Kurtz 1988:23).

Audience involvement in Greek theatre was high. Approximately 15,000 audience were accommodated in the theatre of Dionysus to witness the play. While writing on audience participation, Kurtz writes (Ibid.:34-5):

Their vocal responses - stamping feet, cheering, applauding, throwing nuts and raisins, hissing, drinking and relieving themselves, demanding encores, talking to the actors and to the characters, hooting - undoubtedly affected the judges' voting. During comedies actors sometimes threw raisins and nuts back into the audience...Most importantly, Dionysus himself was thought to be spiritually present in the festive audience.

Actor-audience interaction is a major event in Greek theatre performance because of its religious connection and ritualistic approach and nature of the performance space.

2.7. ROMAN PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND THEORIES

Roman history introduced prominent characters in the realm of the Western theatre. The Romans' achievements provided the basis of the theatre that dominated Western culture.
2.7(a). Audience Participation

Roman audiences were truly democratic and all sections of people used to attend theatre performances including the forbidden slaves. They wanted fun and entertainment. They shouted at one another, laughed, sometimes quarreled, gossiped, and also fought for better seats. Crying babies and womenfolk also took part in the event. Horace, the great Roman poet and literary critic, described how the audience reaction and participation during the performances took place (Ibid.:55):

The audience demanded spectacle and novelty; they would be satisfied. Nobles - men and women - occasionally appeared on stage and in the arena. Many emperors tried to excel in acting, dancing, music, chariot driving, and gladiatorship to delight the crowd. Nero even repealed laws forbidding knights and senators from appearing in events. The advent of mime and pantomime brought even wilder audience responses. Lucian of Samosata described a pantomime audience as "that throng of women and lunatics; [who] clap and yell in unseemly rapture over the vile contortions an abandoned buffoon".

With the arrival of Lombards, a Germanic tribe considered "barbarian" by the Roman theatre, the latter started to decline during 568 A.D. A series of sporadic incursions by these tribes, which began in the century B.C.; eventually the theatre undermined the stability not only theatre but also of the unity of the entire empire. Meanwhile, the local emperor Diocletian seduced by Eastern mythology and religion. With this, new Gods emerged. With the change in religious attitude and mythologies, there was a great revelation that influenced the entire development of Western theatre and civilization. Emergence of Christian mythology - the life of Jesus dominated other great mythologies of the world. Western culture and theatre grew from the Christian epic. In the East, Buddhist religion had emerged during the same period. Therefore the evolution of Christian mythology provided the only Western model for the transformation of the historical person to mythological divinity, who finally became the dramatic hero in the
theatre (Ibid 55-57). As a result, the Christian dramatic theatre spread throughout the medieval period.

2.8. MEDIEVAL THEATRE PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND THEORY

There is some dispute among scholars on spontaneous development in the theatre of the medieval period in Europe. Nevertheless, there was spontaneous development within the Church besides professional entertainment.

Christianity in medieval times provided a new dramatic tradition in the West. In this struggle, liturgical plays came first in the medieval theatre. These plays were performed by the members of the Church community. They were mostly performed inside the Church with a participatory attitude. This is because the inside does not have a stage except for the altar (holy place meant for the priest). Since there was no proscenium arch as a barrier between performers and audience, the audience got involved in the play in a ritual manner. Priests started writing the dialogues and composed special music for the liturgical dramas. By the thirteenth century, these plays were completely developed and appeared in the vernacular or native language. These liturgical plays connected with the Church service enacted only stories from the Bible (holy text). The Resurrection of Jesus was celebrated by performance before the altar at Easter time. Participants or devotees would chant and sing the songs there and thus be involved in the religious function. Later this new tradition was taken outside the Church with Christian laymen's sponsorship. Hence, liturgical plays immensely changed and developed into miracle or mystery plays during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. During this period, a lot of development took place in theatre. Sets become elaborate, and performance moved from the Church steps to the marketplaces. Art historians have discovered numerous elements of theatre such as costumes, make-up, properties, effective texts and stage directions in medieval theatre. Medieval dramas also made use of the speaking and singing voices and of instrumental music; and these two elements becoming a part of the medieval stage shows that medieval staging was symbolic rather than realistic. There are different types
of staging plays in different places in the Medieval theatre. Those plays were staged in church's and out side the church. Playhouse with round . The rectangular open theatre, semi-circular theatre, processional theatre, the booth theatre and the indoor theatre. The presentation of dramas are different for entertainment in the medieval period. Majority medieval period theatre was open theatre performances. Actor-audience participation is open and secular during this age. Whether lewd or not in theme, the indore staging of the interlude, in barn, in chapel, great hall, or monastic refectory, seems usually to have been a simple affair of a small acting area (not necessarily a raised platform) at one end of the room and an audience (perhaps seated at table) at the other end. The combination of small cast and small audience, in close proximity to each other and undistracted by elaborate staging, encouraged the writing of intimate dialogue in which the audience could fully participate" (Cawley 1983: 34).

The above scholarly idea directly show the environmental theatre concept and its religious and ritualistic approach to a participatory nature in the theatre performances in medieval theatre. Arnott (1971:22) clearly pointed out the relationship between religion and drama that caused the new dramatic tradition in the entire medieval period:

...association of drama with religion is one of the reasons for the long series of prohibitions laid upon drama; the forbidding, in Deuteronomy, of the exchange of clothes between the sexes, originally directed against some pagan dramatic ritual and invoke by zeal-of-land buy in Bartholomew Fair:... and seventeenth-century France, where Moliere was at first refused Christian burial; the banning of catholic miracle plays by the reformed church in the sixteenth century; the Catholic and Protestant suppression of folk plays and rituals; the long puritan and Nonconformist attacks in the stage; Marxist censorship. In all these instances, the drama is involved in the struggle between one system of belief and another.

Revival of religiosity that had ceased in the Roman theatre brought remarkable changes in the theatre performance, and in performance theories and structure during
the medieval period.

2.9. REVIVAL PAST THEATRE PERFORMANCES: A GOD-CENTRIC APPROACH

Massive changes in society caused the streamlining of the Greek, Roman and Medieval theatres. Sam Smiley (1987) aptly pointed out the god-centric approach in his book *Theatre: The Human Art*: "Greek, Roman and medieval dramas were mostly religious in philosophy or celebratory in emotion. A majority of the plays didactically prevented a closed, God-centered vision of the universe and of human existence..." (Ibid.:183). The history of the Medieval Age and theatre surveys show the dominance of the Christian monarchy and its attempt to enforce uniformity of belief in theatre performances. The decline of the feudal system in the medieval period showed new a path to the Renaissance Movement. This movement continued from 15 A.D to 17 A.D. It started in Italy and spread to the rest of Europe.

2.10. RENNAISSANCE THEATRE PERFORMANCES AND THEORIES

The changes that occurred in man's thinking were a great influence even on theatre performances during the seventeenth century. The simple religious faith which formed the basis of theatre or drama in the Greek to the medieval theatre had lost it roots. By the mid 18th century, religious flavor began to diminish and reason and logic began to prevail, and these developments found expression in the theatre. Attention was paid to the social conditions in the performances. Goodmann (1978:316) writes:

Under the influence of the Deists, men started to put their minds to work on social and economic problems and to take a special interest in the down-trodden, the exploited, and the poverty-striken. This ushered in a procession of sentimental comedies and middle-class tragedies; these plays were highly moral, superficial, and didactic. Almost as an antidote to them there suddenly appeared, early in the eighteenth century, a great number of revivals and of
adaptations, parodies, and burlesques—all filled with music, song and dance; theateregoers, apparently, were now more interested in lively and spectacular entertainment than in uplifting dramas.

Renaissance was the first age to think of itself as an historical entity. But the Renaissance was the first age is a still religious period, even though religion was secondary in popular consciousness and in the initially dramatic theatre. ...“Renaissance art and theatre evolved through many schools; the Renaissance theatre grew out of the tumult of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries...the renaissance began an information explosion. In fact, the breakdown of traditional Asian, African and American institutions and attitudes that began in the Renaissance continued into the Modern age. Not until the nineteenth century would scholars and scientists again be as respected. Those seeking to expand industry and trade through science and technology explained the world as an empirical reality capable of being ordered and understood by a systematic recording of sensory experiences. The theatre became a place to hear new explanations... Human power seemed beyond limit. The theatre showed people testing their limitations. The emergence of science depended on the economic needs of new, strong state governments. The printing press, a visual, sequential, uniform, and lineal presentation of thought, experience, and perception, seemed appropriate to Renaissance national ambitions and scientific methods” (Kurtz 1988:154). The changes during this period occurred throughout the European countries like Italy, England, France, and Spain.

In addition, there was a revival of sex and the occult. As a result, Renaissance found a twistin the relationship between love and sex. The revived interest in the Greeks and Plato caused humanists to support new attitudes on sexuality that were represented on the Renaissance stage. This attitude immediately affected theatrical performances too, which shared the new interest in sexuality. Classical subjects had provided the themes related to rapes and incest and births in the plays. Despite a great desire to curb sexual excesses, the Christian Church was rendered virtually impotent by its own internal dis-
orders. Religious disputes relaxed the Churches grip on drama, but disrupted the peace of the audience. This classical antiquity renewed the theatrical performances. Classical dramatic works were seen to have a different method of obtaining unity. Medieval simultaneity seemed incompatible with the Renaissance desire to create the illusion of a different reality. Theatre people could no longer justify the existence of actors silently waiting on stage when not part of scene. Nor could the simultaneous on-stage presence of unused setting satisfy the age's desire for truth. Therefore humanist scholars rejected the artistic conventions of medieval illusions, and new principles of unity in dramatic art developed (Ibid.: 159) Further, Kurtz narrates:

Theatrical space was unified according to standards of proportion. Dramatic themes were restricted to suit the new concentration of dramatic form; plays were either serious or comic in tone. Plot actions needed rational motivation. Logic was applied to theatrical beauty. The relationship between play's parts and its whole design became an issue of mathematical proportion. Art and theatre entered a rational, logical phase.

Logic and reason (especially the logic and reason of the ruling elite) dictated a life ruled by formal codes designed to protect society from anarchy and emotional excess. Dramatic art, like society, came to be based on order and discipline. Greek and Roman theatrical art was admired for self-control and the suppression of passion. Renaissance artists, copying the ancient masters, subordinated spontaneity, inspiration and ecstasy. The emotionalism of the Gothic era disappeared; Christ was portrayed without pain, Mary suppressed her feelings towards the Christ child, and kings on stage contained their passions in regular metered verse. Theatre praised the normal behavior of moderated persons; it condemned and punished the individual behavior of immoderate persons. Both tragic and comic heroes were flawed by immoderation. Economy also characterized artistic technique: A small number of figures inhabited both painting and the stage (Ibid.:159).
Kurtz's lengthy description on Renaissance theatre, its socio-cultural changes in society, and its influence on theatre was true and accountable for the theatre performance developments and theories.

Due to changes in society, theatre has also undergone many changes. The net result was theatre architectural changes and its demarcation into two divisions, unlike in the Greek, Roman and Medieval theatres. Henceforth, the Greek, Roman and Medieval theatre performance stage was replaced by a proscenium arch, and a separate building came into existence. The interior theatre was shaped roughly like a horseshoe and was divided into two main parts, auditorium and stage the auditorium accommodated the audience according to social status. The seats in the orchestra called the pit were less expensive and were occupied by the middle class of society (bourgeois society) and the working class (proletarian society), including servants who were given the cheapest place to sit on the benches. The stage modified with proscenium arch, wings and drops was close to the walls of the house. Later on, the backstage area was enlarged and built with revolving and rolling platforms as well as mechanical and lighting equipment. Even special theatrical effects, rehearsal rooms and green rooms were predominantly found. Then the first permanent proscenium theatre came into being in 1618 at Parana in Italy (Goodmann 1978).

Another remarkable change in theatre performance during this period was the appearance of women on the stage. Love episodes involving both sexes began to be enacted. These episodes were more physical, sensual and realistic. The director made his appearance during this period only, though previously this task was not that important; the task of coordinating the various elements of a production was left to the playwright or the actor-manager. Thus Renaissance theatre became diversified. The earlier religious plays were no more enacted except in Spain. Church performances were replaced by newly created court performances. And learned humanistic dramas began to be popularized inside the court.
According to Smiley (1987), the end of 17 A.D saw a new social freedom, and with 18 A.D came the enlightenment. People of the lower and middle classes came to dominant the aristocracy. During England's Restoration period at the end of 17 B.C, producers presented the English version of neo classical plays. But the Enlightenment brought changes to the theatre. David Garrick introduced a more realistic acting style to England. Italian designers contributed elaborate baroque theatrical setting. Germany's Golden Age produced a strong national theatre and two outstanding playwrights Goethe and Schiller. The nineteenth century spirit stressed individuality and adventure. The intellectual leaders of 19 A.D emphasized the importance of the common person and the perfectibility of every human being. The late 18th century political revolutions in France and U.S.A took deep roots, and the desire for equality spread throughout these countries and affected many others. Common men and women were for the first time in history considered important, and novels and plays of the period reflected this sentiment. The theatre of the century, in all its phases, stressed the value of the individual in life's marvelous achievements. Due to the above changes in society, theatre became more vital than drama during this period. These changes continued for many centuries. Later, these tendencies and innovations occurred during the 20th century, which caused the creation of the Modern theatre. Commenting on Modern drama (1870-1920), Godmann (1978:354-55) says:

Towards the end of this century men were making gigantic strides in industry and economics, social reforms and scientific discoveries; and the ideas of Darwin, Marx and Freud were beginning to make themselves felt. Darwin taught that man is related to the animals; Marx, that "thinking" animals can arrange society to suit their needs; and Freud, that the nervous mechanisms of these animals can be repaired if they break down during the process of living. Realism reflected this thinking in the theatre; the Duke of Saxe-Meininger tried to create the effect of the reality in the visual aspects of his productions and the dramatists of the period were striving for the same effect in their plays. The works of Ibsen, Chekov, and Shaw mirror modern thinking; social,
scientific, philosophical, and even religious questions provided the themes of their dramas.

2.11. REALISTIC THEATRE: MODERN THEATRE PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND THEORY

Within a short period, the Modern drama or realistic theatre spread over the entire Europe and other places of the world. With the introduction of realism, theatre demanded a great intimacy with the audience in terms of physical attachment, but this did not happen because the box set was introduced to reform the picture frame stage. The auditorium had the invariable disadvantage of providing a considerable number of seats at the gallery ends that had a poor view of the stage. From a societal point of view, this demarcation of the modern stage created a lot of discrimination among the audience.

But realism lost its supremacy during the last quarter of the twentieth century, when a new age began in the realm of theatre performance. The new dramatic art moved towards episodic and unstructured form and content. As a result, the demarcation between the various genres began to fade and ballets intermixed with drama, drama with mime, and graphics and films were introduced into society. Modern drama did not hesitate to flaunt its unashamed eclecticism for a long time but it travelled a new path, searching for its own roots of pre-dramatic theatre forms for ever participatory events.

2.12. DEPARTURE FROM REALISM AND ARRIVAL OF AVANT-GARDE

After the two world wars, materialistic, nihilistic and cynical attitudes began to play a major role in society. The world was full of tension, violence and nausea, and the same prevailed in the individual. At this point, the theatre produced playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Friedrich Duerrenmatt. These writers' brought about remarkable changes in theatre performance history and theories. The drastic changes in social norms and people's agony and despair
in an atomic age is depicted in its most revolting aspect in the plays written by them.

Rama Rao in his *Makers of Modern Theatre* (1975), has given a clear understanding of avant-garde experimental theatrologist theories. Most prominent and most creative among the avant-garde directors was Vsevold Meyerhold. He was the first director who objected to the orthodox theatre. He became an experimentalist innovator and continued his experiments with non-realistic forms in the theatre. The first experimentation he did was with Komissarzhevskauja's production of “Ghost”. In this production he removed the front curtain. He was more influenced by Gordon Craig and his writings on *The Art of the Theatre*. He hated the tyranny of the spoken word. He was against the conversational theatre of the playwright - actor type. He thus substituted the director for playwright and made it a director-actor theatre. Not only this, he also evolved a new method to create scenic background in the production. This he called *Constructivism* on stage. This made him popular and many of his followers followed and copied his ideas and methods. After abolishing the front curtain, he moved further forward and shifted the action outside the proscenium arch by converting the orchestra pit and using it as a part of the stage. He asked his actors to move into the auditorium and mix with the audience. Meyerhold's intention in extending the stage space and improving actor-audience participation clearly shows the anti-traditional theatre approach. His enthusiasm to create a common space and to create better actor-audience participation and experiments with didactic theatre were later taken up by eminent theatrologists and directors like Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Breckt. He is the foremost and most eminent director who stood firmly against the advancement of Naturalism and Realistic theatre, and further directed the entire European theatre into its avant-garde paths to create suitable performance theories.

**2.12(a). Vakhtongov: Theatre of Realism**

After Meyerhold (1969), the task of theatrical experimentation was taken over by Vakhtangov (Rama Rao 1975:135:36). He was a student of Stanislavsky. “Vakhtangov
agreed with Stanislavsky that the supreme task of the theatre was to project the reality of man's spiritual life. He wanted to present it in a suitable theatrical form. So he combined the inner realism of Stanislavsky with the outer theatrical form of Meyerhold (whom he called "Master"), and evolved a new style called Theatrical Realism.” He differed from Stanislavsky in one important aspect, for he held the view that the actor should not try to "become the Character". If the actor's performance was in any way to resemble the character's behavior under the pressure of events in the play, it was not necessary to insist that the actor also transform himself into the character.

S.IS(b). Bertolt Brecht: Epic Theatre

Bertolt Brecht was a poet, dramatist and director. He constituted a theory called 'Epic Theatre'. His passion to create actor-audience participation forced him to think and invent a new theory for theatre. Therefore, he evolved a theory called 'Alienation' or 'Verfremdung'. He strongly opposed the playwright's intervention in the production. He crystalized his thoughts and made theories. Verfremdung means dis-familiarization. His invention was to dis-familiarize the characters to the audience through actors. The audience watching a play should remember the character's actions, not the actor. According to him, a play is for intellectual appeal rather than for emotional appeal; during a performance, the spectators should think about the characters and action of the play and judge it accordingly. Hence a good performance should stimulate intellect and simultaneously propagate the individual's relationship to the social, historical and political circumstances under which they live. His theory calls for "the audience not to forsake the faculty of thinking in the theatre. The action on the stage should stimulate their minds, not their feelings. They should not identify themselves with the characters on the stage. They should remain outside all the characters of the play in order to be able to judge them well. Then only would they be able to opine, evaluate and sit in judgment over the actions of their parallels whom the actors impersonated on the stage. This would enable them not to repeat mistakes committed in the past. The spectators
should not only differentiate good and bad, but should also think out what is bad and why. The spectator can achieve this only as a alien to the play or the production" (Rama Rao 1975:144).

Brecht's productions were non-realistic. He used only real properties. The place of the action was named by hanging strips. Lighting was never realistic, the parabolic reflectors were kept at the back of the audience. To create the continuity of action and to make the play unemotional, he used songs (this technique was adopted from the Asian theatre), placards, projected titles, and characters commenting on their actions between scenes. Ideologically, his theatre performance bore some similarity to the environmental theatre concept.

Brecht's epic theatre was an attack on the middle class illusionistic dramatic and theatre concepts. Kurtz (1988:382) writes on Brecht's works:

He worked to create a theatrical experience that placed the audience in a skeptical point of view towards what happened on the stage. Because Brecht believed a bit more skepticism would have prevented the horrors of the modern age, his theatre tried to develop the habit of skepticism in the modern audience. Brecht wanted neither actor nor audience to lose themselves, to escape, or to forget that the events on stage were not real. He wanted actors and audience to confront, consciously and rationally, both themselves and the stage, so that they might learn what needed to be done in society... The stage's illusion of reality was just as changeable and unrealistic as people's illusions of everyday reality. Emotional sympathy or empathy with characters and situations interfered with the actors' and audience's ability to remain skeptical.

Melchinger's opinion on Brecht theatre is:

The illusionistic 'dramatization', according to Brecht, took place both on the stage and in the audience: on the stage by having the actors identify
themselves completely with the roles so that they became immersed in them, thus playing a trance by which the action could be completely resolved in an ostensible truth. In the audience this dramatization was achieved by means of sympathy, suggestion, enchantment, intoxication - in other words, by means of a trance. The epic theatre, on the other hand, put ahead of everything the assertion that theatre is theatre and nothing else. The actor is not Lear, Hargapon, Schweik.- he depicts these people! (This is the alienation effect).

From the standpoint of theatrical history, this is all part of the return to the pre-illusionistic theatre, in which the theatrical element had not yet been made suspect by the exion of naturalness. Epic theatre, as Brecht defined it, was the Chinese; the Indian, and partly also the Elizabethan theatre. From the standpoint of human society, the epic theatre is the most conscious attempt to bring the public into communication with the stage (quoted in George 1992:14-15).

2.12(c). Antonin Artaud: Theatre of Cruelty

Antonin Artaud, an actor-director, was called the father of avant-garde. Influence of Balinese dances created a tremendous effect on him. His various writings on the theatre were collected and published under the title The Theatre and Its Double (1958), which is considered the text book for avant-garde directors. He proposed that "language should be subordinated to live action". But he did not propose the complete banishment of speech from the theatre. He also proclaimed that the playwright's words should be used only for their sound and not their meaning. The spoken word appeals to the intellect, being a symbol of thought. It is only the physical act, the deed, that can cause the direct involvement of the sense. Therefore he detested the tyranny of the spoken word for the correct interpretation. "The audience should be involved by their sense not their mind. And contact with the senses of the audience should be achieved through assault." (Rama Rao 1975:155).
Therefore, Artaud called his theatre *The Theatre of Cruelty*, the word cruel meaning "sense of intensity of life", not in the sense of a blood-shedding event. He proclaimed that **there** should be no barrier like proscenium arch, curtain or footlights between the performer and the spectator if the spectators are to participate in a dramatic experience which allows communion between the stage and auditorium" (Ibid.:156).

He attacked the Western theatre for having a psychological and intellectual bias, and preferred the Eastern religious and metaphysical theatre. He urged the Western theatre to return to the ceremonial roots of magic, myth, ritual and dance. He attacked the audience central nervous system and went directly to the subconscious to liberate forces. To create better communion, he used the variety technique like metaphysical in action, incantational language, puppets, dance, improvization, music, magic etc. He also encouraged the audience to feel and to involve itself like in a religious ritual, and to create this effect he evolved certain elements like audience participation, incantations, rhythmic movement, symbolic gestures, exorcism, sensory hieroglyphics, masks, distorted objects etc.

In all his writings, Artaud directly or indirectly supported the pre-dramatic rituals concepts from which he might have taken inspiration for his new theories. His theories attracted several other avant-garde directors, and have been introduced in the second half of the 20th century in Euro-American theatre circles. Directors who explored the actor-audience participation are Okholopkov, Jerzy Grotowski (Poor theatre), Julian and Judith Beck (Living theatre), Allan Kaprow (Happenings), Chaikin (Open theatre), and Peter Brook (Empty theatre). They have obtained successful results. Okholopkov brought action into the very midst of the spectators in such a way that the spectator also reacted along with the actors. In 1935, his presentation made remarkable changes in the theatre realm. "That year Okholopkov was breaking down the proscenium and presenting theatre in round and the rectangle and the hexagonal, as it had never been dreamed of before" (Evans 1989:78). Okholopkov wanted that theatre be "a meeting place where
the actor and spectator must clasp hands in Fraternity” (Rama Rao 1975:159). All the above theatrologists broke down the barrier between the actor and audience and created a shared common experience.

2.12(d). Jerzy Grotowski : Poor Theatre

Polish avant - garde experimentalist and director Jerzy Grotowski, who influenced American and Continental actors, proposed a theory called 'Poor theatre'. In his view, a theatre can exist without make - up, without costume and scenography, without light and sound effects, but it cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship. In the world of high technology, theatre has a different function other than those of television and film. Grotowski worked with his group and experimented in the theatre. In his book he says, "No matter how much theatre expands and exploits its mechanical resources, it will remain technologically inferior to film and television" (1968:19). Because of this inferiority, he turned his theatre movement to other worlds where even television or films cannot enter. The only basic and fundamental notion of Grotowski's work is breaking the conventional traditional physical theatre and its sets, and imitating the intimate theatre with the actor in the centre using his trained body and voice as his tools in the performance. While defining his poor theatre concept, Grotowski summarizes:

The theatre must recognize its own limitations. If it cannot be richer than the cinema, then let it be poor. If it cannot be as lavish as television, let it be ascetic. If it cannot be a technical attraction, let it renounce all outward technique. Thus we are left with a 'holy' actor in a poor theatre (Grotowski 1968: 41).

Grotowski's ideology is more akin to the traditional Asian theatre in terms of physical movement and actors' use of body, mind and voice.
2.13. AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE THEATRE

In the world theatre performance realm, the most advanced experimentation was done by American directors, and even some theories were made by them under the light of actor-audience participation between 1960 and 1970. In his book *Macmilnal Modern Theatre: American Alternative Theatre* (1982), Theodore Shank explained the histories and performance experimentation and theories of American theatre directors:

The social upheaval in the United States during the 1960s and early 1970s not only gave rise to a new cultural movement outside the dominant culture; it also spawned an alternative theatre. Initially, the new theatre was expressive of those who aligned themselves with the various social movements of the time - civil rights, free speech, hippie, anti-nuclear, anti-Vietnam War, ecology, feminists and gays. It was an alternative to the theatre of the dominant complacent middle-class society which tended to perpetuate the status quo in its aesthetics, politics, working methods, and techniques. The alternative theatre companies directed themselves to the new audiences, often a specific constituency such as intellectuals, artists, political radicals, workers, blacks, chicanos, women or gays. They explored the new working methods, new techniques, and new aesthetic principles that would be in harmony with their convictions and would be used to express their new theatrical conceptions (Shank 1982:1).

Alternative theatre in American society and lifestyle made spectators conscious of the real world rather than focusing their attention on fictional illusion, and it tried to continue the experiments in the theatre realm. Alternative theatre performances are intended to perceive real time and place. The most important condition of this theatre is that performers and spectators are physically present in the same time and place. "This is abrogated, however, when the spectators are permitted only to see the illusion of character and not the performer, when they are focused exclusively on fictional time.
and place. If a compelling all-absorbing realistic illusion were to continue as the aesthetic means of live theatre, then live theatre would be doomed to compete unsuccessfully with motion picture" (Ibid 1982:5).

The most radical and advanced concepts taken by the other generation in American theatre are by Allan Kaprow's 'Happenings', and Julian Beck and Judith Malina's 'Living Theatre' and Schechner's 'Environmental Theatre'. Others are, Intermedia Performances, Guerilla Theatre, Workers Theater Movement and Agit-prop Movement. All the above directors and practitioners main ambition was to create or rediscover numerous new techniques and theories. They named it as "alternative theatre" in America. The alternative theatre explores the relationship of the artistic to the works and the performance to the spectator. They attempt to discover the unique possibilities of live theatre, and seek ways of extending the use of theatre beyond its entertainment (Ibid.:1982:6-8).

Alternative theatre need not keep the audience in the focused fictional illusion and create suspense. This can be observed in the traditional proscenium theatre where spectators focused and involved themselves in fictional characters. Therefore, the artists of alternative theatre explored the actor-audience relationship. They attempted to discover the unique possibilities of live theatre and seek paths of expanding the use of theatre beyond its entertainment value. "The tremendous energy of the alternative theatre of the period, in fact, is best appreciated by recognizing the diversity of experiments, in acting styles (especially those begun by Jerzy Grotowski at his Polish Laboratory Theater, and continued and modified in the United States by Blau, Richard Schechner, and Joseph Chaikin), production environments (found space, lofts, art galleries, created "environments" and "assemblages"), dramatic functions (as agit - prop theatre, ritual theatre, live poetry, dance theatre, theatre therapy, and theatre anthropology, to name only a handful), and dramatic style" (Heuvel 1992:29).
2.13(a). Allan Kaprow's "Happenings"

In the 1950s and 1960s, "Happenings" became popular in American culture. First the happenings were initiated by Allan Kaprow, whose 18 Happenings in 6 parts were staged at the Reuben Gallery, New York in Oct 1959. In this production, spectators and performers equally participated in the flow of actions and unexpected events which were either real or fictitious. In these performances, both actors and spectators were given a choice to perform and to involve themselves in the environment where all are equally treated. Commenting on 'Happenings,' Kirby 1965:11) says, "Happenings are a new form of theatre, just as collage is a new form of visual art, and they can be created in various styles just as collages (and plays) are". After some years they slowly diminished in spite of their potential and artistic qualities that could be developed. Later, the movement was led into other directions by Julian Beck, Chaikin and Richard Schechner.

2.13(b). Julian Beck and Judith Molina's "Living Theatre"

Julian Beck and Judith Malina both formed the living theatre in 1951. Their radicalism was aesthetic. They have explored a variety of theatrical techniques, some of them adopted from Happenings and Allegory music. Beck's and Malina's works were intended to jolt the audience into a new awareness to produce unique works. This group explored the techniques of actor-audience relationship to create wealthy environment in theatre realm. Their main productions are Jack Gelber's The Connections (1964), Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1965), Sophocles' Antigone (1967) and Paradise Now (1968). In these productions, they experimented with actor-audience participation with successful results. For Living Theatre, group life is theatre, and they gave more importance to reality rather than to fiction. Therefore, they started doing mysterious productions for exploring actor-audience participation. Commenting on Living Theatre's productions and actor-audience participation, Shank opines:

It contained most of the innovation for which the Living theatre became
known during their years in the Europe-audience confrontation, spectator participation, breaking down the separation between stage and auditorium, collective creation, performance improvisation, performance without text, set or costumes, nudity, focus on real time and place rather than a fictional illusion, and actors devoid of the usual stage mannerisms, voice, and bearing. These innovations were intended to unite the actors and spectators into one community in the here and now; their objective was to effect social change (Shank 1982: 15).

The living theatre group and its productions became a popular model for other American theatrologists and experimental group in the country. Later, Schechner's use of living theatre's actor-audience participation and his use of the spatial concept and performance text have made him construct his own theory and experimentation under the banner of *Environmental Theatre*.

2.13(c). Richard Schechner's "Environmental Theatre"

Reference has been made earlier (see page ) to Schechner's contribution to environmental theatre. In this context, Schechner (196Sb:41-63) formulated the following six axioms:

1. The theatrical event is a set of related transactions.

2. All the space is used for the performance; all the space used for audience.

3. The theatrical event can take place either in a totally transformed space or 'found space'.

4. Focus is flexible and variable.

5. All production elements speak in their own language.

6. The text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of a production. There may be no text at all.
Under his direction, the performance group adopted techniques and concepts drawn from several sources. The living theatre's use of the techniques and the formulation of their concepts pre-dated the performance group; they were not simply borrowed by Schechner but thoroughly explored through practice. The key of his goal is environmental thinking. The basic principle of environmental theatre is to begin with an empty space, without a preconception of actor and audience and their relationship. Environmental theatre prefers to perform at any available space but not arranged to link other conventional theatres. Sometimes, the performance occurs in a large open room, similar to a black box, and audience arena and performance arena are unpredictably intermixed. The audience - environment and the performance-environment interpenetrate so that a single atmosphere pervades all present. Thus, environmental theatre deals with the whole, not merely fragments placed in spaces predetermined by conventions. Schechner aptly writes about environmental theatre spaces: "Literally spheres of spaces, spaces within spaces, spaces which contain, or envelop, or relate, or touch all the areas where the audience is and/or performers to perform. If some spaces are used just for performing, this is not due to a predetermination of convention or architecture but because the particular production being worked on needs of space organized that way. And the theatre itself is part of a larger environment outside the theatre. These larger out-of-the theatre space are the life of the city; and also temporal-historical spaces - Modalities of time/space" (quoted in Evans 1989:79). The aesthetic of alternative theatre underlie the environmental theatre concept. According to scholars like Robe Cohen and John Haroop, the environmental theatre explored the use of space, because space was regarded as totality embracing both actors and audience in one common place. The action takes place around, above, behind, below and among the audience. The purpose of this technique is to create a totally shared experience, where bodily contact was more between the actors and audience members (see chapter V).

The major productions of Environmental Theatre of the Performance group are *Dionysus in 69* (1968-69); *Makbeth* (1969-70); *Commune* (1975-72); *The Tooth of Crime*
(1972-74); *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1975-77); *The Marylin Project* (1975-76); *Odipus Seneca* (1977); *Cops* (1978-79); and *The Balcony* (1979-80). Richard Scheduler and his group extensively explored the training and working methods to utilize the space and scenography, to deal with the problem of audience participation, etc.

### 2.14. PROFILE ON PERFORMANCE THEORY

All the above movements and experimentations in theatre history, one way or another, ideologically explicate the Avant-garde theories. Exploration of avant - garde theatrologists and their theories rightly looks back to the roots of the theatre and its ritualistic behaviors. Modern and postmodern theories and their experimentations are profiled by Evans (1989:1):

...For Stanislavsky it meant the importance of the actor, whereas for Craig the actor was practically dispensable, the emphasis being upon the scenic possibilities of theatre. Meyerhold and Reinhardt stressed the importance of the director; Appia the use of light. Brecht, like his master, Piscator, was concerned to explore the didactic nature of the theatre. Artaud, like Stanislavsky, came to believe that theatre should reflect not the everyday reality of naturalism, but rather those intimations that are beyond the reach of words. Much that was foreseen by the early pioneers has come to be realized in the American modern dance, while the theatre of Alwin Nikolais represents in many ways a synthesis of Artaud’s concept of a non-verbal theatre and Craig’s idea of moving abstract masses. Finally, like Copeau, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba have gone back to the essence of theatre, to the live relationship of actor and audience.
2.15. SCHECHNER'S RESEARCH OUTPUT ON PERFORMANCE THEORIES

Richard Schechner's thorough research from rituals to modern theatre and his investigations are clearly depicted in his book, *Performance Circumstances: From the Avant-garde to Ramilila* (1983). One of its chapters "From Ritual to Theatre and Back", gives the outgrowth of performance theories and changes from beginning of theatre history to the present. His understanding of theatre history made him create performance theory. He correctly pointed out: "It is my belief that theatre history can be given an overall shape as a development along a core which is a braid structure constantly interrelating efficacy and entertainment" (Ibid.:139). His efficacy/entertainment braid model, which is the ideological heart of all aspects of new theatres is given below in (fig 2.1).

The above diagram relates the efficacy and entertainment braid, taking into consideration theatrical history and its development. While commenting on the braid graph, he says: "For Western theatre, at least, I think it can be shown that when the braid is tight - that is, when efficacy and entertainment are both present in nearly equal degrees - theatre flourishes. During these brief historical moments the theatre answers needs that are both ritualistic and pleasure-giving" (Ibid.:139).
The model offered by him clearly shows the simplification and helps in conceptualizing the progression of theatre history. He explains the model as follows:

Fifth century Athenian theatre, Elizabethan theatre, and possibly the theatre of the late nineteenth century and/or of our own times show the kind of convergences I'm talking about. When efficacy dominates, performances are universalistic, allegorical, ritualized, tied to a stable established order; this kind of theatre persists for a relatively long time. When entertainment dominates, performances are class-oriented, individualized, show business, constantly adjusted to suit the tastes of a fickle audience. The two most recent convergences - the rise of entertainment before the Elizabethan period and the rise of efficacy during the modern period - are necessarily opposites of each other. The model that I offer is of course a simplification. I present it as a help in conceptualizing my view of the progression of theatre history, which I think has its own logic and internal force. The late medieval period was dominated by efficacious performances: church services, court ceremonies, moralities, pageants. In the early Renaissance these began to decline and popular entertainments, always present, gained, finally becoming dominant in the form of the public theatres of the Elizabethan period. The private and court theatres developed alongside the public theatres. The private theatres were for the upper classes. Although some professionals worked in both public and private theatre, and some spectators attended both, these entertainments were fundamentally opposed to each other. The conflict between the public and private theatre never worked themselves out because all the theatres were closed in 1642. When theatres reopened at the Restoration the Elizabethan public theatre was gone and all the theatres resembled the private theatres and masques, the property of the upper classes. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this aristocratic theatre developed into the bourgeois theatre, as that class rose to displace the aristocracy. The dominant efficacious
mode of the medieval centuries went underground to re-emerge in the guise of social and political drama during the last third of the nineteenth century. This new naturalistic theatre opposed the commercialism and pomposity of the boulevards and allied itself to scientific theatrical styles and techniques. The avant garde identified itself both with Bohemianism - the outcasts of bourgeois society and science, the source of power. Avant garde artists used terms like 'experimental' and 'research' to characterize their work, which took place in 'laboratories'," (Ibid.:139-40).

The above lengthy investigation into historical development from Greek theatre to Avant-garde performances and their efficacy and entertainment led to create performance theories during the postmodern age. But evidence of transformational steps by which theatre emerges from ritual - by which an efficacious event in which the participants depend on the performance is transformed into an entertainment in which the entertainer depend on an audience - is not locked in ancient or medieval documents (Ibid.: 142). The move from ritual to theatre happens when a participating audience fragments into a collection of people and moves from theatre to ritual. The tendencies can be found in all performances. Even Brect and Meyerhold worked it and kept the tension between these extremes working throughout each performance by moving an audience back and forth moment to moment. "So wherever we look, and no matter how far back, theatre is a mixture, a braid of entertainment and ritual. At one moment ritual seems to be the source, at another it is entertainment that claims primacy" (Ibid.: 158).

2.16. CONCLUDING NOTES

Most of the post-war avant-garde theatrologists attempted to overcome fragmentation by approaching performances as a part of community. This community-related avant-garde is not only a phenomenon of the industrialized West, but also countries that are industrializing or undergoing great changes in social organization. Being a radical thinker, Schechner has gone beyond the theatre and propounded his performance
theories and environmental theatre concept to overcome participatory community in this society. To him, "...the orthodox dramaturgy - the theatre of plays done in fixed setting for a settled audience relating stories as if they were happening to others - is finished. At least this kind of theatre doesn't meet the needs of many people - needs as old as theatre itself, combining ritual and entertainment" (Ibid.:158).

Theatre is a middle world where real interaction and participation can happen. It is not only through physical audience participation but also psychological and subtler means of audience inclusion and environmental staging. Therefore, theatre combines artistic composed behavior along with everyday spontaneous behavior. The coming chapters explicate the Ethnography of Bhagavatha performance and important axioms of performance theory.