

CHAPTER-1

INDIAN DRAMA: AN INTRODUCTION

“Drama raises more questions than it answers how life really is.”

-Aristotle, Poetics

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Through the centuries, the image and the role of the drama in educating the society has been observed and studied in various ways, and the acquired knowledge has been recorded in literature, works of art, religious texts, mythology and codes of social behavior. As N. Velamani says in the preface to her book *Drama in Indian Writing in English- Tradition and Modernity*:

Drama has proved to be a creative and effective instrument of protest and social change all over the world. In India too, drama has been effectively used during the Freedom Struggle to reach out to the masses..... After independence, drama focuses on many issues that confront us as a nation.¹ (4).

People have always felt that there is a need to have an understanding of the code and conduct of their living in the society within its rational system. In this process they depend on various forms of Literature. Drama is one such meaningful form that has been worshipped and has been perceived as a powerful tool for social change.

Culture is an offshoot of a society which in turn affects and reframes the mother society. It is developed out of various influences and out of fantastic ideas of the people that include, besides others, myths, legends, folklore and, sometimes, its history. These are the fictional narratives which many believe to be based on fact. They are actually product of the people’s fantasy, their religious beliefs and social gossips. Mostly, these tales are considered as unscientific, superstitious and ritualistic by the modern scientific world. However, they are

deeply rooted in culture and can be interpreted in relation to the social predicaments of the corresponding time. Majority of the Indian English Playwrights have deftly used these cultural tales as their themes to bring to light the individual and social concerns of their countrymen in contemporary times. That way, such tales of the people acted as a mirror of their society for the playwrights. Through this mirror, they have reflected the individual and social problems of the common man and suggested solutions. *Social Concern in the select plays of Vizai Bhaskar: a Study* presents the reformist attitude as inculcated by the Playwright through his plays.

1.1 AIM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is an attempt to analyze the social concerns in the select plays of Vizai Bhaskar of the post-Independence period of Indian English drama. Such a study necessitates a brief survey of the pre-Independence Indian English drama to bring out the contrast in the depiction of element of social concern in the plays. In keeping with the various notions prevalent in Modern World, the plays of Vizai Bhaskar reflect the social concern that glorify the sacrificing, giving, submissive and suffering of down-trodden in the society.

This study aims at exploring and identifying the social concerns in the select translated plays of Vizai Bhaskar. It also endeavours to throw light on the playwright's conviction that human beings can survive only when there is social equality and political justice is being practiced impartially.

The plays taken for the analysis are: 1. *Ruthwik* (1989), 2. *Kaalakootam* (1997), 3. *Return of Gandhi* (1998), 4. *Riding the Tiger* (1994) and 5. *The Chair* (1994)

1.2 HYPOTHESIS

A careful study of the select plays of Vizai Bhaskar reveals certain sociological aspects with reference to existence of dharma, social equality, emancipation and political justice. This analysis confirms his concern for society and the care for the human beings. It also brings to light that the select plays explicate the intrinsic value of society and the humans' bond to it, liberation of downtrodden from oppression and the preservation of human rights from upper class and capitalists' greed. Further, it records the playwright's desire to witness a world that respects society and is free from all kinds of oppression. Therefore, it is hypothesized that a study of the select plays of Vizai Bhaskar will establish his faith in the social concerns and his attempt to create social-consciousness among people.

1.3 ROLE OF DRAMA IN MODERN WORLD

The World that is referred as 'Modern World' is nothing but the outcome of complex situation mostly dominated by political controls and economic gains which lead to be 'insignificance' of Man in his completeness. A good writer in which ever language he writes feels of a compulsion to define the totality of man in changing situations and resurrecting him against all odds whichever genre he takes up whether poetry, short-story, novel or drama, his main endeavour center around that theme.

Out of all creative genres the responsibility of the drama is higher since it is directly answerable to the people as it is presented amidst the people. It has emerged as a powerful agent of social change and become part of social revolution. John McGrath, founder of the Scottish popular theatre company, argues that.....

The theatre can never cause a social change. It can articulate pressure towards one, help people celebrate their strengths and maybe build their self-

confidence... Above all, it can be the way people find their voice, their solidarity and their collective determination.² (3)

In the modern world the political system is the controlling factor of all institutions. Whichever part of the Globe they live, whatever language they choose for their expression, the writers all over the world have been seriously thinking for redefining the sensibility of the man and state towards each other and make the world more acceptable for better living. As part of such efforts, political theatre has taken its existence in multiple shapes. In Indian context during the modern period which witnessed the impact of two World Wars and the great struggle for Indian independence and slowly started appearing on stage of 1930s and nourished mostly communist movements which founded National theatre, People's Theatre etc.,

During the period all the theatrical activity grouped under progressive movement which seriously concentrated on class struggle as part of communist ideology but in India class structure is not prevalent as it appears in western countries or in the upper parts of Asia. Exploitation in the name of caste is found in modern democratic system of India. This has assumed a major thematic proportion for modern writing. Only a few writers have chosen to delineate its different shades in the form of drama. Vizai Bhaskar is one of the few prominent writers who has been working on this theme. He transplants the traditional rural based caste structure in the modern democratic process and powerfully voicing its exploitation and exploring all the possibilities to strengthen the down trodden to get their rightful share in ruling as in Stephen B.Oates, *Let The Trumpet Sound* Martin Luther King sincerely cried out that.....

A society that has done something special against the Negro for hundreds of years must now do something special for them.³ (20)

Vizai Bhaskar basically writes in Telugu which is one of the major languages that constitutes the Indian cultural fabric. His plays are well received in many other Indian languages like Kannada, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil and Manipuri. Today's Indian writing in English has two major components 1. Straight writing in English 2. Writing in regional language and then translated into English which is known as 'Diglossia'. The real Indian ethos is reflected by the second group of writers. The first group is more western oriented and they ground on the western complexes in Indian living rooms. They look at Indian realities through western bifocal vision whereas the second group goes the bottom of Indian life at the rural level and comes out powerfully with full life size representation of several shades of a living problem.

The present research is a sincere attempt to understand such complex Indian situation through Vizai Bhaskar's plays which contains agitating ideas, upsurging concepts social, political and philosophical proposition revealed one by one as we read his works. He is found to be fully dedicated to theatre for presenting inequalities in the society not just as they appear to naked eye. It tries to unearth the reasons hidden in the history. The quest for equality and social and political justice is the goal and basic spirit of his dramatic art. He creates the milieu of his drama so effectively to reach his goal of achieving respect honour rightful share in power position and property for the weaker sections without damaging the traditional frame work of Indian culture. For this purpose he uses myth as an instrument and poses the problem before the audience and makes them think about it.

Since the ages, theatre has been serving the purpose of an artistic expression of human kind. Theatre is the most common performing art form, which can be found in every culture. No society that did not have a theatre of its own in some or the other form has ever existed. Theatre is a showcase, a forum, a medium through which ideas, fashions, moralities and

entertainment of the people in a society are displayed and at the same time its conflicts, dilemmas and struggles are negotiated. It is a dais for depicting political revolutions, social propaganda, civil debates, religious rituals, mass education and even for its own self-criticism.

After the Second World War, theatre has been appropriated for the expression of political ideology and hence shifted its emphasis from elite entertainment to common folk for upholding social issues. The theatrical works of post world war depict the agony and grief in the society and viewed the ordinary people that were being affected by warfare. On the other hand, the Marxist philosophy has shown a wide impact on theatre personalities - the playwrights, directors, actors etc. The bodies like Communist party, trade unions, student community and many other sections of society began to communicate their views through the medium of theatre. As a result, cultural organizations like Indian Peoples Theatre-Association (IPTA), Red Theatre of China, Guerrilla Theatre of Green peace from Belgium, Berliner Ensemble of Germany and many more emerged throughout the world. Theatre movements like Invisible Theatre, Modern Street Theatre, Guerrilla Theatre, Black Theatre, Community Theatre and Feminist Theatres were greatly influenced by Marxist ideology. All these movements tried to address the working class against all sorts of exploitation. In this process, all of them have opposed the practice of proscenium theatre — the area of a modern theater that is located between the curtain and the orchestra—and looked for an alternative space. As a result, new aesthetics were established in place of aesthetics of proscenium.

Hence, a search for more alternate platforms, alternative aesthetics, and alternative performance genres were started. The hard-pressed life of the working classes and the exploiting nature of ruling classes became the themes for the modern theatrical performances. Theatre of the third world countries started opposing all the European theatrical models and

started using their own artistic symbols, language, space and genres which mostly prevailed in their cultures. Hence many folk performing art form were adopted for the modern theatre. Theatre practitioners started identifying their own cultural roots and use them for a social change.

Now, in this thesis, an attempt is made to focus on how dramas help developing social consciousness. It also tries to look at how plays of Vizai Bhaskar give us a direct presentation of life experiences.

1.4 ORIGIN OF THEATRE

The information about the origin of theatre comes from wall paintings, decorations, artifacts, and hieroglyphics that show the importance of successful hunts, seasonal changes, life cycles, and stories of the gods. From these we see the necessity of passing along the experiences of the old to the young through art, storytelling, and dramatizing events. This practice gives the youth of a culture, a guide and a plan for their own lives.

Theatre emerged from myth, ritual, and ceremony. Early societies perceived connections between certain actions performed by the group or leaders in the group and the desired results of the whole society. These actions moved from habit, to tradition, and then on to ceremony and ritual. The formulation of these actions, and the consequent repetition and rehearsal, broke the ground for theatre. According to the mythologist Joseph Campbell: Rituals are related to three basic concerns: pleasure, power, and duty.⁴ (2002)

Power- influencing and controlling events were often the intention of rituals such as ceremonies to guarantee a successful crop or to please the gods. Usually societies had rituals that glorified supernatural powers, victories, and heroes. Often supernatural forms would be represented using costumes and masks. Rituals that were practiced as duty to the gods also brought entertainment and pleasure.

These rituals are accompanied by myths. The myths enter the storytelling tradition, gaining a life beyond the original rites. This new life allows the myths to move towards entertainment and the esthetic. These stories now are performed for their own sake and move towards theatre. Through these rituals, leaders, or actors emerged. These acting/leadership roles were often filled by elders and priests. In addition, the beginnings of acting spaces or auditoriums developed as a result of more elaborate rituals. According to the historians Oscar, Brockett and Franklin Hildy....

Rituals typically include elements that entertain or give pleasure, such as costumes and masks as well as skilled performers. As societies grew more complex, these spectacular elements began to be acted out under non-ritualistic conditions. As this occurred, the first steps towards theatre as autonomous activities were being taken⁵ (2003)

1.5 THEATRE AND DRAMA IN WEST

1.5.1 GREEK THEATRE

The Greeks' history began around 700 B.C. with festivals honouring their gods. One god, Dionysus, was honoured with an unusual festival called the *City Dionysia*. The revelry-filled festival was led by drunken men dressed up in rough goat skins because goats were thought sexually potent, who would sing and play in choruses to welcome Dionysus. Tribes competed against each other in performances, and the best show would have the honour of winning the contest. Of the four festivals in Athens, each reflecting seasonal changes, plays were only presented at one festival-City *Dionysia* as Pelling says.....

Participation in the city-state's many festivals—and attendance at the City Dionysia as an audience member or even as a participant in the theatrical productions in particular—was an important part of citizenship.⁶ (83)

At the early Greek festivals, the actors, directors, and dramatists were all the same person. Later, only three actors could be used in each play. After some time, non-speaking roles were allowed to perform on-stage. Because of the limited number of actors allowed on-stage, the chorus evolved into a very active part of Greek theatre. Though the number of people in the chorus is not clear, the chorus was given as many as one-half of the total lines of the play. Music was often played during the chorus' delivery of its lines.

Although few tragedies written from this time actually remain, the themes and accomplishments of Greek tragedy still resonate to contemporary audiences. The term tragedy — *tragos* and *ode* — literally means goat song that sung by the participants' after the festival, dancing around sacrificial goats for prizes. Most Greek tragedies are based on mythology or history and deal with characters' search for the meaning of life and the nature of the gods. Most tragedies that have survived from this period begin with a prologue that gives the audience exposition to the following action. The chorus then introduces a period called the *parados*. During this time introductions to characters are made, exposition is given, and a mood is established. The final scene is called the *exodus* when all the characters as well as the chorus depart.

Three well-known Greek tragedy playwrights of the fifth century are Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripedes. Aeschylus, who was a competitor at the *City Dionysia* around 499 B.C., wrote some of the oldest tragedies in the world. Only a few of Aeschylus' plays have survived but they include *The Persians* and the *Oresteia trilogy*. Aeschylus is attributed with the introducing the second actor to the stage. Another Greek playwright was Sophocles, and only seven of his tragedies--including the still-popular *Antigone*, *Electra*, and *Oedipus Rex*--have survived. Sophocles won twenty-four contests for his plays, never placing lower than second place. His contributions to theatre history are many: He introduced the third actor to

the stage, fixed the number of chorus members to fifteen, and was the first to use scene painting.

Euripides was another prolific playwright who is believed to have written 90 plays, 18 of which have survived, including *Medea*, *Hercules* and *the Trojan Women*. He was often criticized for the way he questioned traditional values on stage. Euripides also explored the psychological motivations of his characters actions which had not been explored by other authors. His plays were used as pattern for other authors for many years after his death.

Comedy was also an important part of ancient Greek theatre. Aristotle defined comedy as.....

A representation of laughable people that involves some kind of error or ugliness that does not cause pain or destruction.⁷ (1987)

No one is quite sure of the origins of comedy, but it is said that they derived from imitation. All comedies of note during this time are by Aristophanes. Aristophanes, who competed in the major Athenian festivals, wrote forty plays, eleven of which survived--including the most controversial piece of literature to come from ancient Greece, *Lysistrata*, a humorous tale about a strong woman who leads a female coalition to end war in Greece. Although only thirty three tragedies and eleven comedies remain from such a creative period, the Greeks were responsible for the birth of drama in the Western world.

1.5.2 ROMAN AND BYZANTINE THEATRE

Roman theatre derived from religious festivals The Romans' carnival-like festivals included acting, flute playing, dancing, and prizefighting. Almost all festivals used music, dance, and masks in their ceremonies. The first Roman performance occurred in Rome around 364 B.C. The Roman historian Livy wrote that

The Romans first experienced theatre in the 4th century BCE, with a performance by Etruscan actors.⁸ (1996)

The Romans have been known for using other cultures and practices and improving on them, and the same can be said of their approach to the theatre. Romans borrowed Greek and Etruscan methods in their own theatre, but made them distinctly Roman by improving and modifying those methods.

In contrast to ancient Greece, comedy was more popular in Rome than tragedy. Titus Maccius Plautus was an extremely popular Roman comedy writer who is attributed with 130 plays. Publius Terentius Afer was another Roman comedy writer who wrote six plays, all of which have survived. Terence wasn't as popular as Plautus but his critics consider his writing deeper and more developed. Only three names of Roman playwrights of tragedy are known from the early times: Quintus Ennius, Marcus Pacuvius, and Lucius Accius. The later Roman period had a few surviving plays by Lucius Annareus Seneca who wrote *The Trojan Women*, *Medea*, *Oedipus*, *Phaedra* and *Hercules on Oeta* among others. Later Seneca's popularity declined, and he committed suicide in 65 A.D.

The theatre was certainly not the only form of entertainment in Rome. Roman theatrical entertainment included the popular chariot racing, horse racing, foot races, wrestling, fights between wild animals called venations, and fights between men, or gladiators. Chariot races were held in the Circus Maximus which could accommodate 60,000 people. It also housed wrestling, fighting, and wild animals like lions. The Romans also had *naumachia* or sea battles in which lakes were dug or amphitheatres like the Colosseum were flooded for the occasion.

1.5.3 EUROPEAN THEATRE AND DRAMA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

After the fall of the Roman Empire, small nomadic bands traveled around performing wherever there was an audience. They consisted of storytellers, jesters, jugglers and many other performers. Later, festivals cropped up where entertainers would show their talents.

However, the powerful Catholic Church made headway during the middle Ages to stamp out such performances and convert the entertainers.

Despite its insistence that acting and traveling performances were sinful; the Church was actually instrumental in reviving theatre in the middle ages. In one type of church service, called *The Hours*, Bible stories were dramatized. Music often would be incorporated into the dramatizations. The very first written-down liturgical drama or play is known as the *Regularis Concordia* by Ethel old, Bishop of Winchester. The majority of performances were held in monasteries at the beginning of the age. Brockett describing these performances as.....

Symbolic objects and actions – vestments, altars, censers, and pantomime performed by priests – recalled the events which Christian ritual celebrates. These were extensive sets of visual signs that could be used to communicate with a largely illiterate audience. These performances developed into liturgical dramas.⁹ (77)

In the staging of liturgical drama there were many conventions used in the church. Small scenic structures called mansions were used to illustrate the surroundings of a play. Small plays had only one mansion, longer plays had two or more. Costumes for liturgical drama were church clothing to which real or symbolic accessories were added. Most of the lines of the drama were chanted in Latin rather than spoken.

It was late in Middle Ages when religious plays were given outside the churches. This seemingly small step opened the door for many other more significant changes in medieval drama. With the formation of guilds, the growth of towns, and a decline in feudalism, theatre had great opportunities to flower. Between the years 1200 to 1350 vernacular plays took over the number one spot previously taken by liturgical plays.

Many plays were performed outdoors during the spring and summer months. Cycle plays also became popular. The cycle plays were composed of many short plays or episodes

and could or could not be religious. Cycle plays could take a few hours or 25 or more days to perform. The cycle plays varied but usually all dealt with religious figures, biblical writings of the church and sermons of the church. The plays had little sense of chronology, and most of their authors were anonymous.

The morality play was a special play much like the cycle plays which centered on men's continuous struggle between good and evil. One of the most influential morality plays was *Romance of the Rose*. This play had characters such as Slander, Danger, and Fair Welcome. In these dramas Justice was personified as an entity which exercised in the following as.....

Theological virtue or grace, and was concerned with the divine pronouncement of judgment on man.¹⁰ (406)

1.5.4 ITALIAN THEATRE AND DRAMA

Around 1485, Italian rulers began to finance productions of Roman plays and imitations of them. This prompted interest in rewriting Roman plays into Italian as well as the writing of new plays. One of the first important vernacular tragedies was *Sofonisha* by Giangiorgio Trissino. A chorus of 15 was used, in keeping with the number in the Roman choruses. Between the 14th and 16th centuries Renaissance drama was developed in Italy, marking an end to medieval practices and a release of traditional Roman ways of presenting drama.

The neoclassical ideal was formed in Italy and spread throughout Europe. This ideal was characterized by an interest in literary theory and a desire to read and understand theoretical works such as Horace's *Art of Poetry* and Aristotle's *Poetics*. The neoclassical ideal demanded verisimilitude which dealt with the strong appearance of truth. Because of verisimilitude, fantasy and supernatural elements were avoided in neoclassical plays. The

chorus and soliloquies were also discouraged. Reality was stressed in drama along with plays that teach moral lessons.

In Italy staging was made popular by using perspective architecture and painting. These methods gave audience members the illusion of distance and depth. Scenery and stages were raked or angled to increase the illusion and create a perspective setting. Italians also came up with new methods of shifting scenery using wings and painted canvas coverings. The chariot and pole system of shifting scenery was created by Giacomo Torelli in 1641, and it was so popular it was used in other theatres throughout Europe.

Commedia dell'arte was comedy of professional players. This was separate from amateur drama because of the high level of performances. Every aspect of the drama was top of the line from the scripts to the costumes. Two aspects of Commedia dell'arte were improvisation and stock characters. Some of the reason improvisation was so well done was because actors would play the same characters their whole lives. The strong reputations of the companies brought in huge audiences.

1.5.5 ENGLISH THEATRE IN MIDDLE AGES

During the 1580's a group of men formed a group called "The University Wits." These were men who were interested in writing for the public stage. The "wits" included Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, and Robert Greene.

Thomas Kyd wrote *The Spanish Tragedy*, the most popular play of the 16th century. He constructed a well-planned plot that made for a very interesting play. The Cambridge-educated Christopher Marlowe was important in the development of chronicle plays such as *Edward II*. He also wrote the well-known play *Doctor Faustus*. John Lyly was another member of the University Wits who wrote primarily pastoral comedies in which he used mythology along with English subjects. *Campaspe*, *Endimion*, and *Love's Metamorphosis* are just a few examples of Lyly's work. Yet another University Wit, Robert Greene, wrote

pastoral and romantic comedies. Greene took many different aspects and pieces and combined them into a single play. Two of his adventurous works are *Friar Bacon & Friar Bungay* and *James IV*. G. K. Hunter argues that

The new humanistic education of the age allowed them to create a complex commercial drama, drawing on the nationalization of religious sentiment in such a way that it spoke to an audience caught in the contradictions and liberations history had imposed.¹¹ (24)

The greatest dramatist of all time William Shakespeare was involved in all aspects of theatre, more than any other writer of his day. Shakespeare is said to have written 38 plays-- histories, tragedies, and comedies— including *Comedy of Errors*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Richard II*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Macbeth*. No writer has been more effective and powerful with the use of the language as Shakespeare does. Emotions, pride, attitudes are all incorporated into Shakespeare's dramatic situation. He was effective and at the same time sensitive to needs of his audience and actors. Although well-known during his life, Shakespeare's popularity didn't flower until after his death. Mark Dominick appreciates.....

Shakespeare was not revered in his lifetime, but he received a large amount of praise.¹² (1988)

Ben Jonson was also a popular playwright in England. Some scholars consider him the finest Elizabethan playwright. In an effort to combat the dramatic excesses of his English contemporaries, Jonson addressed classical principles and sought to bring back the practices of the ancients in his own plays. According to *Hypercritica*

Jonson's classicism is native; it is not an extraneous foreign element, but rather blends easily with the English tradition, of which it is a logical evolution.¹³ (2013)

The most successful two of Jonson's twenty eight plays are *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*. He was awarded the title of England's poet laureate in 1616.

After 1610, changes started to occur in English drama. There was an increase in technical skill, playwrights handled exposition better, they began to compress action to fewer episodes, and they built startling climaxes to surprise audiences. With these changes came a new breed of playwrights who created a drama more focused on thrilling and exciting subject matter than complex characterization or tragic emotion.

John Fletcher was one of these new playwrights who became very successful writing jointly with Francis Beaumont. Together they wrote about fifty plays including *The Maid's Tragedy*, *Philasta*, and *A King and No King*. Fletcher also wrote plays on his own after Beaumont retired. *A Wife for a Month* and *The Scornful Lady* are two of his most famous solo works. Interestingly enough, during the Restoration, Fletcher's plays were performed more frequently than Shakespeare's or Jonson's.

Thomas Middleton, Philip Massinger, John Webster, John Ford, and James Shirley were also strong dramatists who helped shape and encourage theatre during this time. With Massinger's *A Way to Pay Old Debts*, Webster's *The White Devil*, Ford's *The Broken Heart* and Shirley's *The Cardinal*, these men became well-known playwrights who made a great impression on the world of theatre.

1.5.6 THE SPANISH THEATRE

During the 16th & 17th centuries the Spanish theatre flourished with religion as its primary source. During the 16th century, Spain held a religious festival three times annually called the *Corpus Christie* festival which emphasized the power of the Church. At the festival, they performed plays called *autos sacramental*. The *autos sacramental* had some of

the aspects of morality plays as well as some aspects of cycle plays, and they featured human as well as supernatural characters.

During its Golden Age, roughly from 1590 to 1681, Spain saw a monumental increase in the production of live theatre as well as the importance of theatre within Spanish society.¹⁴ (JSTOR)

By 1500 secular dramas had begun to emerge. One of the most important early works was *The Comedy of Calisto and Melibea* which first consisted of sixteen acts, and later was increased to twenty-one acts. Although written by many men, the work is attributed to Fernando de Rojas. A man who is often referred to as the founder of Spanish drama is Juan Del Encina. His first works were religious, but later he also wrote secular plays. The most noted of these is *The Eclogue of Placida and Victoriano*.

Professional theatre in Spain began around 1550 led by Lope de Rueda, who was an actor and author. He was first noticed in religious plays, but later he wrote plays for popular audiences. A few of his works include *The Frauds, Medore, Aumelina, and Eufemia*. Rueda normally played fools or simpletons, but his characters were fully developed of the time. He is considered the father of the Spanish professional theatre and also was the most successful performer of his day.

In Spain, Comedia was the word used to describe any full-length play, whether it was serious or comic. Most Comedias were divided into three acts and began with a loa, or prologue. Public theatres in Spain were known as Corrales. The first Corrales was built in Madrid and was called the *Corral de la Cruz*. A few public theatres were also built in these cities. Performances began at 2:00 p.m. in the fall and 4:00 p.m. in spring and were required to end at least one hour before nightfall.

1.5.7 RENAISSANCE THEATRE

Renaissance theatre derived from several medieval theatre traditions, such as the mystery plays that formed a part of religious festivals in England and other parts of Europe during the Middle Ages. Other sources include the "morality plays" and the "University drama" that attempted to recreate Athenian tragedy. The Italian tradition of *Commedia dell'arte*, as well as the elaborate masques frequently presented at court, also contributed to the shaping of public theatre.

Since before the reign of Elizabeth I, companies of players were attached to households of leading aristocrats and performed seasonally in various locations. These became the foundation for the professional players that performed on the Elizabethan stage. The tours of these players gradually replaced the performances of the mystery and morality plays by local players, and a 1572 law eliminated the remaining companies lacking formal patronage by labeling them vagabonds.

The City of London authorities were generally hostile to public performances, but its hostility was overmatched by the Queen's taste for plays and the Privy Council's support. Theatres sprang up in suburbs, especially in the liberty of Southwark, accessible across the Thames to city dwellers but beyond the authority's control. The companies maintained the pretence that their public performances were mere rehearsals for the frequent performances before the Queen, but while the latter did grant prestige, the former were the real source of the income for the professional players.

Along with the economics of the profession, the character of the drama changed towards the end of the period. Under Elizabeth, the drama was a unified expression as far as social class was concerned: the Court watched the same plays the commoners saw in the public playhouses. With the development of the private theatres, drama became more

oriented towards the tastes and values of an upper-class audience. Gurr Andrew opines in his book *The Shakespearean Stage....*

By the later part of the reign of Charles I, few new plays were being written for the public theatres, which sustained themselves on the accumulated works of the previous decades.¹⁵ (12–18).

Puritan opposition to the stage argued not only that the stage in general was pagan, but that any play that represented a religious figure was inherently idolatry. In 1642, at the outbreak of the English Civil War, the Protestant authorities banned the performance of all plays within the city limits of London. A sweeping assault against the alleged immoralities of the theatre crushed whatever remained in England of the dramatic tradition.

1.5.8 RESTORATION COMEDY AND RESTORATION SPECTACULAR

English comedies written and performed in the Restoration period from 1660 to 1710 are collectively called "Restoration comedy". After public stage performances had been banned for 18 years by the Puritan regime, the re-opening of the theatres in 1660 signaled a renaissance of English drama. Restoration comedy is notorious for its sexual explicitness, a quality encouraged by Charles II (1660–1685) personally and by the rakish aristocratic ethos of his court. The socially diverse audiences included aristocrats, their servants and hangers-on, and a substantial middle-class segment. These playgoers were attracted to the comedies by up-to-the-minute topical writing, by crowded and bustling plots, by the introduction of the first professional actresses, and by the rise of the first celebrity actors. This period saw the first professional woman playwright, Aphra Behn.

The Restoration spectacular, or elaborately staged "machine play", hit the London public stage in the late 17th-century Restoration period, entralling audiences with action, music, dance, moveable scenery, baroque illusionistic painting, gorgeous costumes, and special effects such as trapdoor tricks, "flying" actors, and fireworks. These

shows have always had a bad reputation as a vulgar and commercial threat to the witty, "legitimate" Restoration drama; however, they drew Londoners in unprecedented numbers and left them dazzled and delighted.

Basically home-grown and with roots in the early 17th-century court masque, though never ashamed of borrowing ideas and stage technology from French opera, the spectaculars are sometimes called "English opera". However, Hume opines.....

The variety of them is so untidy that most theatre historians despair of defining them as a genre at all.¹⁶ (205)

Only a handful of works of this period are usually accorded the term "opera", as the musical dimension of most of them is subordinate to the visual. The expense of mounting ever more elaborate scenic productions drove the competing theatre companies into a dangerous spiral of huge expenditure and correspondingly huge losses or profits.

1.5.9 NEOCLASSICAL THEATRE

Neoclassicism was the dominant form of theatre in 18th century. It demanded decorum and rigorous adherence to the classical unities. Neoclassical theatre as well as the time period is characterized by its grandiosity. The costumes and scenery were intricate and elaborate. The acting is characterized by large gestures and melodrama. Neoclassical theatre encompasses the Restoration, Augustan, and Johnstinian Ages. In one sense, the neo-classical age directly follows the time of the Renaissance. This Theatre encouraged politically satirical comedies.

1.5.10 NINETEENTH-CENTURY THEATRE

Theatre in the 19th century is divided into two parts: early and late. The early period was dominated by melodrama and Romanticism. Beginning in France, melodrama became the most popular theatrical form. August von Kotzebue's *Misanthropy and Repentance* (1789) is often considered the first melodramatic play. In Germany, there was a

trend toward historic accuracy in costumes and settings, a revolution in theatre architecture, and the introduction of the theatrical form of German Romanticism. Influenced by trends in 19th-century philosophy and the visual arts, German writers were increasingly fascinated with their Teutonic past and had a growing sense of nationalism. The plays of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, and other *Sturm und Drang* playwrights, inspired a growing faith in feeling and instinct as guides to moral behavior.

In Britain, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron were the most important dramatists of their time. In the minor theatres, burletta and melodrama were the most popular. Kotzebue's plays were translated into English and Thomas Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery* was the first of many English melodramas. Egan, Douglas William Jerrold, Edward Fitzball, and John Baldwin Buckstone initiated a trend towards more contemporary and rural stories in preference to the usual historical or fantastical melodramas. Brockett and Hildy mention that....

James Sheridan Knowles and Edward George Bulwer-Lytton established a "gentlemanly" drama that began to re-establish the former prestige of the theatre with the aristocracy.¹⁷ (297–298)

The later period of the 19th century saw the rise of two conflicting types of drama: realism and non-realism, such as Symbolism and precursors of Expressionism. Brockett and Hildy also say.....

Realism began earlier in the 19th century in Russia than elsewhere in Europe and took a more uncompromising form¹⁸ (370)

Ivan Turgenev used domestic detail to reveal inner turmoil, Alexander Ostrovsky was Russia's first professional playwright, Aleksey Pisemsky's *A Bitter Fate* (1859)

anticipated Naturalism, and Leo Tolstoy's *The Power of Darkness* (1886) is one of the most effective of naturalistic plays. Beginning with these plays, Brockett and Hildy opine.....

A tradition of psychological realism in Russia culminated with the establishment of the Moscow Art Theatre by Konstantin Stanislavski and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko.¹⁹ (370-372)

The most important theatrical force in later 19th-century Germany was that of George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen and his Meiningen Ensemble, under the direction of Ludwig Chronegk. The Ensemble's productions are often considered the most historically accurate of the 19th century, although his primary goal was to serve the interests of the playwright. The Meiningen Ensemble stands at the beginning of the new movement toward unified production and the rise of the director as the dominant artist in theatre-making. Naturalism, a theatrical movement born out of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) and contemporary political and economic conditions, found its main proponent in Émile Zola.

In Britain, after 1860, melodramas, light comedies, operas, Shakespeare and classic English drama, Victorian burlesque, pantomimes, translations of French farces, French operettas, continued to be popular. The comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan were so successful; they greatly expanded the audience for musical theatre. This, together with much improved street lighting and transportation in London and New York led to a late Victorian and Edwardian theatre building boom in the West End and on Broadway. Later, the works of Henrik Ibsen helped the drama for its significant development.

Ibsen works evoke a sense of mysterious forces at work in human destiny, which was may be a major theme of symbolism and the so-called "Theatre of the Absurd". After Ibsen, British theatre experienced revitalization with the work of George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, John Galsworthy, William Butler Yeats, and Harley Granville Barker. Unlike most of

the gloomy and intensely serious work of their contemporaries, Shaw and Wilde wrote primarily in the comic form.

1.5.11 TWENTIETH-CENTURY THEATRE

20th-century theatre continued and extended the projects of realism and Naturalism. There was also a great deal of experimental theatre that rejected conventions. These experiments form aesthetic orientated work. Examples include: Epic theatre, the Theatre of Cruelty, and the so-called "Theatre of the Absurd". Theatre practice describes the collective work that various theatre practitioners do. A theatre practitioner may be a director, a dramatist, an actor, or characteristically often a combination of these traditionally separate roles. Milling notes that.....

The term theatre practitioner came to be used to describe someone who both creates theatrical performances and who produce a theoretical discourse that informs their practical work.²⁰ (2001)

A number of aesthetic movements continued or emerged in the 20th century, including: Naturalism, Realism, Dadaism, Expressionism, Surrealism and the Theatre of Cruelty, Theatre of the Absurd, Postmodernism. After the great popularity of the British Edwardian musical comedies, the American musical theatre came to dominate the musical stage, beginning with the Princess Theatre musicals, followed by the works of the Gershwin brothers, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Rodgers and Hart, and later Rodgers and Hammerstein.

1.5.12 THE ABBEY THEATRE

The abbey Theatre also known as the National Theatre of Ireland in Dublin, Republic of Ireland, first opened its doors to the public on 27 December 1904. Despite losing its original building to a fire in 1951, it has remained active to the present day. The Abbey was

the first state-subsidized theatre in the English-speaking world; from 1925 onwards it received an annual subsidy from the Irish Free State. In its early years, the theatre was closely associated with the writers of the Irish Literary Revival, many of whom were involved in its founding and most of whom had plays staged there. The Abbey served as a nursery for many of the leading Irish playwrights and actors of the 20th century, including William Butler Yeats, Augusta, Lady Gregory, Sean O'Casey and John Millington Synge. In addition, through its extensive programme of touring abroad and its high visibility to foreign, particularly American, audiences, it has become an important part of the Irish tourist industry.

1.5.13 EPIC THEATRE

Epic theatre was a theatrical movement arising from the theories and practice of a number of theatre practitioners, including Erwin Piscator, Vladimir Mayakovski, Vsevolod Meyerhold and, most famously, Bertolt Brecht in the early to mid-20th century. Brecht unified many of the concepts and practices, developed the style, and popularized it. Epic theatre incorporates a mode of acting that utilizes what he calls *gestus*. The epic form describes both a type of written drama and a methodological approach to the production of plays. According to Brecht.....

Its qualities of clear description and reporting and its use of choruses and projections as a means of commentary earned it the name 'epic'.²¹ (121)

Epic theatre was a reaction against popular forms of theatre, particularly the naturalistic approach pioneered by Constantine Stanislavski. Like Stanislavski, Brecht disliked the shallow spectacle, manipulative plots, and heightened emotion of melodrama; but where Stanislavski attempted to engender real human behavior in acting through the techniques of Stanislavski's system and to absorb the audience completely in the fictional

world of the play, Brecht saw Stanislavski's methodology as producing escapism. Brecht's own social and political focus departed also from surrealism and the Theatre of Cruelty.

1.6 AFRICAN THEATRE

1.6.1 ANCIENT EGYPTIAN QUASI-THEATRICAL EVENTS

Theatre in Africa could have been started with the earliest recorded quasi-theatrical events dates back to 2000 BCE. These theatrical events are the "passion plays" of Ancient Egypt. In these plays the story of Jesus, his suffering and God Osiris story performed in annual festivals.

1.6.2 YORUBA THEATRE

In his pioneering study of Yoruba theatre, Joel Adedeji traced its origins to the masquerade of the Egungun the "cult of the ancestor". The traditional ceremony culminates in the essence of the masquerade where it is deemed that ancestors return to the world of the living to visit their descendants. In addition to its origin in ritual, Yoruba theatre can be traced to the theatrogenic nature of a number of the deities in the Yoruba pantheon as Benham mentions in the *Cambridge Guide to African and Caribbean Theatre*.....

Obatala the arch divinity, Ogun the divinity of creativeness and Sango the divinity of the storm, reverence is imbued with drama and theatre and the symbolic overall relevance in terms of its relative interpretation.²² (2005)

The Alaarinjo theatrical tradition sprang from the Egungun masquerade. The Alaarinjo was a troupe of traveling performers whose masked forms carried an air of mystique. They created short, satirical scenes that drew on a number of established stereotypical characters. Their performances utilized mime, music and acrobatics. The

Alaarinjo tradition influenced the Yoruba traveling theatre, which was the most prevalent and highly developed form of theatre in Nigeria.

Total theatre also developed in Nigeria in the 1950s. It utilized non-Naturalistic techniques, surrealistic physical imagery, and exercised a flexible use of language. Playwrights writing in the mid-1970s made use of some of these techniques, but articulated them with "a radical appreciation of the problems of society."²³ (70) as Banham noted in *Cambridge Guide to African and Caribbean Theatre*.

Traditional performance modes have strongly influenced the major figures in contemporary Nigerian theatre. Wole Soyinka, who is generally recognized as Africa's greatest living playwright, gives the divinity Ogun a complex metaphysical significance in his work. In his essay *The Fourth Stage* (1973), Soyinka contrasts Yoruba drama with classical Athenian drama.

1.7 ASIAN THEATRE

1.7.1 INDIAN THEATRE

The earliest form of Indian theatre was the Sanskrit theatre. It emerged sometime between the 2nd century BCE and the 1st century CE and flourished between the 1st century CE and the 10th, which was a period of relative peace in the history of India during which hundreds of plays were written. With the Islamic conquests that began in the 10th and 11th centuries, theatre was discouraged or forbidden entirely. Later, in an attempt to re-assert indigenous values and ideas, village theatre was encouraged across the subcontinent, developing in a large number of regional languages from the 15th to the 19th centuries. Modern Indian theatre developed during the period of colonial rule under the British Empire.

Sanskrit theatre

Sanskrit performances were usually given on special occasions such as religious festivals, marriages, coronations, or victory celebrations. No scenery was used but the stage

had painting or carvings that would have symbolic value. Sanskrit drama emerged sometime between 1500 and 1000 B.C. Richmond writes about the traces of Sanskrit drama in *India in Banham* as.....

The Mahabhasya by Patanjali contains the earliest reference to what may have been the seeds of Sanskrit drama.²⁴ (517).

Sanskrit drama could not be classified as comedy, tragedy or melodrama, but was based on the concept of Rasa. All the Rasa relate to human emotions. The eight Rasas are erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, heroic, terrible, odious, and marvelous. Two famous Indian plays which deal with the Rasa were *The Little Clay Cart* by Bhasa and *Sakuntala* written by Kalidasa. The major source of evidence for Sanskrit theatre is *A Treatise on Theatre Natyasastra*, a compendium whose date of composition is uncertain and whose authorship is attributed to Bharata Muni. The *Treatise* is the complete work of dramaturgy in the ancient world. It addresses acting, dance, music, dramatic construction, architecture, costuming, make up, props, the organization of companies, the audience, competitions, and offers a mythological account of the origin of theatre. Its aim was both to educate and to entertain.

1.7.2 RURAL INDIAN THEATRE-KATHAKALI

Kathakali is a highly stylized classical Indian dance-drama noted for the attractive make-up of characters, elaborate costumes, detailed gestures, and well-defined body movements presented in tune with the anchor playback music and complementary percussion. It originated in the country's present-day state of Kerala during the 17th century and has developed over the years with improved looks, refined gestures and added themes besides more ornate singing and precise drumming.

1.7.3 CHINESE THEATRE-SHANG HAN AND TANG THEATRES

There are references to theatrical entertainments in China as early as 1500 BCE during the Shang Dynasty; they often involved music, clowning and acrobatic displays. During the Han Dynasty, shadow puppetry first emerged as a recognized form of theatre in China. There were two distinct forms of shadow puppetry, Cantonese southern and Pekingese northern. The two styles were differentiated by the method of making the puppets and the positioning of the rods on the puppets, as opposed to the type of play performed by the puppets. Both styles generally performed plays depicting great adventure and fantasy, rarely was this very stylized form of theatre used for political propaganda. The Tang Dynasty is sometimes known as 'The Age of 1000 Entertainments'. During this era, Emperor Xuan Zong formed an acting school known as the Children of the Pear Garden to produce a form of drama that was primarily musical.

1.7.4 SONG AND YUAN THEATRE

In the Sung Dynasty, there were many popular plays involving acrobatics and music. These developed in the Yuan Dynasty into a more sophisticated form with a four or five act structure. Yuan drama spread across China and diversified into numerous regional forms, the best known of which is Beijing Opera, that is still popular today.

1.8 PHILIPPINE THEATRE

During its reign the Spanish government was introduced into the islands. The Catholic religion and the Spanish way of life gradually merged with the indigenous culture to form the folk culture and now shared by the major ethno linguistic groups. Today, the dramatic forms introduced or influenced by Spain continue to live in rural areas all over the archipelago. These forms include the komedya, the play lets, the sinakulo, the sarswela, and

the drama. In recent years, some of these forms have been revitalized to make them more responsive to the conditions and needs of a developing nation.

1.9 JAPANESE THEATRE

In Japan, three classical forms of theatre exist: Noh theatre, Bunraku theatre and the most classical form, Kabuki theatre. Kabuki is a highly stylized form of theatre that employed lots of scenery and elaborate sets and costumes. Kabuki, like most oriental theatre, did not use women in its theatre performances. Another classical form, Bunraku, is puppet theatre. Each puppet had three operators, but only the master puppeteer's face could be seen. The classic form of Noh, however, started as religious ritual. It had a shite, who was the lead actor, and waki, who was the sidekick or confidante of the shite. Noh theatre utilized an orchestra which had a special position on-stage, but Noh, like Kabuki, did not use women in its performances. Besides the enduring influences of its stylized classical theatre, the Japanese also introduced to the world the revolving stage, a design which is used worldwide.

1.10 INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA-EVOLUTION

1.10.1 DRAMA IN INDIA—AN OVERVIEW

Drama is the branch of performing arts in which stories are acted using combinations of speech, gesture, music, dance and sound. Indian drama and theater has a vivid history. Many theaters forms developed over the period of time like musicals, opera, ballet, illusion, mime, classical Indian dance, kabuki, mummies' plays, improvisational theater, stand-up comedy, pantomime and non-conventional or art house theater.

The history of Indian drama is charming, enigmatic and incredible. India has an indigenous dramatic tradition, and is still remain uninfluenced from any foreign influence. Hindu drama was not borrowed or an imitation of any other, but it is the product of native genius. The dramatist Bhasa or Bhrata is traditionally considered the founder and "Father" in the history of Indian drama.

It was customary to dedicate any literary work authored to the ruler under whose favor; the author was bound to survive. History of Indian drama starts from about a dozen plays being written in India between 400 and 900 A.D. Plays like *Shakuntala* and *Meghadoota* written by Kalidasa are some of the older plays, following the thirteen plays composed by Bhasa. The compositions of the two biggest playwrights in India, Kalidasa and Bhavabuti, were attributed to the emperors Sudraka and Sriharsha respectively.

The colonial period in the history of Indian drama and its evolvment had brought in a radical and almost whirlwind phase for dramatists from the country. The best known drama to the British was *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa, which was translated into English by Sir William Jones in 1789. The play etched an insightful impression upon scholars like the German poet, novelist and dramatist, Goethe and created a `literary sensation`. It was then thought that Greek literature had penetrated into India and influenced the playwrights of that time. The play is parallel to the European ethics of the late middle Ages. A political composition named *The Signet of the Minister*, written around 800 A.D and *The Binding of a Braid of Hair* are the other famous plays in ancient India.

Indian drama and theatre is one of the oldest art forms. The history of Indian drama, began from the Vedic Age, the classical theater traditions of that time influenced the Hindi, Marathi and Bengali theatres down the line. The beginning of the ancient drama can be observed in the Rig Veda, together with Pururava - Urvashi, Yama-Yami, Indra-Indrani, Sarma-Pani and Ushas Suktas. Even the epics Ramayana, Mahabharata and Artha Shastra are instilled with dramas.

Valmiki, Vyas and Panini had also thrown light on dramaturgy and Patanjali in his *Mahabhashya* told that two dramas existed over the time, namely - Kamsa Vadha and

Vali Vadha. Actors not only served as dancers but also as musicians. Vatsayana (author of *Kama Sutra*) stated that kings were of the habit to arrange programmes of acting in festivals and celebrations. The origin of dramas of the early Vedic age is considered the most authentic and authoritative amongst all the later creations.

Later, by the mid-A.D. 300`s, play acting and penning in the Sanskrit language had developed and flourished, which were considered as epic poems. The primary aim was to reproduce and promote harmony. In historical times in Indian drama, there were seven main dramatists - Bhasa, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Shudraka, Bhatta Narayana, Vishakhadutta and Harsha. The plays were based on the Hindu epics and the puranas. Bharata`s *Natya Shastra* is considered to be the first attempt to devise and contrive the art of drama in a systematic manner. Bharata also laid down principles for stage design, make-up, costume, dance, a theory of rasas and bhavas, acting, directing and music. Bharata set out a detailed theory of drama, where he described Bhavas and Rasas. Mahakavi Bhasa is regarded as the first playwright of ancient Sanskrit literature. He has virtually composed 13 plays, based on the stories of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas and the Lok Kathas. Mahakavi Kalidasa penned *Malvikagnimitra*, and *Abhijnanasakuntalam* which describe history of drama in India. Kalidasa was honoured as greatest poet and playwright ever to have arrived in Sanskrit literature.

Till the 15th century, Sanskrit dramas were performed on stage in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. After the 15th century, Indian dramatic activity almost ceased due to foreign invasions on India. However, the age witnessed the beginnings of *Loknatya* (people`s theatre), which was noticed in every state of India from 17th century. Several states innovated fresh and new styles of drama; in Bengal there were styles like *Yatrakirtaniya*, *Paal*, *Gaan*; in Madhya Pradesh *Mach*; in Kashmir

Bhandya Thar and in Gujarat the forms comprised *Bhavai*, *Ramlila*; in northern India there existed the *Nautanki*, and *Bhavai*, *Ramlila* and *Raslila*; in Maharashtra *Tamasha*; in Rajasthan *Raas* and *Jhoomer*; in Punjab *Bhangra* and *Songe*; while in Assam it was *Ahiyanat* and *Ankinaat*; in Bihar it was *Videshiya* and *Yakshagana* of Karnataka, *Veedhinatakamu* of Andhra and *Teerukoothu* of Tamilnadu.

In 1831, Prasanna Kumar Thakur founded the Hindi Rangmanch. In 1843, the playwright Vishnudas Bhave penned *Seeta Swayamwar* in Marathi. In 1880, Annasaheb Kirloskar had staged *Abhignan Shakuntalam* in Marathi. The drama groups from western countries began to arrive in India to stage English plays due to Portuguese influence in western parts of India.

In 1850, theatre originated in Bengal, Karnataka and Kerala. Gujarati and Urdu plays began to be staged in many cities in Mumbai and Gujarat, chiefly in Ahmadabad, Surat, Baroda and Vadnagar from 1858. The Parsis started their own drama company and used words from Hindustani, Urdu, Persian and Sanskrit in their compositions. About the same time, theatrical activity began in Karnataka and Orissa. Attention was given on the decoration of stage in the Parsi plays. Thus, from 1850-1940, there was a resurgence of dramatic movement in different regions of India and there was significant development in the genre of Indian drama and its historical flowering. These almost hundred years can rightly be stated as the `Golden Age` of Indian theatre.

1.10.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

From the times immemorial India has vast and rich heritage of Drama. Drama begins its journey in India with the Sanskrit plays. A.L.Basham, a prominent historian, expresses his views in this manner.....

The origin of Indian theatre is still obscure. It is certain, however that even in the Vedic period dramatic performances of some kind were given, and passing references in early resources point to the inaction at festivals of religious legend, perhaps only in dance and mime²⁵ (434-435)

Indian traditions are preserved in the "Natyasastra", the oldest of the texts of the theory of the drama. This play claims for the drama divine origin and a close connection with the sacred Vedas themselves. Origin of Indian English drama can be traced to the ancient rules and seasonal festivities of the Vedic Aryans.

Bharata's Natyasastra is the most significant work on Indian poetics and drama. In it there is description in detail about composition, production and enjoyment of ancient drama, a wealth of information of types of drama, stage equipment, production and music. According to the legend, when the world passed from the golden age to the silver age and people became addicted to sensual pleasures and jealousy, anger, desire and greed filled their hearts. The world was then inhabited by gods, demons, yakshas, rakshasas, nagas and gandharvas. It was the gods among them who led them by Lord Indra, approached god Brahma and requested him thus –

Please give us something which would not only teach us but be pleasing both to eyes and ears.²⁶ (86)

Bharata ascribed a divine origin to drama and considered it as the fifth Veda. Its origin seems to be from religious dancing. According to Bharata, poetry (kavya) dance (nritta), and mime (nritya) in life is play (Lila) produce emotion (bhava) but only drama (natya) produces flavor (rasa). The drama uses the eight basic emotions of love, joy (humour), anger, sadness, pride, fear, aversion and wonder attempting to resolve them in the ninth holistic feeling of peace. Thus, when the dramatic art was well comprehended, the

natyaveda was performed on the occasion of the celebration of Lord Indra's victory over the Asuras and danavas. In the Natyashastra there is a verse in its sixth chapter which can be quoted as Bharat Muni's own summary of his dramatic theory as A.B.Keith quoted in his book *The Sanskrit Drama* as.....

The combination called natya is a mixture of rasa, bhavas, vrittis, pravrittis, siddhi, svaras, abhinayas, dharmis instruments, song and theatre – house.²⁷

(12)

The rise of the modern drama dates back to the 18th century when the British Empire strengthened its power in India. As Krishna Kriplani points out the modern Indian drama 'owed its first flowering to the foreign grafting'²⁸ with the impact of Western civilization on Indian life, a new renaissance dawned on Indian arts including drama. Furthermore, English education gave an impetus and a momentum to the critical study of not only Western drama, but Classical Indian drama. English and Italian dramatic troupes toured India and performed many English plays, mainly Shakespeare's, in cities like Bombay and Madras. The Portuguese brought a form of dance drama to the West coast. A Russian music director, Rebedoff, is said to have produced the first modern drama in Calcutta towards the end of 18th century. Thus, the Western impact awakened as Iyengar narrates in his book *Indain Writing in English*.....

the dormant, critical impulse in the country to bring Indians face to face with new forms of life and literature, and to open the way for a fruitful cross-fertilization of ideas and forms of expression.²⁹ (226)

In 1765 a Russian drama lover Horasin Lebdef and Bengali drama lover Qulokhnath has staged two English comedies *Disgaig* and *Love Is the Best Doctor*. But the real beginning

was in 1831 when Prasanna Kumar Thakur established "*Hindu Rangmanch*" at Calcutta and staged Wilson's English Translation of Bhavabhuti's Sanskrit drama Uttar Ramacharitam. Social drama of Girish Chanda Ghosh, historical dramas of D.L. Roy and artistic dramas of Rabindranath Tagore Muktheadhara, Chandalika continued to reach up to the stage of realistic dramas during the period of the worst - ever famines of Bengal and the Second World War in 1852-1853, the famous Parsi Theatre was launched in Bombay which influenced the whole country in no time. Postagi Pharmji was the pioneer in establishing the Parsi Theatre company in India. Many new theatre experiences were brought up on stage during Parsi Theatre' evolution in India. On the other hand, the amateur theatre also developed with the works of Bharatendu Harishchandra, acclaimed as the father of Hindi drama.

Indian English drama was started when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote *The Persecuted* in 1837. The real journey of Indian English Drama begins with Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Is this Called Civilization* which appeared on the literary horizon in 1871. Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, the two great sage - poets of India, are the first Indian dramatists in English. R.N. Tagore wrote primarily in Bengali but almost all his Bengali plays are available to us in English renderings. His prominent plays are *Chitra*, *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice*, *Red Oleanders*, *Chandalika*, *Muktheadhara*, *Natir Puja*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *Sanyasi* and *The Mother's Prayer*. These plays are firmly rooted in the Indian ethos and ethics in their themes, characters and treatment. R.K Ramaswamy finds a depth and gravity of purpose in his dramatic art

.....more than anything else, he has shown the way both in respect of ideas as well of methods, by which the soul of India could be realized and revealed in the realm of dramatic creation and representation.³⁰ (47)

Sri Aurobindo is the prominent dramatist in Indian English Drama. He wrote five complete blank verse plays besides his six incomplete plays. His complete plays are *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, *Rodoguna*, *the Viziers of Bassora* and *Eric* and each of these plays is written in five acts. His incomplete plays are *The Witch of Ilni*, *Achab* and *Esarhaddon*, *the Maid and the Mill*, *the House of Brut*, *the Birth of Sin* and *Prince of Edur*. The length of these incomplete plays varies from one scene of fifty two lines to three acts.

The notable feature of Sri Aurobindo's plays is that they depict different cultures and countries in different epochs, ringed with variety of characters, moods and sentiments. *Perseus the Deliverer* is grounded on the ancient Greek myth of Persues; *Vasavadutta* is a romantic tale of ancient India. *Rodoguna* is a Syrian romance; *The Viziers of Bassora* is a romantic comedy which takes us back to the days of the great *Haroun al Rashid*, while *Eric* is a romance of Scandinavia, a story of love and war between the children of Odin and Thor. In Aurobindo we find romance, heroic play, tragedy, comedy, farce. Aurobindo is much influenced by Elizabethan drama in matters of plot construction and characterization. The use of the English blank verse is flawless in Aurobindo and in the right tune with the characters and situations. We also find the impact of Sanskrit playwrights like Bhasa, Kalidas and Bhavabhuti on Aurobindo as Dr. K. R. S. Iyenger observes,

But all five plays are steeped in poetry and romance, recalling the spirit and flavour of the distinctive dramatic type exemplified in different ways by Bhasa, Kalidas and Bhavabhuti. Though, of course all have Aurobindonian undertones.³¹ (226)

Another playwright who has made significant contribution in the growth of Indian English drama is Harindranath Chattopadhyay. He started his career as playwright with *Abu Hassan* (1918). There are seven verse plays to his credit published under the title of *Poems*

and Plays (1927) and all the seven plays are based on the lives of Indian saints. His *Five Plays* (1929) are written in prose. *The Window and the Parrot* deals with the lives of the poor whereas *the Sentry's Lantern* is a symbolic display of the expectation of the advent of a new age for the downtrodden people. *Siddhartha: Man of Peace* is an adventurous effort to dramatise Buddha's life.

The next great name is A.S.P. Ayyar who wrote six plays. *In the Clutch of The Devil* (1926) is his first play and the last one is *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity*. P. A. Krishnaswamy is also a name in the history of Indian English drama whose fame rests chiefly on his unusual verse play *The Flute of Krishna*. Another dramatic voice on the Indian literary scene that demands attention is that of T.P. Kailasam. He wrote both in English and Kannada. Though Kailasam is regarded as the father of modern Kannada drama, his genius finds its full expression in his English plays such as *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfillment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karna* (1964) and *Keechaka* (1949). He has a real genius and love for the drama G. S. Amur holds a very high opinion about T.P. Kailasam. Amur rightly remarks....

A talented actor who appeared on the amateur as well as the professional stage, he brought to the writing of drama an intimate knowledge of the theatre. It is for this reason that his plays whether in Kannada or English, have a uniform technical excellence.³² (186)

Bharati Sarabhai is the modern woman playwright during the colonial era of Indian English drama. She has written two plays *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women with some considerable measure of success*. Of these two plays, the former is symbolic, poetic and is besides a significant contribution to the Gandhian social order, while the latter is realistic, written in prose and probes the private world of a sensitive individual.

J.M. Lobo Prabhu is the last great name in pre-Independence Indian English drama. He has written over a dozen plays but only *Mother of New India* (1944) a Play of Indian Village in three acts and *Death Abdicates* (1945) appear before Independence. Lobo Prabhu is capable of writing dialogues with felicity, situation – creation is also admirable but his characters do not appear life like, soothing and convincing to the audience.

Up to post – independence era, drama in English in Indian soil could not flourish as a major current of creative expression. Although the pre–Independence Indian English drama is notable for its poetic excellence, thematic variety, technical virtuosity, symbolic significance and its commitment to human and moral values, it was by and large not geared for actual stage production.

The post- Independence Indian English drama was benefitted by the foreigners’ increasing interest in Indian English literature in general and Indian English drama in particular. A good number of plays by Indian playwrights like Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Gurucharan Das were successfully staged in England and U.S.A. But the plight of Indian English drama is indefinable. There was no regular school of Indian English drama was established in our country. This was mainly because the encouragement drama received from several quarters immediately after India got freedom but it was monopolized by the theatre in the Indian regional languages while Indian English drama continued to feed on crumbs fallen from its rich cousins table. The plays have been written in prose but at the same time poetic plays also survive in the post colonial era. M.K. Naik rightly opines that

.....Tagore-Aurobindo-Kailsam tradition of poetic drama continues, but which a difference in the hands of poetic drama continues, but Manjeri Isvaran, G.V. Desani, Lakhan Dev and Pretish Nandy.³³ (256)

Manjeri Isvaran's *Yama and Yami* (1948) is a dialogue in poetic prose, with a prologue and an epilogue, dealing with the incestuous love of Yami for her brother. G.V.Desani's *Hali* (1950), an entirely different kind of play, received high praise for its originality, symbolism and rich imagery. Regarding the message of the play *Hali*, M.K.Naik remarks,

Hali finds peace in the thought that man must transcend human love, go beyond life and death and even leaving behind his limited idea of godhead, develops in himself a god-like love and detachment³⁴ (256)

Lakhan Dev's *Tiger Claw* (1976) is a historical play in three acts on the controversial murder of Afzal Khan by Shivaji. His two plays are *Vivekananda* (1972) and *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976). The use of blank verse is flawless and the last play compels us to remind of T.S.Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Other verse plays of the period include P.A.Krishnaswami's *The Flute of Krishna* (1950) M.Krishnamurti's *The Cloth of Gold* (1951). S.D.Rawoot's *Immortal Song. Karm and The Killers* (1959) Satya Dev Jaggi's *The Point of Light* (1967) Pritish Nandy's *Rites for a Plebian Salute* (1969). Hushmat Sozerekashme's *Vikramjeet* (1970), Sree Devi Singh's *The Purple Braided People* (1970), P.S. Vasudev's *The Sunflower* (1972) and S.Raman's *Karme* (1979).

The number of prose playwrights is larger in comparison to verse playwrights. Asif Currimbhoy believed to be one of the most prolific playwrights of the Post-Independence period, who has written and published more than thirty plays. Some important plays are *The Tourist Meeca* (1959), *The Restaurant* (1960) *The Doldrumness* (1960) *The Captives* (1963) *Goa* (1964), *Monsoon* (1965) *An Experiment with Truth* (1969) *Inquilab* (1970) *The Refugee* (1971), *Sonar Bangla* (1972) *Angkor* (1973) and *The Dessident M L A* (1974).

In spite of comprehensiveness, Currimbhoy's dramatic art has been a subject of criticism for the lack of structured plot, embellished language and balanced characterization. His dialogue reflects the extreme poverty of invention and his language is not suitable to capture the internal drama of the clash of motives. According to M.K. Naik.....

His symbols are often crude, conventional and mechanical but the greatest limitation of his technique is revealed especially in his later plays, in which Currimbhoy appears to confuse dramatic technique with theatrical trickery and stage gimmicks with dramatic experience.³⁵ (256)

Pratap Sharma wrote two prose plays *A Touch of Brightness* (1968) and *The Professor has a War Cry* (1970). His plays were staged even abroad successfully but they failed to be staged in the country. Sex, moreover remains the prime theme of his plays but Pratap Sharma shows a keen sense of situation and his dialogue is often effective. Prof M.K.Naik appreciates his dramatic art for his keen sense of situation and effective dialogues.

In the realm of Indian Drama, Nissim Ezekiel is acknowledged for his exceptional poetic creed and rare dramatic sensibility. Nissim Ezekiel's *Three Plays* (1969) including *Nalini: A Comedy*, *Marriage Poem: A Tragic Comedy* and *The Sleep Walkers: An Indo-American farce* is considered to be a welcome addition to the dramaturgy of Indian English drama. *Songs of Deprivation* (1969) is also a short play by Ezekiel. *Gurucharan's Larins Sahib* (1970) a historical play, deals with Henry Lawrence of Panjab. The play *Marriage Poem*, presents the conflict of a middle class husband caught in the conflict of commitments of married life and the desire of love. *The Sleep Walkers* is a diverting take off on national preconceptions and prejudices. In spite of strong sense of dramatic concept, Ezekiel could not transform his poetic talent into appropriate dramatic talent. His plays can be appreciated for symmetrical construction with abundance of irony. They unveil his sharp observation of the

oddities of human life and behaviour. Ezekiel's poetics self swayed his dramatic creed but his plays make a 'pleasant reading'. Chetan Karnani attributes Ezekiel as.....

In his satire of current fashion, in his exposure of prose and presence, Ezekiel comes very close to the spirit of some English social satirists in theatre.³⁶ (126)

Contemporary Indian drama, deviating from classical and European models, is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical qualities. It is not an offspring of any specific tradition and it has laid the foundation of a distinctive tradition in the history of world drama by reinvestigating history, legend, myth, religion and folklore with context to contemporary socio-political issues. A cumulative theatrical tradition evolved by Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sirkar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad, prepared the background of contemporary Indian English theatre.

Girish Karnad in the capacity of writer, director and actor substantially contributed to enrich the tradition of Indian English theatre. His dramatic sensibility was moulded under the influence of touring Natak Companies and especially *Yakshagana* which was in those days not accepted as the purified art form. His well known plays are *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1962), *Hayavadana* (1970), *Nagmandala* (1972). He borrowed his plots from history, mythology and old legends but with intricate symbolism, he tried to establish their relevance in contemporary socio-political conditions.

The play *Yayati* reinterprets an ancient myth from Mahabharata in modern concept. The plot of the play *Hayavadana* is adopted from Katha Saritsagar, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit. *Tughlaq* is Karnad's best historical play where he mingles facts with fiction. Karnad projects the curious contradictions in the complex personality of Sultan

Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. In the play *Tale Dande*, he discovers the vital relationship between contemporary society and literature. His use of myth as a structure and metaphor in his play gives new meaning to the past from the vantage point of view of present.

In the play *Nagmandala*, the conflict is between patriarchal and matriarchal views of society. It is about the life of Rani, a typical Indian woman in male dominated society. She is married to Appanna, a wealthy village youth. The focus in the play is on sexual liberty of to sexes: male and female. In order to counter male dominance, Karnad adopts a strange device in which King Cobra gets sexually involved with Rani and ultimately she becomes pregnant. Like his other female protagonists, she is encouraged to pass through chastity ordeal. Regarding the position of Rani, Smita Nirula holds,

Rani is never free to express herself, to be herself. She is either a daughter, wife, lover or mother. She is always playing a role imposed upon her, except in her dreams in the lonely nights that engulf her. She is a woman used, abused. She can either live as a whore or a Devi. There is no element of person for her³⁷ (1988)

Success of Karnad's dramatic art lies in technical experiment with an indigenous dramatic form. The collective efforts of Karnad and Karalam Narayana Pannikar are significant in their binding of the traditional forms of Indian theatre with the modern.

Born in 1928, Vijay Tendulkar began his career as a journalist but from the very first play *Grihasth* in 1955 to *Safar* in 1992; his plays have given Indian theatre a rich and challenging repertoire. Leading the vanguard of the avant-garde Marathi Theatre, Vijay Tendulkar symbolizes the new awareness and attempts of Indian dramatists of the century to depict the agonies, suffocations and cries of man, focusing on the middle class society. In all

his plays, he harps upon the theme of isolation of the individual and his confrontation with the hostile surroundings. Influenced by Artaud, Tendulkar relates the problem of anguish to the theme of violence in most of his plays. He does not consider the occurrence of human violence as something loathsome or disgusting in as much as it is in nature in human nature. In Sachidanand Mohanty's article for the *Hindu*, Tendulkar announces....

Unlike the communists I don't think violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or for that matter, in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that human being is born with. Not that it is bad. Without violence man might have turned into a vegetable.³⁸ (5)

While depicting violence on the stage, Tendulkar does not dress it up with any fancy trapping so as to make it palatable but rather keep it raw and natural. The plays *Chimanicha Ghor Hote Menache* (1960) *Kalojanchi Shalai* (1968), *Ek Holti Mugli* (1967) reflect Tendulkar's concern with authority and the idea of exploitation of individual. In the plays *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1968) and *Ghasiram Kotwal* (1972), the theme of oppression dominates. *Sakharam Binder* (1972) is a study in human violence amounted to powerful dramatic statement. *Kamala* (1982) and *Kanyadaan* (1982) are written on the lines of naturalistic tradition. *Kamala* is a study of marital status as well as study in the theme of exploitation. *Kanyadaan* is a complex play about the cultural and emotional upheavals of a family. Tendulkar was associated with New Theatrical Movement in Maharashtra. He presents a fictional reality in which the reality of life acquires a sharp focused character having rare dramatic power.

Badal Sircar too is a prestigious name in the realm of contemporary theatre. He represents New Theatrical Movement in India. He has created an appropriate 'peoples' theatre' a theatre supported and created by people. His dramatic career began with humorous

play like *solution X*. His earlier plays are *Evam Indrajit* (1962) *That Other History* (1964) and *There is no End* (1971). All these plays are based on political, social, psychological and existential problems. *Evam Indrajit* is a tale of a playwright who struggles in vain to write a play. In the play *There's no Need* Sircar develops the thesis that "We are all accused" and shares the burden of guilt. Afterwards, he wrote *Pary Konodin*, *Jadi Aur Ek Baar*, *Palap* and *Pagla Ghoda*. His later plays *Procession*, *Bhoma* and *Stale News* are based on the concept of Third Theatre. The play *Procession* is about the search for a 'real home' in new society based on equality. It suggests a 'real way' to new way in which man does not have to live exploiting man but should work according to his own needs. *Bhoma* is a dramatization of the life of oppressed peasants in sexual India. The analysis of these three plays suggest remarkable changes in Sircar's concept of a 'real home' a new society based on equality and free from the horrors of exploitation. Tendulkar in 1967 established his theatre group called 'Satabdi.' Sircar's first contact with Grotowski's 'Poor Theatre' influenced him greatly in formulating his Third Theatre.

In Indian English drama the influence of Mohan Rakesh cannot be ignored. He wrote in Hindi but for exceptional dramatic relevance, his plays have been translated in English and other regional languages. He published his first major play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* in 1958, *Leharon Ke Rajhansa* appeared in 1963 and *Adhe Adheere* was first staged in 1969. The play *Pair Tale Ki Zamin* was completed by Kamleshwar after his death and published in 1974. As a playwright, his main concern was to portray the crisis of contemporary man caught in the web of uncongenial surroundings and the persistent threat to human relationship. Mohan Rakesh perceived drama as a complex art involving the uniform contribution of actors, scenic effects, light and music and effective stage direction. Mohan Rakesh made extensive experiments in theatre. He used words and languages not as dialogues or direct statements but

as the tools of suggestion to convey the meaning beyond the verbal connotation. In *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*, he highlights the dangers of sycophancy that whites of his age face in desire of dignified official position. In *Leharon Ka Rajhans*, he reflects on the problem of relations between man and woman, ego clashes, divided self and ongoing illusion and nothingness. *Adhe Adhure* deals with the clash of ego between husband and wife, disintegration of family relationship, the prominence of individual interest against the commitments of the family.

Vizai Bhaskar is another Playwright originated from Andhra Pradesh occupies a predominant place among the contemporary playwrights of India. To his credit, he has about 25 plays of everlasting value with varied themes which won a great deal of appreciation from the theatre loving public. *Ruthwik, Kalakootam, the Return of Gandhi, the Chair, and Riding the Tiger* are his plays translated into English. *Ruthwik* dramatizes satirically the hypocritical life of modern man in which the central character Ruthwik sermonizes the viewers about the need of ethical living. *Kalakootam* deals with the clash between two politicians who deprive of the real meaning of democracy and embody the present political system. *The Return of Gandhi* is another social play, attacks the rot in the present political system that is being run by unscrupulous political class. In which his experimentation of Gandhiji's rebirth appeals the attention of all.

The Playwright has utilized the Hindu belief of rebirth as a technique and brought back Gandhiji to Earth and to India to witness all the evil practices in politics as well as in daily routine of People. *The Chair* comprehensively deals with the subject of political reservations given to the *Dalits* in India. *Riding the Tiger* ascribes factionist practices of Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh State and how this heinous deed plays with innocent followers of landlords to uphold the power of them. In the play, Vizai Bhaskar's knack of showing these innocent followers at a time as both heroes and villains is praiseworthy. These

riders of the tiger do not know that they would be prey to the same tiger once they stop riding it. Here Vizai Bhaskar, ventures to pull the curtain to expose the world of crime, conspiracy, violence, treachery and manipulation of human motives.

All the plays of Vizai Bhaskar are entertaining and enlightening. They are touching to the heart as well as thought provoking. His sharp vision on human relations and his analysis on the ways of the world are indeed amazing and unique in nature. He leaves no stone unturned while giving expression to his feelings on the human nature in all its nakedness. His dramatic world is not only an expression of art but also becomes a realization of life and it may be regarded as a preface to the tradition of unconventional popular, Indian theatre.

Besides, women dramatists also tried to enrich the soil of Indian drama by projecting the inner world of feminine psyche in the theatre. Women's theatre coalesces with Street Theatre movement, using the same technique in performance and production. It can be attributed as a 'Theatre of Protest' because women writers expressed their resentment against the politics of exploitation on the basis of gender discrimination. They also revived the traditional myths of Sita and Savitri and tried to reinterpret the epics from women's point of view. The dramatic work of Usha Ganguly and Mahasweta Devi can be placed in their category.

Mahasweta Devi emerged as a dramatist having a quest to explore something challenging and new. Her five plays are *Mother of 1084*, *Aajir*, *Urvashi O' Johnny*, *Byen* and *Water*. The play *Mother of 1084* is a moving account of the anguish of an apolitical mother who witnesses the horrors of Naxalite Movement. In *Aajir*, Mahasweta Devi deals with the issue of the fast deterioration of values and their effects on society, particularly on illiterate people. *Urvashi O' Johnny* is a play written for emergency through the love affair of Johnny with Urvashi, a talking doll. The play *Bayen* presents a moving account of harsh reality of a

woman's life in rural India. Her plays represent a profound concern for human predicament and sincere hope for the better future of mankind.

Thus Indian English Drama is at the peak of creative powers, continuously experimenting with new forms and manners of expression. As a literary form it may not be stereotypical. Its journey often hits its Playwrights mounting greater peaks with thematic material rise to extraordinary heights.

1.11 THEMES, TECHNIQUES, LANGUAGE, STAGE-WORTHINESS IN INDIAN ENGLISH PLAYS

1.11.1 THE THEMES

Having a rich variety from its civilization, India is remarkable to find sources for literature. Keeping this background in view, Indian English Playwrights are able to freely use incidents from the Upanishads, mythologies, epics, history, society of the country, in addition to some foreign sources for their drama themes. The Playwrights are more successful in depending on the ancient lore of the country for their themes. They dramatize the incidents by idealizing the characters suiting to the purpose. In the case of historical themes, along with authentic details of Indian history the playwright's imagination adds to the quality of plays. Further it is also believed that the playwrights have to still tap our rich sources for their themes.

The social plays and play-lets outbeat other types in number. Their themes successfully bring out social problems. India being a vast and an ancient country and having a variety in all aspects of life, there had been room for various types of complications in society all these centuries; and the people had to suffer a lot on account of some corrupt customs like the dowry system practiced in the name of religion.

The Indian English playwrights come out to attack these social evils through their plays. It is found they succeed in employing these problems as the themes of their plays. Some try to project them as they are, others aim at the solution through melodrama. Some like Girish Karnad bring out a modern treatment to mythological incidents as themes in their plays. The playwrights like Kailasam tried to remodel the ancient stories of the country in order to bring out the Greek tragic concept.

Further, during the foreign rule, the selection of the contemporary political themes was a problem to playwrights. That is why we rarely come across plays directly dealing with people's fight for independence of the country; or the playwrights had to resort to allegorical form in such cases. Some playwrights desiring to have a predominant idea in the collection of their plays had to face the problem of shaping them to suit their purpose and strewing them in one thread. If, for example, Sri Aurobindo tries to highlight the romantic impulse in his plays, Kailasam attempts at a quest for greatness in his epic characters. Some authors have used the drama form merely as a vehicle to carry their ideas and cared little for dramatic art.

1.11.2 TECHNIQUES AND MODELS

Though there are lack of opportunities to test their plays on a living theater the Indian English Playwrights have presented various models and techniques dramatized in their works successfully. Though there was an ancient dramatic tradition in the country, playwrights like Sri Aurobindo were attracted towards the Western models particularly the Elizabethan with its features like the five-act structure, more plots, long speeches particularly in verse-form, clowns, the prologue and the epilogue, and the element of horror. But there lay a discussion on the playwrights' success in examining the relevance of the new genre of aping the West to the Indian situation. This is very important as some seem to have been unnecessarily carried away by the fashionable West in spite of the rich dramatic tradition existing in the country. Worth-examining in this context is M. K. Naik's remark:

It is a shocking fact that the Indian English playwright has mostly written as if he belonged to a race which has never had any dramatic traditions worth the name, and must therefore solely ape the West.³⁹ (187)

Further, some playwrights tried to follow the Sanskrit drama tradition fully or partially. There is always a discussion on the way how best they could employ its features like lengthy descriptions and dialogues, the *nayaka* and *pratinayaka* and techniques like the Sutradhara, Pravesaka and others. A few, at later stage, pick up social themes aiming to entertain the audience on some occasions.

Vizai Bhaskar uses Indian myths very effectively in his plays. Primarily he writes his plays in Telugu and then translates them into other languages. He uses myth, folktales, reinterpretation of history, and projection of contemporary social and psychological problems as themes of his dramas. This makes him one of the successful contemporary dramatists. His remarkable contribution to Indian drama in English is observed by Prof Gangisetty in foreword of Spring Thunder as such:

Dr. D.Vizai Bhaskar brought an enviable pride to the genre of drama writing by his continuous production of several outstanding plays over the last two decades. He has not only the courage, conviction but also the tact to convince the people who provide the model for his roles.⁴⁰ (3-4)

It shows that, Vizai has the great contribution to Indian drama in English, but themes of his plays are especially from the very hearts of the people of his contemporary society and native soils in order to provide solutions to the problems.

1.11.3 THE LANGUAGE

Use of Language is one of the biggest challenges for the Indian English playwrights. Though we are associated with British rulers for many decades, English is not used by the

majority in the country. Similarly Most of the playwrights are also not well-acquainted with the spoken forms that might develop artificiality in dialogues. It has been tough task for them to use appropriate phrases in foreign tongue suitable to Indian characters and using the right idiom that has to describe Indian culture in their plays.

In social plays, even if the characters are carefully chosen, it could not solve the problem. Only those characters, who are supposed to know English, should have a place in Indian English drama. In that case, there would be too much of limitations; much more so in the case of characters from epics, mythology and history. There are innumerable works on these themes in various Indian languages and it is absurd to expect that such characters should know these languages. For instance, to demand a certificate of qualification in Kannada from Tughlak would be as foolish as to expect knowledge of English from Julius Caesar. So what one could expect is the use of a language in keeping with the dignity and decorum of classical characters. Further, in a play in any language, a character would be expected to use the spoken word of his or her level. A servant, for example, in King Duryodhana's court cannot be expected to speak the high-flown language of Drona or even of Duryodhana. So the Indian English playwrights must have neglected these problems.

Even the English vocabulary is problematic as some English words are found incomprehensive to convey certain concepts of Indian culture, such as *dharma*, *sanyasa*, etc. Some playwrights like Kailasam tried to overcome this difficulty by using Sanskrit or other Indian words themselves in their original form. In this connection, it may not be out of place to think of the methods used by some writers like Raja Rao who would rather have translations of local idioms to convey the Indian shades of thought and thereby impart a natural colour to speech. Thus the language problem in Indian English drama deserves a special analysis.

1.11.4 STAGE WORTHINESS

The success of a play is to be judged mainly on the stage. In modern times, mere imitation of the West, unless warranted, could not make our modern plays stage worthy. In fact, some playwrights used the living folk forms with success, for example, the use of ‘Yakshagana’ in Girish Karnad’s Kannada play, *Hayavadana*, *Dashavatar*, and Khele techniques in Vijay Tendulkar’s Marathi play *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Jatra* in Utpal Dutt’s *Jokumareswara* and Badal Sarcar’s *Evam Indrajit*.

But, so far as the Indian English playwrights are concerned, the rich Indian tradition of stage-plays appears to have been almost neglected. What “Sriranga” (Adya Rangacharya), a well-known Kannada playwright, remarks about the modern Indian theatre in general, may be particularly applied to Indian English drama:

Unthinkingly we opened our theatre and bewitched by the (Western) breeze we forgot it and just walked over to the Western theatre... Like parentage it (the classical Indian drama) lives in us even in these days. We may denounce our father, but we cannot empty ourselves of his blood in us⁴¹ (41)

In this connection we can consider how playwrights like Eliot and Fry could write stage worthy verse-plays even without resorting to Shakespeare. Some playwrights like Sri Aurobindo rather unwarrantedly put the Elizabethan garb for their native themes; and the extent of artificiality on the stage is to be examined in respect to such plays. In the case of many social plays, authors like V. V. Srinivasa Aiyangar have not followed any model; but they appear to have written plays and play lets only to give a light entertainment to the audience, may be even with an interesting dialogue. Thus their success on the stage is to be doubted.

Yet, even in the early phase of Indian-English drama we come across a few like Kailasam who had stage-sense. Of late, Asif Currimbhoy has shown some promise in

writing the stageable plays like *Doldrummers*, *the Dumb Dancer* and *Goa* which are successful on the stage both in this country and abroad. But in some cases, there seems to be too much of stage-sense and cinematographic techniques at the cost of the development of plot. Further, with the help of modern stage-techniques, plays like Gurucharna Das's *Larins Sahib*, Dilip Hiro's *To Anchor a Cloud* and Shiv Kumar Johsi's *He Never Slept So Long* could be staged with success.

1.12 INDIAN ENGLISH PLAYS-PROBLEMS

The Indian English Drama has developed as an important and versatile body of English Literature and has caught attention of the global audiences. It has made a substantial progress by encapsulating various issues that India has been facing from time to time. It finds its impetus from Indian sensibility, philosophy, myths and religious beliefs and attracted attention of the people beyond boundaries. When one goes through the history of Indian English Drama, one comes to know that it has made a little progress than Indian English Fiction and Poetry. Though Indian English Drama came to the scene before these above-mentioned genres but failed to keep pace with them because of some reasons. Unlike Fiction and Poetry, Drama cannot be restricted to reading only. It needs a theatre, an encouraging audience, effective dialogues, efficient actors and other stagecraft. Indian English Drama passes many phases and at last comes to a whole new range of playwrights who have left no stone unturned to give to its due place.

Drama is to gratify a mixed audience. It immensely follows current trends and tastes for its accomplishment and nourishment. But this may not be suitable in the case of drama in English by Indian writers because it is always meant for a selected audience. Here in this country, the selected audience means a category of people who understand the idiom of language in English. Such audience is limited hence the drama in English by Indian Writers is

slow in its progress. Though we have considerable stage techniques and many other sophisticated devices for lighting and acoustic effects, it is because of language, dialogues and originality of thought presentation in foreign language, the Indian drama in English has a stunt in its growth.

Our awareness of the past theatrical activity is very meager. But we can moderately affirm that in India the theatrical activity began with primitive magical, religious or social rites, ritualistic dances, festivals etc. Today, many tribes in different parts of the country perform rituals related to birth, death, puberty, marriage, food gathering, and hunting. In all of these activities the dramatic or theatrical elements are prominent. So there found various Vedic references in these activities. Sanskrit drama also renders various mythological references and reveals many levels of human experience. There by it depicts social relations, individual emotions of human life. Sanskrit drama is based on profound philosophical outlook and which has brought down aesthetics in the name of the theory of the Rasa.

Indians do not like to see a human being as a puppet in the hands of fate and leave a character to suffer by the supernatural powers. On the other hand they like to see the character to fight against that power and try to win over the evil spirit. That is why in Sanskrit plays, we have a portrayal of happy and cheerful moments in the protagonist's journey towards success or failure instead of series of suffering or unreal mess up in the name of dramatic emotion. So Sanskrit Drama may challenge the categorization of drama into tragedy or comedy as the Greek Drama does. Instead, it is categorized according to the protagonist's mental and social status and his action. The Sanskrit plays consider drama as a form of imagination not reality. So the time and place is imaginative and the so-called unities of time and place may not condition in the case of Sanskrit Drama. To indicate the change of

time and locale, sometimes a character mentions the change, or it is communicated by the conventions of the movement of the actors from one stage area to another.

Indian Drama in English has struggled to have its progress during the post-independence period. It does not make much headway as poetry and novel. Drama has faced more problems, than the other literary forms do. Most of the plays of this period are successfully staged inside and abroad. Immediately after Independence, the first Five Year crucially noted the performing art like drama does should be for social awareness and public enlightenment. To encourage this *The National School of Drama* was established in Delhi. There raised many institutions and academies in imparting dramatics. The Sangeet Natak Academy also started The National Drama festival in Delhi since 1954.

According to the Indian view of life, the purpose of Drama and theatre has to create a feeling of pleasure or bliss (Rasa) by demarcating various situations that human beings come across with a different feeling of sorrow, suffering and there by discomfort of the life whereas the Western drama reveals the struggle of life in different forms. When India was under the rule of conquerors, the western drama and theatre entered and stood as threat to Indian drama by alluring the Indian audience feeling that they would be inferior to their counterparts in terms of understanding, acceptance, openness in the culture and development.

The Indian English drama did not get much appeal like the Indian English novel. Relatively Many writers have not succeeded in writing more plays, so it lacked in both quality and quantity. The reasons attributed for the insufficient amount of Indian Dramas are the unsuitability for stage production, the lack of creativity among the dramatists to use the Indian myth and historical heritage.

Translations paved the way for the growth of Indian Drama in English. This enabled the readers to get aware of the different culture and tradition followed in different regions in India. Creativity is enhancing in the writers, both in their themes and the presentations. In spite of a work written in his own language, a dramatist is celebrated for his dramatizing skill and style. Prominence was given to the works produced with Indian dramatic tradition-history legend Myth and Folklore. Dramatists like Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad became popular not only in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Kannada, but also in all the Indian languages of modern Indian theatre by their innovative works and presentations of plays on the stage. Now Vizai Bhaskar has also been putting the same effort in presenting his plays on the stage similarly what his predecessors have done.

British drama influenced the Indian English drama in the early twentieth century, giving rise to many theatrical groups. The department of theatre was established in major universities giving a good scope to drama in Indian languages. Plays produced in recent years are complex according to its relationship to modernity as well as tradition. The works of Post-Independence Playwrights celebrate the modern Indian nation's cultural heterogeneity. Their plays exhibited a visible and desperate development, both in terms of performance aesthetics and politics of representation. They differed from their predecessors in the choice of subject matter and dramaturgic practice.

The playwrights returned to the past as an immediate response to "westernization" in India. Even though, some Indian dramatists in their works returned to the past, they failed to portray the "pure" Indian tradition in their works. They tried to recover some of the fading performing arts. In order to bring back a sense of history that is wider and more relevant to the majority of the people living in rural areas, these playwrights renovated the old forms. Nanda Kumar in his book *Indian English Drama* opines.....

“Tradition to these dramatists is not a fossil creature to be exhibited in a museum, but a rich cultural treasure left unnoticed⁴² (225)

Contemporary Indian dramatists attempted to cross cultural boundaries across time, going “back to the past” in a metamorphic sense to retrieve ancient traditions by creating them in their dramatic productions and the last few decades have undergone translations from the regional languages in English. This increases the quality of writing drama in totality. The epics and classics when translated in English becomes an important part in Indian English literature. Translated texts when taught to the students, increased their creativity and English translations popularized the Indian tradition among the scholars. Translations of regional drama served as a pillar for the emergence of “national theatre” into which the streams of theatrical art seem to converge.

There were several factors responsible for this stunted growth of drama and the foremost problem was the indissoluble relation between drama and the theatre. Drama, a mimetic representation of life, is a composite art in which the written word attains artistic realization when spoken by the actor on the stage and reciprocated by the audience. A play in order to communicate fully must become a living dramatic experience and so it needs a real theatre and a live audience. According to Naik, a true dramatist has to “communicate or he will die”⁴³ (181). It was precisely the lack of these essentials that had hamstrung Indian drama in English all along.

One silver lining was that in the recent decades Indian drama in English language had “fared sumptuously and put on flesh”⁴⁴ (155). Drama was the fifth Veda for the ancient Hindus and Indian classical drama, which flourished for ten centuries or more, could now safely challenge comparison with other genres in Indian Writing.

Drama in India has had a rich and glorious tradition. The contemporary dramatist Girish Karnad says in Prologue of his play *The Fire and the Rain* that Brahma, the Lord of all creation extracted the requisite element from the four Vedas. He culled out the text from Rig Veda, songs from Sama Veda, the art of acting from the Yajur Veda and Rasa—aesthetic experience—from the Atharvana Veda and combined them into a fifth Veda “Natya Veda” and thus gave birth to the art of drama. He then handed it over to his son, Lord Indra, the supreme God of Gods. But Indra, Lord of Gods, realized that Gods were unfit to the new form and passed it on to the human preceptor Bharata who organized a troupe with his hundred sons and twenty-five Apsaras. Narada and others were engaged as musicians, Gods and demons became the spectators; Nandhi and Anukrati were the commentators.

1.13 SOCIAL CONCERN IN THE PLAYS OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH PLAYWRIGHTS

The Indian English Drama has left a mark in its development as one of the important forms of English Literature and has appealed the attention of the audiences across globe. In its progress it has brought various issues that India has been facing from time to time on to the stage. So often it depends on Indian sensibility, philosophy, myths and religion to attract the attention of its readers or audiences. Another element that Indian English Drama strongly propagates is social concern.

A drama is a vehicle that works for societal reformation. Drama is a mirror image of the society and it speaks about the societal issues. Drama is a form not only entertains the audience but also educates them. Drama is an art that spreads a philanthropic conscience by showing deep concern towards exploited brothers and sisters in the society. It has a deep concern for atheists who embark with misconceived notions, and tries to stand as a torch-bearer for Truth-lovers. That is why; the Indian English Drama has its writings constitute a

cocktail of Vedic culture, human philosophy besides traditional episodes and patriotically spirited anecdotes, despite their social themes in main.

Furthermore, it sheds tears for the deteriorating human relations, de-tracking virtues and evaporating ethics and for the people abhors able greed for money throwing such people in tragic trauma! Through fantasies, legends and epics, the social plays educate people with essence of spiritual enlightenment. Social concern is a deep rooted entity of the drama and theatre in order to highlight the importance of societal harmony.

Dramas written with social concern as prime elements would sustain as need based forms of literature. This kind of drama should be encouraged as the present world is fast moving towards the goal of universal harmony and peace. The drama with social concern is part of education today as it is mentioned by Gangisetty Lakshminarayana in his foreword to *Spring Thunder* an anthology of drmas of Vizai Bhaskar.....

It reminds me how the British Government treats a good drama with social purpose as an adult education reader. The drama is now commonly used as an adult education text in the United Kingdom as Michelene Wandor records in her work, *The Art of Writing Drama*. In fact, it is the hoary tradition of ancient India to use drama in many forms, both classical and folk, only to educate the masses, the common people who did not have the privilege of formal education.⁴⁵ (3-4)

Play is an art which easily enlightens literate as well as illiterate about the welfare and well being of the society. Play is an effective medium to unite the hearts of pundits and peasants. It also exposes the hues of human nature by giving an ideal path to the society in its

eternal journey. Most of the post-independence playwrights of Indian drama in English resort to the social concern as their major themes in the plays that they have produced.

Modern Indian English Drama has the immense scope for traditional techniques. It has the courage to give new dimensions to traditional theatrical perceptions. It not only uses old conventions but gives them new meanings also. So it is never a blind imitation of classical drama but evolves its new theory and takes drama to the common man. Modern Indian English Drama is not the offspring of any specific tradition rather it has laid the foundation of a distinctive tradition in the field of drama by exploring new vistas through reinvestigation into history, legend, myth, folklore and contemporary socio-political issues. A whole new theatrical perception is evolved by the modern Indian English Playwrights like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Habib Tanvir, Badal Sircar and Vizaibhaskar.

Indian Drama in English has to fulfill great expectations and dedicate itself entirely to the noble cause of building a new nation post independence. Modern Indian Dramatists, definitely, have taken the cause in their hands. Girish Karnad's genius lies in the fact that he draws a parallel between antiquity and contemporariness. His plays like Yayati, Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Nagamandala, Tale Danda and Fire and the Rain are based on History, Myths and legends. He explored new vistas to further Indian English Drama. Through Karnad Modern Indian English Drama gets new ways to address social and individual issues. While Karnad uses historical and mythical set-up, Badal Sircar, the great Bangali playwright uses contemporary scenario to throw light on the social problems of modern man. Utter meaninglessness on human existence is the chief theme of his plays. He wants to go from village to village and involve the people. His great contribution lies in his Third Theatre. It is also called Street Theatre. It has brought revolutionary change in the concept of Dramatic performances. Through this theatre, Sircar addresses not only socio-political but ecological

issues also. This theatre is the result of growing unemployment among educated youth. It is very cheap and mobile medium that would, besides many more, serve the purpose of forming a society based on equality. Nivedita Tandon in the article *Street Theatre in India: Badal Sircar's Contribution in the form of Third Theatre* says...

Various issues of social and ecological concerns are voiced through this medium of theatre. They seek to enlighten the masses on a plethora of social, political, religious, economic communalism, caste disparities, terrorism, nuclear distastes and corruption. AIDS awareness finds a place in the repertory of street plays.⁴⁶ (104)

Iconic Marathi dramatist, Vijay Tendulkar kicks-off a virtual revolution in Indian theatre both in terms of content and style. He is a subtle observer of Indian social reality. He is a humanist, an innovative playwright who continuously experimented with form and structures. He is known for his insightful objectification in the development of multi-layered characters whose existential anguish was held up against the social traumas of the society. Tendulkar's plays have dealt with themes that unravel the exploitation of power and latent violence in human relationships. Leading the vanguard of the avant-garde Marathi Theatre, Vijay Tendulkar symbolizes the new awareness and attempts of Indian dramatists of the century to depict the agonies, suffocations and cries of man. In all his plays, he works upon the theme of isolation of the individual and his confrontation with the hostile surroundings.

The contribution of many more like Mahesh Dattani, Indira Parthasarathy, Mahasweta Devi and Padamanabhan also cannot be ignored whenever the element of social concern in Modern Indian English Drama is talked. Belonging to this category Vizai Bhaskar writes dramas keeping social concern as his major theme. Most of his dramas attack on social exploitation. His anguish and protest is towards elements of selfishness, savage-like and

sadist mentalities among people. He envisages the interminable philosophy of life and Divinity through his social plays. His dramas strive for Global Family and Universal brotherhood. He has a special knack in exposing the hypocrisy of modern life and giving antidotes to the ills of it. He hails from the region, Srikakulam district in North Andhra that is believed to be backward, deprived and marginalized social background. This personal background, his tenure as a Government Officer in various regions of Andhra Pradesh State, his close encounter with the political power during this career may also have made him conscious and wise to put the enemy in the dock and to advocate for the real social change.

Bertolt Brecht uses this medium powerfully to propagate the ideology of social change. Bertolt Brecht believes that art is not for art's sake, but he utilizes it for educating the people and prepares them to fight for social change. Having been influenced by the progressive ideology and thought process of Bertolt Brecht, Vizai Bhaskar also believes basically in the method of using the art and art forms for the people and for the progressive social transformation. He honestly believes that the art form of Drama is particularly not corrupt with commercial values unlike the other forms. Hence it could be effectively utilized for spreading the message of social change. So, he invokes the backdrop of religious mythology and brings about very appealing and thought provoking Plays on various evils and problems plaguing the Indian Society in general and the Telugu Society in particular.

As I said earlier, his social background, his education and the opportunity of working as a Government Officer in various regions, both urban and rural, of the State of Andhra Pradesh, provided him with the necessary experience, observation, diction, the subject and, most importantly, the motivation to write twenty six Plays in Telugu. Most of his plays are translated into other Indian Languages proving his subjects, ideology and its presentation has the universal appeal. Vizai Bhaskar happens to be the first Playwright from Telugu to receive

the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2010. He has also won several Awards and laurels from various Natak Academies and Nandi Awards from the Government of Andhra Pradesh prior to this highest honour.

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CHAPTER-2

VIZAI BHASKAR AS A REGIONAL PLAYWRIGHT

2.0 A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF VIZAI BHASKAR

Born in a humble rural setting of Ampolu village in Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh, Vizai Bhaskar picked up his artistic components from his surroundings that demonstrate the dignity of work and the intensity of human predicament. Received his Master's Degree in English Literature which indirectly trained his sensibility to understand the depths of human drama, he started his career initially as a Lecturer in English but soon switched over to public service as a Municipal Commissioner in that capacity he has seen through different cross sections of the society, the boundaries of human greed and mutual exploitation.

Love of the poor is his strong path. He chooses creativity for aggression to express his agony over social injustice. He is a constant seeker of the beauty of human souls amidst all odds and calamities. He is a great dreamer consciously or unconsciously searching graceful rewards to all aspects of human labour. He dreams for a society where work is worship and where such masses are endowed with higher respect and prosperity.

Powerful pun, witty retort, piercing socio-political satire and creative experimentation across mythology, folklore and social fabric are the main pillars of the edifice of his dramatic art, punctuated by poetic precision and 'a typically Indian Art of Narration'. He has carved a place for himself in the annals of Modern Telugu Drama by producing twenty six plays and bagging a number of *Nandi Awards* by the Government of Andhra Pradesh for 'Best Script', including Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University *Sahitya Puraskar*. He has also received *Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Puraskar (Award)* for the year 2010 for his outstanding contribution to Telugu Theatre in the Playwriting Category. *Ruthwik, Kaalakootam, Kinchitbhogam,*

Gandhi Jayanti, Minister, Jeevannatakam, Brahmaraata, Kabeerdas, Mabbullo Bomma, Sramanakam, Bommalu Cheppina Bhajagovindam, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Yogi Vemana are his dramas glorify the Telugu Theatre and spread its paramountary to perpetual vistas.

Vizai Bhaskar occupies a predominant place among the contemporary playwrights of Telugu Theatre. He has twenty six plays of everlasting value with varied themes which won a great deal of appreciation from the theatre loving public. All his works are entertaining and enlightening. They are touching to the heart as well as thought provoking. His sharp vision on human relations and his analysis on the ways of the world are indeed amazing and unique in nature. He leaves no stone unturned while giving expression to his feelings on the human nature in all its nakedness.

Belonging to the place known for its vibrant socio-political activity and selfless sacrifices for social justice and equality, Vizai Bhaskar imbibed a spirit of democratic struggle against social and political oppression by reasons of caste, demography and political system. He draws his themes from the agony of human predicament prevalent in our rural society. He often employs the mythopoeia and folklore concepts to awaken the rural masses since their cultural foundation are deep rooted in the perceptions of yesteryears. He also employs a powerful sense of humour with all its shades of satire and pun to inspire and provoke them for an effective realization of their goal, as he takes drama and theatre as a powerful means of social change.

Suryanarayana father of Vizai Bhaskar worked in Handloom Cooperative Society and plays in various roles of pouranik and social plays of those days. Mother Varalakshmi tells stories to her peer group by adding her exposure over various issues belonging to those days. The same aptitude of their parents would have been the strong foundation to Vizai Bhaskar to become a dramatist later days. He asserts in saying that his village is filled with literary

environment having many dramas being played every year. Vizai Bhaskar says that his village has developed a deep rooted urge in him towards writing and playing dramas.

Vizai Bhaskar's native place Ampolu is suburb of Srikakulam of Andhra Pradesh. Most of the villages of this district used to have a practice of playing social and pouranik plays and competitions were held in these plays. Ampolu is also one such kind of a village having many actors with teeming enthusiasm. In this village, Temple of Lord Rama witnessed a lot of story-telling, spiritual recitations those days. It was the very base for literary environment of village. Kalivarapu Yerrayya Master plays the role of Kabir in the play of Ramadasu. He was the one who played even in Ravindra Bharathi (A raised Platform for Telugu Drama.....An Auditorium at Hyderabad) those days. His experiences and most of the friends playing the dramas at his village are indelible impressions to Vizai Bhaskar. They seem to be the strong influences on his writing. His village, his friend and child artiste Kasina Prasadayya's enthusiasm, Kalivarapu Yerrayya Master's dramatic skill, childhood friendship with Gondu Krishnamurthy, Pondari Suryanarayana and K.V. Ramanamurthy, father's experience as a stage artiste, mother's way of story telling are the formative influences on the childhood of Vizai Bhaskar. It is because of this environment, in his very elementary education itself; he has developed a special aptitude towards drama.

2.1 INFLUENCE OF LITERATURE ON VIZAI BHASKAR

Sreekurmaam is one of the popular tourist spots in Srikakulam District of Andhra Pradesh State. It is the place where Vizai Bhaskar had his high school education. He was a little shy and meek boy who was not allowed by his peers into play ground. There were many games, but he had no opportunity to play as he was not that fitting. He was little disappointed from which a strong determination rose. He wanted to be better than that those of who were good at play ground those days. That has sown seeds for his deep rooted desire of becoming one of the most successful Playwrights.

Vizai Bhaskar used to convert the stories from *Chandamama*-a magazine for Children in Telugu- into poems written with a special aptitude. Bankupalli Lakshmana Murthy, Telugu Teacher of Vizai Bhaskar highly appreciated this novice task and encouraged him to do so. This appreciation made Vizai Bhaskar to write more anthologies of poems in Telugu those days that made him to receive acclamations in his high school education and added popularity as a child bard. In this process, his teacher at Sree Kurmaam high school, Divili Apparao highly influenced Vizai Bhaskar.

Srikakulam is the land which is the birth place for various revolutions those days where Vizai Bhaskar has studied Intermediate and B.A. degree. Throughout his education, he has keenly observed the society with his intellectual eye. He has moved by watching the life style of weavers and their pathetic condition raised several questions in the mind of him through which *Toorpu Tallarindi* a play has come out. Later Vizai Bhaskar moved to Andhra University at Visakhapatnam to study M.A. in English Literature.

2.2 VIZAI BHASKAR'S ASSOCIATION WITH VARIOUS STALWARTS OF HIS REGION AND THEIR RESPONSES

Sri Kalipatnam Rama Rao is one of the most popular writers of Andhra Pradesh. He is popularly known as KARA Master. Most of the lovers of literature in Andhra Pradesh lovingly call him KARA Master in order to give him a great respect. Association with him has developed in Vizai Bhaskar a writer in him. He has become a story writer. Kara Master observed Vizai Bhaskar's stories and complimented for the conversations of those stories. He has observed the originality in him in turn he advised Vizai Bhaskar to write dramas. He has also connected Vizai Bhaskar to renowned Drama Director Sri Mishro.

Mishro's training has made Vizai Bhaskar a powerful Playwright. Vizai Bhaskar has also opined that Mishro has a noval aptitude towards drama. It is Mishro who has imbibed

the same aptitude in him. Vizai Bhaskar says while describing the writing style of him quoted in Sundara Sai's book *Vizai Bhaskar Naataka Sahityam* as.....

I say what I wanted to say something very strong through drama. While creating a new drama, I fall into a very typical situation; I cross myself as characters of the same drama, and converse with me with the dialogues I write for that drama. I shall only be the center point for contradiction and conclusion. I shall write drama by experiencing the same feelings again and again.¹ (4)

Vizai Bhaskar announces that drama is a possible weapon to save the world from it being the victim of change in the name of modernization, industrialization etc. He says that the drama is a suitable tool to describe artistically the change that appears between generations. He also opines that he has no such an excellent reasoning power to state that everything around us happens both good and evil because of God's grace. He also says that he is not that strong to fight against evil practices with a sword or a weapon. He has known only drama writing in order to expose the naked picture of world with its changing face filled with indifferences.

Former Vice Chancellor, Dravidian University, Kuppam of Andhra Pradesh Prof. Gangisetty Lakshminarayana says that it is Vizai Bhaskar's age in the history of Telugu Playwriting. Popular Drama Director and Artist Dr. Chatla Sri Ramulu also points out that the dramas of Vizai Bhaskar are written according to the pulse of people and they have come out the fire that has generated from the problems of public.

It is not an exaggeration to state that Vizai Bhaskar is not only a playwright but he has become an institution to drive the contemporary Indian drama on the most successful way. His dramas are translated into English and other Indian languages like Bengali, Kannada, Tamil, and Malayalam etc. It shows that his dramatic art is not just minimized to the Telugu

society and he gives room for others to acclaim the greatness of it. Being a playwright understanding the societal situations and being a responsible officer, Vizai Bhaskar is working hard for the societal upliftment. Through his dramas, he is trying to add his efforts in expounding the Universal Brotherhood and International Peace.

A Popular Telugu Movie Artiste Dr. Nuthan Prasad says about Vizai Bhaskar in the book *Worship through Drama* by accurately assessing the sharpness of his pen as.....

Vizai Bhaskar bears abundant concern and social consciousness! It is not only his ambition but also his fixed target and commitment to it that all the poor should become rich overnight! At the same time, he never intends that the rich should get perished! It is his aspiration that the bad elements in the rich community should get changed and they have to be transformed as noble saints of the society! Many people know only writing and preaching sermons. But this man knows how to practice them also! Instead of making huge money in writing scripts for the television and films, he deems it well simplicitor to write plays and then fill his bag with handful of 'hats-offs' and a cart load of claps! That's all! Peculiar! Strange! Isn't it? He is definitely on such literary personality who took birth to change the times with his mighty pen.² (36-37)

Dr. G. Gangadhar Chairman, Social Justice Forum, Andhra Pradesh opines that Vizai Bhaskar is a powerful playwright who believes in preparing people to fight for social change. In his foreword to *Spring Thunder* he says....

Having been influenced by the progressive ideology and thought process of Bertolt Brecht, Dr. Vizai Bhaskar also believes basically in the method of using the art and art forms for the people and for the progressive social transformation.³ (7)

2.3 INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH PLAYWRIGHTS ON VIZAI BHASKAR

After a promising beginning of Indian English drama in post Independence period, suddenly there is a downfall and a total dearth of English plays. In 1970s, a new trend came forward in English plays in India which changed its face i.e. Translation method, which means translate the plays of contemporary notable regional playwrights into English and staged in theatre. It got huge success for its bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of both thematic concerns and technical virtuosity within no time. Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Mahashweta Devi are the most representative of the Contemporary Indian drama not only in Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, and Kannada but also on the pan Indian level. From Telugu Vizai Bhaskar should also be added to the above list.

Mohan Rakesh, a Hindi playwright, in his plays presented a relentless fight against the traditional stranglehold of Hindi drama. According to R. K. Dhawan “his plays dramatize the suffering of men and women who fall victims to socio-economic hierarchy and cultural hegemony.”⁴ (21) His plays *One Day in Ashadha*, *the Great Swans of the Waves* and *Half-way House* are translated in English which had an immense success on stage.

Vizai Bhaskar also projects social equality and universal brotherhood as his philosophy in his plays. He envisions to see the down trodden should come up fighting for their rights. On this line his drama *The Chair* gives a call for a positive hope of improvement in the situation of dalits and their potentiality in the rule. The drama also discusses the negative trend of not caring for their own people in the upwardly mobile Dalit section.

Another playwright, a Bengali theatre artist Badal Sircar adopted existential philosophy in his plays, created a genuine people’s theatre known as Third Theatre, a theatre supported and created by people and merely performed by people. His plays- *Procession*,

Bhoma, and *Stale News* are based on the concept of Third Theatre and projected existential philosophy of breakdown of communication.

Vizai Bhaskar also adopts similar kind of philosophy of bringing an element of egalitarian society through his dramas. He always pleads for equality and social justice. He detests evil in any form in the society and advocates happiness for all people. Prosperity of humanity is the undercurrent of his plays. His plays, while discussing poignant social problems do offer prudent solutions to them. Thus each of his plays empowers a message with all dramatic excellence. Often he chooses a wider canvas to project his view point and dramatis personae will commensurately be sizeable. His dialogues are sharp and precise and couched in idiomatic languages. His dialectal adoption is full of nativity and dignity.

A Marathi playwright, Vijay Tendulkar, initiated avant-garde movement in Indian theatre through his plays by changing the form and pattern of traditional Indian drama by demolishing the three act play and by creating new models. His plays - *Sakharam Binder*, *Gashiram Kotwal* and *Silence The Court is in Sessions* are worldwide famous which highlights the typical middle class morality, sexual harassment and complexities of human existence. As Veena Noble Das points out,

He does not consider the accuracy of human violence as something loathsome or ugly as it is innate in human nature.⁵ (9)

Vizai Bhaskar also initiates quite a few new experiments in his plays like bringing animals appeal human beings for better living in the play *Jeevannatakam*, Gods surprise to see human providence in the play *The Return of Gandhi*. As G. Rama Krishna Rao points out,

Experiments are not the monopoly of the genre of poetry. As a matter of fact, there is a better ambience in drama for such exercises. Being a discerning playwright, D. Vizai Bhaskar knows it well.⁶ (3)

Each one of Vizai Bhaskar's plays has something new in them in their treatment, characterization or technique. The play *Jeevannatakam*-the drama of life- is quite innovative and is full of symbolism. The play starts with a dialogue between a donkey, a dog and a monkey on one side and God on the other. The three animals, wearied of man's dominance over them, pray to God to cut short their remaining life. God agrees to the request provided any other living being comes forward to receive the period. Finally, man agrees to take it. An elephant is a witness for the whole episode.

Girish Karnad, author of the Kannada plays- *Tughlaq*, *Yayati* and *Hayavadana* is an important contributor to Indo-Anglian theatre. K.R.S. Iyengar attributes as.....

In all his three plays- be the theme historical, mythical, or legendary- Karnad's approach is 'modern' and he deploys the conventions and motifs of folk art like masks and curtains to project a world of intensities, uncertainties and unpredictable denouements.⁷ (735).

Vizai Bhaskar also loves to bring mythological references in his plays in order to fulfill his interest of conveying resolute messages. *The Return of Gandhi*, *Hiranya Garbha*, *Devudu Kaavali* are some of the plays example for the apt use of myth in them. In *The Return of Gandhi* and *Devudu Kaavali* Vizai Bhaskar adopts melodrama with a liberal component of myth and fantasy. In *The Return of Gandhi*, Lord Yama holds Gandhiji responsible for the abuse of independence by vested interests in the country and directs him to spend thirty days in independent India. Gandhiji comes alive on his birthday and gets entangled in several unpalatable episodes and faces even death sentence. He finally reached the Heaven in *Pushpak Vimana* (flowery chariot like flight referred in Hindu Purana). He vows that in the next birth, he will be an embodiment of verve and vigour.

Mahesh Dattani, born in Bangalore on November 1958, is a prolific playwright and is regarded as the first Indian English playwright to win the Sahitya Akademi Award for his play, *Final Solutions* in 1998. Being actor, director and playwright, he knows what constitutes a play. In an interview with Anita Nair, he says:

I see myself as a craftsman not as a writer. To me being a playwright is about seeing myself as a part of the process of production. I write for the sheer pleasure of communicating with this dynamic medium⁸ (21).

Mahesh Dattani has relentlessly shed light on the gritty realities of the society which is a hub of such issues which are quite noticeable but generally brushed aside under the carpet of civilization. There are certain hush-hush issues in almost every Indian family which, when leak out and come to the notice of others, become insufferably embarrassing. He says that “I am certain that my plays are true reflection of my time, place and socio-economic background . . . in a country that has a myriad of challenges to face politically socially, artistically and culturally”⁹(xv). He considers drama as a business of holding a mirror up to society.

Thus, both, Vizai Bhaskar and Dattani are social realists committed to reveal evils appear in the contemporary society. While Vizai Bhaskar presents the struggling picture of down-trodden and their life, Dattani has also depicted the marginal position of women and their struggle against exploitation dealing with the issues, such as gender discrimination, class-conflict, which are often brushed aside under the carpet of the society and are dubbed as fringe issues.

To depict reality on stage Vizai Bhaskar has moved from an officer to a dalit while Dattani has made subject of his discussion only to middle class urban family. With the help

of his dramatic virtuosity and theatrical adroitness, Vizai Bhaskar has presented hidden and burning reality on the stage split in various levels signifying the fractured personality and conscience of postmodern human beings who are mechanized to such an extent that human relations have no value for them.

Vizai Bhaskar, basically a social commentator and an officer of civil services, delves deep into the realities of life in cotemporary social milieu. Vizai Bhaskar, first a teacher and then a playwright having a natural change in his inner personality as a writer, to suit to the role to make it convincing and effective. His writings reflect with such quality that they have all his experiences in his various positions like teacher, officer and a playwright. Committed to revealing the malfunctions of society, Vizai Bhaskar explains the influence of his region on him in the preface of *Spring Thunder*:

I am one amongst the many whose childhood was immensely caught in the whirling currents of social, cultural and political forces. Because of these factors, whatever I want to write, I need to write and I have to write with a direct or indirect influence of the background of my native region.¹⁰ (13)

Vizai Bhaskar's native region 'North Coastal Andhra', especially Srikakulam District, received many literary and progressive influences from Bengal which is considered as the epicenter of reformation and renaissance. Patriotic fervor of Subhash Chandra Bose, poetic flavor of Rabindranath Tagore and the revolutionary waves from *Naxalbari Movement* touch and get assimilated into the culture of North Andhra and plays a major role in shaping its thought process.

As an individual or rather as a social being one feels deeply involved in the existing state of one's society and one may brood over it. So, as a writer Vizai Bhaskar also finds

himself persistently inquisitive, nonconformist, ruthlessly cold and brutal by being against to all exploitation. He passionately appeals that all exploitation must end. In his play *The Chair* he discusses the negative trend of not caring for their own people in the upwardly mobile *dalit* section and warns against such bad trends and pulls up the educated *dalit* people. Dr. G. Gangadhar, Chairman, Social Justice Forum, Andhra Pradesh in his foreword to *Spring Thunder* reminds us of the words of Ambedkar as:

I have brought the chariot of social change so far with great difficulty. If you can do it, take it further, if not leave it there. The next generations would take it forward. But never ever push it back or take it in the reverse direction.¹¹ (11)

There is definitely a lot of difference in the situation of empowerment of the *dalits* and backward masses which they may not have dreamt of prior to Ambedkar. Vizai Bhaskar's play *the Chair* acknowledges this difference and largely emanates a positive hope of improvement in the situation and in fact calls for it by creating awareness among the deprived and underprivileged sections of the society. Thus it reveals its playwright Vizai Bhaskar as a critic of the contemporary political situation and as a great visionary of the peaceful, non-violent social revolution by being one of the well known regional playwrights.

As a writer Vizai Bhaskar feels fascinated by the violent exploited-exploiter relationship and obsessively deep into it instead of taking a position against it. That takes him to a point where he feels that this relationship is eternal, a fact of life however cruel, and will never end. Nor that he relishes this thought while it grips him but it cannot shake him off. His play *Riding the Tiger* deals with a peculiar trend of 'factionism' prevalent in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh State, from the people friendly perspective. This play brings out exploited-exploiter relationship effectively by presenting the people of this region who involve in the cruel sport factionism. The innocent and illiterates who are

habituated to terrible terrorism by riding the factionist tiger know at one point that they cannot get down the tiger to be prey to it or they cannot continue this dreadful riding. After this self realization they stop this evil deed. Thus the Rayalaseema Region's influence on Vizai also makes him a Regional Playwright.

Interested in analyzing the relationship between power and violence, Vizai Bhaskar observes that violence is not as something that exists in isolation, but as a part of the human milieu, human behavior and human mind. It has become an obsession. At a very sensitive level, violence can be defined as consciously hurting someone, whether it is physical violence or psychological violence. Violence is something which has to be accepted as fact. It's no use describing it as good or bad. Projection of it can be good or bad. And violence, when turned into something else, can certainly be defined as vitality, which can be very useful, very constructive. So it depends on how you utilize it.

Vizai Bhaskar shows this in his play *Rajigadu Rajayyadu* that seeks to unfold the misery of a barber who doesn't have an awareness to exercise one's rights to ensure a meaningful life. President Naidu, his wife Mangamma and their kith and kin rule the roost in the village. Rajigadu, man of self-esteem finds it hard to digest the social disdain heaped on people of low calling. On knowing the glorious contents of *Nayi Brahmin Puranam*- the mythology of barber community, he learns that no calling is low and each has its pride of the place the vested interests benefitted from the discrimination. He gets educated under the guidance of a caring Bammagaru, a reformist Brahmin widow. She teaches the downtrodden to become aware of their rightful place in society. Thus awakened the less privileged lot finally gets Rajigadu elected as the president of the village. In his article to *the Hindu*, Velcheti Subrahmanyam rightly points out Vizai Bhaskar's influence of his rural milieu as:

Rajigadu Rajayyadu presents contemporary rural life, warts and all..... Renowned Playwright Dr. Vizai Bhaskar scripted it in Srikakulam dialect, it documented seamy side of rural life against the backdrop of troubles and travails of the eponymous character Rajigadu belonging to barber community..... The focused dialogue is reflective of Vizaibhaskar's perceptive grasp of the dynamics of contemporary rural life.¹² (14)

Thus, the use and misuse of authority to maintain the status of power and to perpetuate the violence against down-trodden has been recurring theme in Vizai Bhaskar's plays. The milieu may change but to examine and underline the power-violence syndrome in different strata of society remain the motto of Mahesh Dattani also.

Chandra Sekhar Kambar a Kannada Playwright, is well-known for his erudite insight into the traditional lives of Indian people. He is also famous for his depiction of indigenous art or native culture and his treatment of regional art forms. Kambar cherishes the experiences of ordinary people among their gods and goddesses and their unique rituals. Kambar defies logic in most of his plays and tries to reflect the intricacies of the world through them. As he finds the complex network of life that evades concrete meaning, he faithfully reflects the same in his plays. A reader must not try to read his plays with the curiosity of a scientist to discover facts through logical reasoning.

Kambar was a major figure in the movement of 1960s that tried to correlate the folk and modern. "His 'Jokumaraswami' had electrified the theater with its folk structure. The feudal master, the servant who is the strong male, the women who turn between the two (symbolic of earth) ... all these had made a vivid impact on Kannada culture"¹³ (19) and possibly it "is the most popular amateur play in Kannada. It attracts the imagination of the common audience also"¹⁴ (86).

Kambar's contribution and service to folk theater is really commendable. In fact, the effort taken by Kambar to adopt folk form is natural rather than cultural. He avers that "I belong geographically to a village, and sociologically to what was considered to be an oppressed, uneducated class. I am, therefore, a folk person simply because I honestly cannot be anything else"¹⁵ (5). Kambar considers writing is a wonderful tool to inspire people toward meaningful life and feels writers should fully exercise their freedom of expression without deviation.

Kambar and Vizai Bhaskar have high regard for the principles of truth and dharma and they express their faith through their plays. Though they write in this age of commercialization and globalization, they adhere to the native wisdom in their plays. They shower their affection toward mankind but reprimand it for aggravating domination of nature, oppression of women, and suppression of the rights of humans by other humans. They appreciate equality, fraternity, and individuality in their plays and oppose all kinds of domination. They extend these qualities to entities other than humans too.

The playwrights consider ignorance, greed, and selfishness of humans as the causes of environmental problems and confirm the virtues of nature through their plays. It is their attitude and outlook towards society that makes their plays socially sound. The writers indicate the opulence and the independence of society in their plays and depict the humans' correspondence to it. Moreover, they expound the interdependence of all beings on the earth and their dependence on society for their survival. They break the convention of keeping women as passive listeners and disclose their talent in sustaining the principles of social justice.

Kambar and Vizai Bhaskar are optimistic about the developments of Science and Technology but they acknowledge the harm induced on Earth by them. The writers express their concern for the globe through their treatment of nature, women, animals, low-caste

people, and marginalized communities. They try to establish balance and harmony in the world through their plays.

Another noteworthy playwright Mahashweta Devi satires the prevailing social system in her plays – ‘*Mother of 1084*’, ‘*Water*’, ‘*Aajir*’, ‘*Urvashi o Jhonny*’ and ‘*Bayen*’ etc. E. Satyanarayana in his book *The plays of Mahashweta Devi* says.....

“Like Brecht, Mahashweta Devi never tries to disguise the stage apparatus so as to make the audience aware that it is sitting in a theatre.¹⁶ (128)

Working on Brecht’s influence on Telugu drama, Vizai Bhaskar possesses an in-depth knowledge about social problems. He also knows how to satirize the situations sensibly and to allow the audience to pick up the solutions to the problems through his plays. He seems to pick up the stage to address social causes. *Kalakootam*, *Ruthwik*, *Kinchit Bhogam* (A Little Luxury) are some of the examples of Vizai’s ability in satirizing the existing situations in society. *Kalakootam* proves that thirst for power corrupts the mind of persons involved in the process of its case of elections to a Municipal Council for his play. Mere amassing of wealth does not serve, eligibility and conducive atmosphere to enjoy it shall be created is the essence of the theme for the play *Ruthwik*. *Kinchit Bhogam*’s thrust is on convincing that one becoming rich may not be in one’s hand but becoming a good human being is in one’s hand. And these two angles of life are reflected through the characters of a materialist woman and her philosopher husband.

2.5 REGIONAL ISSUES AND THEIR STRONG INFLUENCE ON VIZAI BHASKAR’S DRAMAS

Observation, first-hand knowledge of social conditions and ability to put forth views in simplest and effective spoken language are requirements of any playwright to come out with effective scripts. Vizai Bhaskar is a typical example of a playwright who possesses all

these qualities. He took to play writing like a fish to water. It was due to the efforts of a renowned storywriter, the late Kalipatnam Rama Rao hailing from the same district, who was a teacher in Vizai Bhaskar's village that discovered a dramatist in Vizai Bhaskar.

Powerful pun, refreshing humour, piercing socio-political satire and creative experimentation across mythology, folklore and social fabric are the main dimensions of Vizai Bhaskar's dramatic art, punctuated by poetic precision and a typically Indian art of narration. Being a Lecturer, Administrator and a Playwright Vizai Bhaskar is a keen observer of situations that he comes across in each position that he is in. Particularly societal issues and problems might have influenced him so much. He has a keen observation in picking up the raw-material for writing good plays with better knowledge. He always feels great of his village which has given source to writing as quoted in Sundara Sai's Vizai Bhaskar Naataka Sahityam...

My village happened to be the centre of fine arts. We used to stage a lot of plays and people used to actively participate in it. Even my father Suryanarayana was a stage artiste. So I was quite naturally attracted to theatre since my childhood.¹⁷ (2)

Srikakulam and Northern Andhra Pradesh problems are the resources of his dramas because he was born here and much of his childhood was influenced by the socio-economic and cultural conditions of this region. He was also much fascinated to the teachers and artistes particularly who contributed to the genre of drama in its writing and playing of the region. He says, as it is quoted in an article of *The Hindu*, for why he doesn't concentrate on some other genre.....

May be I am influenced by the street plays I saw in my childhood in my village.¹⁸ (3)

The backwardness, culture conflict, dialect of this region is obviously seen in the dialogues and plot construction of Vizai Bhaskar's Plays. Vizai Bhaskar has tried to expose how the innocence and immaturity of the people of this region is exploited for the vested

interests. He is much comfortable in using his region's language and other elements in his drama writing as it is said in Subramanyam's article in *the Hindu*....

Dialect, dressing and decorum of the region find reflection in works of Vizai Bhaskar.¹⁹ (3)

On the other hand, Rayalaseema region and its problems also have a remarkable influence on Vizai Bhaskar's dramas as he worked much time as Municipal Commissioner in Ananthpur of this region.

His play *Riding the Tiger* deals with a peculiar trend of 'factionism' prevalent in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh State, from the people friendly perspective. The Telugu Film industry is guilty of making several loathsome commercial hit films idealizing this notorious criminal trend, which de-humanizes people and left millions of innocent and unfortunate people victims of violence just for the sake of upholding the authoritarian status of a handful of landlords and warlords. Some unscrupulous film makers and film writers have unabashedly idealized this unhealthy, violent, barbarous and infamous 'factionist trend' for purely commercial reasons. They have the compulsive tendency to depict one side as the Heroes and the other side as Villains. But Vizai Bhaskar's play shows both the sides as the villains and projects the innocent victims and sufferers as the Heroes and doesn't stop at that. It goes on to urge them to stop riding this tiger and annihilate this tiger of factionism once and forever.

Another major influence on Vizai Bhaskar's dramas is social inequality. As Ambedkar believed in the democracy to be complete and comprehensive not only politically but socially and economically too, Vizai Bhaskar also comes with the play *The Chair* that deals with the subject of political reservations given to *Dalits* in India. This play shows how Vizai Bhaskar has been influenced by the age old deprivation of power to the *Dalits* and backward people. He seems to succeed in creating a positive hope for the said section of

people to enjoy their constitutional right. This attempt of Vizai Bhaskar may acknowledge the hope of Martin Luther King who dreamt of a black to be president of America and Ambedkar to see a *dalit* occupying Rashtrapati Bhavan of India.

Vizai Bhaskar's latest play '*Rajigadu Rajayyadu*' focuses on the socio-economic circumstances of members of the backward caste artisans, handicraftsman and service providers, who find it difficult to live in the modern market-driven economy.

2.6 VIZAI BHASKAR'S STRIVING FOR THE SOCIETAL-UPLIFTMENT

Vizai Bhaskar's dramas show an idealistic path for universal peace and social harmony for not only the generations of present society but also for generations to come. Generally every literary piece presents certain principles or moral sermons for people to follow. If it is a drama, it comes up with a few situations that ascribe moral principles, spiritual outlooks, cross discussions etc. Whereas Vizai Bhaskar's dramas not only aspire for wellbeing of Humanity but also they teach what to follow for such wellbeing.

Whatever may be the problem or subject of the drama or plot of it or what so ever background that it takes; Vizai Bhaskar's dramas strive for societal upliftment and social equality. They bring out social stigmas and make the elite to think for the root cause of the problem. Most of his dramas like *The Return of Gandhi*, *Kaalakootam*, *Riding the Tiger*, *Ruthwik* etc., come under this category.

A death sentence is the gift to the father of our nation who strived to bring independence. In *The Return of Gandhi*, Vizai Bhaskar has given a shape to an imagination of how Gandhi would react to the present day political scenario that filled with various strange feats. He brings Gandhi's character to make the present generation aware of how to react to hooliganism, malice attacks and corruption that are practiced vividly everywhere. It stands as an example play that brings message to the younger generation.

Kaalkootam brings the pathetic picture of politicians how they use democracy for their personal benefits. The freedom struggle that has taken innumerable lives is comparable to *Ksheera Sagara Madhana* and brought out the *Amrutha* of democracy which enthroned the common man as the supreme power, let us not pour out the venom that kills the immortal spirit of democracy. This play appeals the leaders to be realistic as they should be by exercising real democratic methods rather not being opportunistic to have power in any way. Vizai Bhaskar succeeded in bringing out how a corrupt politician after his death in his ghost form addresses his opponent is as following.....

In democracy one may treat his foe as a corpse,
but stoop not to make him a corpse as such ²⁰(141)

Vizai Bhaskar has shown how nectar like democracy is poisoned with corrupt practices of present day politicians through this drama and he also appeals the leaders to work for betterment of the society. He also appeals the general public to cast their valuable vote to keep up the value of Democracy in order to build the right Nation and society.

“Society should prosper, people should prosper” should only be heard in this county but not this class would prosper or that class would prosper. Universal welfare and Qualitative living standards are the slogans that propagated by Vizai Bhaskar’s play *Hiranyagarbha* that stands as an outstanding example wishing for the societal upliftment. This play is a better example to promote the philosophy of social equality. Society is like running water that moves forward and like rising Sun that goes top.

Riding the Tiger is another splendid example for factionist leaders how they rob of the innocence of their followers. This play not only describes the dangerous sport of factionism that compared to the riding the tiger, but also given an eye opener to the people of rayalaseema region who take this sport as their birth right. This play could prevent the anti-social elements and atrocities.

Ruthwik is a play deals with ailments that are so common in the life of the modern man who suffers from the desire of power; money etc., It sermonizes the people to live harmoniously by protecting *dharma* which in turn protects human life. The dawn of new tendencies and vogues affecting the very truthful way of human life is the crux of the story. By making ‘spiritual anchor’ *Ruthwik* a character in the play, Bhaskar dexterously demonstrates *dharma*’s co-presence in the contemporary Indian home, street and office which marks the *adharmas* co-existence of their lives. While appreciating Vizai Bhaskar’s wizardry as a playwright, Dr. P.V. Ramana, Head, The Department of Theatre Arts, Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad, in his foreword comments on the play superficially a message oriented, creative, entertaining and very real account of an attack on present day societal ills and mistrust.

Vizai Bhaksar has emerged as a great hope to see the society with its balance keeping all its inequalities aside. He strongly believes drama does the best in keeping society healthy. He points it out in one of his anthologies of dramas *Spring Thunder*.....

All my effort is to make my characters forerunners and beacon holders of such metamorphosis and to unveil a ‘new society’ of equality and human dignity where man will be empowered by himself without any hereditary hierarchic caste references.²¹ (13-14)

Vizai Bhaskar is a dramatist with human spirit. His dramas are picturesque presentations of society and its concern towards races. As quoted in Subrahmanyam’s article in *the Hindu*, Vizai Bhaskar admits that he writes dramas naturally for societal upliftment. He mentions, “I favour drama to express myself, as I have the flexibility of saying all that my heart wants to say through the characters. In fact, I do not subscribe to the views of some of my character, but then it is lurking somewhere in my heart and comes out forcefully.”²² (3)”

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CHAPTER-3

STRUCTURE AND THEMES OF VIZAI BHASKAR PLAYS

All stories interest me, and some haunt me until I end up writing them. Certain themes keep coming up: justice, loyalty, violence, death, political and social issues, freedom.

-Isabel Allende

3.0 INTRODUCTION

All the popular cultural influences such as myths, legends and folklore of gods, goddesses, divine or semi-divine heroes, well-known historical personalities and public events sway the minds of audience of Indian drama and make them reflective. Indian English Playwrights tackle this very influence and present an instructive entertainment in the form of plays based on these cultural and political issues. Therefore, these issues become a great source of entertainment, wisdom, human insight, social criticism, and literary social reformation for the Indian English playwrights. Themes of the plays of Vizai Bhaskar taken for discussion in the thesis prove this point.

The intriguing world of myths, legends and folklore prompted the Indian English dramatists to bring to light the burning issues and contemporary evils of society. Although the themes and plots are different, there are some common motives found in the dramatic renderings of these traditional tales such as to preach the ideals of secularism, social and gender equality, universal brotherhood, love, peace and non-violence. Protest against the religious frenzy and casteism are more dominant themes in their plays which are presented by these dramatists in the guise of the traditional lore. Most of the playwrights are the critiques of age-old Vedantic Brahmanism which is advocated by the socially dominant priestly class and practiced even today in some form or the other by all the upper castes of the Indian society. The dramatists have lashed the pseudo-religious, selfish and hypocritical behaviour

of these classes through their plays using the cultural stories as thematic whips. Despite the modernity and a strong sense of egalitarianism in the Indian way of life these days, the upper castes of the present day Indian society continue to exercise their social dominance over the masses and observe the caste rules directly or indirectly.

Vizai Bhaskar is the bitter critic of this inhuman social custom. His Plays work as weapons to fight the social injustice of casteism and advocate for equality in the divided Indian society. Through the plays, he instructs the audience better treatment for the under privileged. His plays seem to spread the message of humanism using the cultural stories as medium of instruction.

In addition to this social evil of casteism, there is another problem of misuse of power for personal and selfish gains by the upper strata of Indian people which consistently bothers the dramatists. Power remains a potent weapon in the hands of a few castes to sustain their social dominance in India even in the highly advanced and intellectual world of today. In the garb of democratic values, they sway the power frenzy of the scared minds of general people making their innocent intellect slaves of Politics. Vizai Bhaskar's *Return of Gandhi*, *Riding the Tiger*, *The Chair*, *Kaalakootam* are the dramatic examples of the control of caste based politicians over the masses. The dominant political characters in these plays, Raghava, Kodanda Ramaih, Naidu, Reddy, and other rich figures resemble the upper caste people of the present day India. They incite the ignorant masses in the name of power politics, factionism and try to make them hardcore fundamentalists. By fueling their fire of political frenzy, they compel them to fight against the socialist or humanist movements of the society to earn personal gains. To remain powerful, this class upholds the out of date and troublesome customs and wants their ignorant followers to remain superstitious. The myths,

legends, and folklore associated with these characters have brought to light such a mentality of the upper class and their followers.

Therefore, for Vizai Bhaskar these power political gimmicks become symbols of social criticism and in his plays all these evil forces are however shown defeated by the genuine humanists. They all fight tooth and nail against the political and caste evils and raise the banner of revolt. Almost every play either presents this genuine problem directly or under-run the effects through the mythical themes. Hence, Vizai Bhaskar's plays serve as the voice of protest of such oppressed miserable folks of Indian society.

Vizai Bhaskar handles different themes and subject matters in his plays which are both topical as well as appealing. His plays establish his reputation as a playwright in Telugu literature and launch him on his celebrated career in the Indian theatre. Most of his plays are translated into English and many Indian languages and have continued to be performed all over country. Vizai Bhaskar wants to highlight the issues of the contemporary society, widely varied in thematic and stylistic content. The following are some dominant themes found in the plays of Vizai Bhaskar.

Theme of Gender Discrimination is found in the play *Mabbullo Bomma*. The play discusses predominantly about gender discrimination. With a modified Brechtian technique, the play powerfully presents the misery of womanhood in the present Indian setting. The playwright throws open a question to the representatives of different sections of the audience, rather of present society; answer it with their own creations reflecting the blazing flames into which the modern Indian woman is thrown. The central theme of the play is that 'unless woman is self ascertained, the problems surmounting her will not vanish'. We scare a Tiger, we pay respects to cobra, but we simply cut and eat a goat because of its meekness and weakness, woman also, as long as she is docile, she continues to be a prey for the male

dominated society. The popular opinion is that Gods will reside where woman is respected. The playwright says that where woman is respected, there is no need of God, because woman herself is Goddess of mankind.

Theme of Communalism is the presentation of biographical play *Mahatma Jyotirao Phule*. This is the first play in Telugu written on the great visionary, reformer who has questioned the origin on caste system and has revolutionalized the society by educating the depressed, backward and other weaker sections specially the women. A play that is written on the theme of communalism is very serious, delicate and sensitive drama of actions on the well-worn subject. Philosophy & Classics Scholar Paul Woodruff opines:

Like religion, theater seems sometimes to be on the way out, but it keeps coming back in unexpected disguises some horrible, some wonderful.¹ (15)

It is the very essence of communalism theme filled play. The play *Jyothi Rao Phule* challenges traditional beliefs and meaningless superstitions which are guiding the society and making the lives of Sudras miserable. Phule realizes that it is lack of education among Sudras that created inequity and discrimination. He starts schooling to Sudras and women. This is the first instance in Indian History to keep the doors open for education Non-Brahmins and women also. Phule's wife Svitiribai is also restrained and insulted by upper caste people not to take up the mission of education as women and Sudras that are barred from education by the Scriptures. Against all odds, Phule couple takes this task ahead and illuminate the minds of Sudras and Women. Phule wages a long war against the upper caste communities and redeem the masses from the clutches of illiteracy, poverty of thought and lack of progress—physical, mental and spiritual. Saikat Banerjee in his article writes:

The literature of the Post-Independence phase evaluates new forms of communal tension in the sub-continent. The writers consciously or unconsciously open the wounds that were inflicted on Indian psyche in 1947, as they try to relive the traumas of the people who suffered enormously. From the stylistic point of view, we find innovations of form and technique in the works of the writers.² (119)

Similarly Vizai Bhaskar plays too come up with this innovative form and technique. Another play *The Chair* is also based on theme of communalism. As its theme goes on, Narsaiah, a man of down-trodden community, becomes an elected Sarpanch of a village, wherein, 'Dora' and 'Patel' used to exercise their power unauthorisedly. 'Jogulu' and 'Thippadu' are their henchmen. They continue to show their might and bring pressure on Narsaiah to fulfill their desires. Bheemaih, the educated younger brother of Narsaiah, by inspiring people of his own community and with their support gives out a strong protest to those big-heads and succeeds in getting their eyes opened. Sunkulamma, the embodiment of innocence, as a wife of Narsaiah follows his footsteps and guides him too. The truthful and faithful clerical community is represented by the character 'Gumastaha'.

The play also presents greed that doesn't restrict religion, caste and creed, is evident from Bheemayya's love for money and fame. The greed and the violence are two different issues mix together where violence is promoted and preferred in communal riot. The playwright at the end of the play wishes to stop this game of hatred and communal tension through the character of Bheemayya. Even Bheemayya announces that the chair is symbol of power that has been offered by constitution to a dalit.

The post-Emergency period marks a new phase in the political history of India. It has seen heightened social and political articulation and an intense ideological contestation

through a wide variety of issue-based mobilizations and struggles in different parts of the country. The farmers' movements, dalit mobilization, the renewed struggles of the agrarian poor, women's discourse, and the new phase of student politics and civil rights articulation are all demonstrative of the vibrant civil society of post-Emergency India. Factionalism is one such kind of political articulation that has brought negative impact on society.

Factionism is another theme in the plays of Vizai Bhaskar. He makes himself conspicuous by picking up such sensitive issue of the society in the play *Riding the Tiger*. The play is all about how innocent people die in the dangerous sport of factionism. But this shocking revelation transformed into the murder of Mareppa. In this play, Vizai Bhaskar brings into focus the hypocrisy and repression of this 'high sophisticated class' practicing factionism that brings contradictions among the people as Jorge in the article *Leadership Changes, Factionalism and Organizational Politics* opines:

Factional politics should be distinguished from organizational politics. They feature conflict over personnel and office holding, their defining characteristic is that they emerge out of the policy arena and that many disputes stem more from organizational roles than from the individual characteristics of power contenders.³ (132)

The society accepts factionists to influence the politics but would not allow their practices to partake leadership. This is very heart rendering story about the henchmen of factionists murder simply for biryani and liquour given by their bosses, fills us with horror and sense of injustice. Vizai Bhaskar depicts the appropriate reflections of society regarding these henchmen who are unknowingly involved in factionism in the play. They know their death is confirmed either by the tiger or tiger-like the factionism that they are practicing.

Thus *Riding the Tiger* expresses the crisis of innocent henchmen being treated as tools to carry out the faction murders.

Greed of modern man is another theme that is found in Vizai Bhaskar's plays. He offers a continual flow of analysis and criticism of an age which he thinks is heading for disaster. He analyses modern man's sense of directionlessness and indicates that he must re-evaluate his aims and goals, his morality and economics, and discard worn out values which no longer describe either human nature or contemporary problems. The play *Ruthwik* introduces this theme that modern men must overcome their limited frames of reference and must cultivate open-mindedness in their search for meaning and direction in a complex world.

Theme of spirituality is also found in Vizai Bhaskar's plays. Probably *Brahmaraata*, *Bommalu Cheppina Bhajagovindam* and *Kabirdas* deal with the subject of spirituality. *Bommalu cheppina Bhajagovindam* is a play in which the philosophy of Adi Sankaracharya is enshrined. In this play, it is very effectively depicted how boundless greed will spoil the individual and society. A Minister in connivance with the officials wants to grab the land, is objected and criticized by his wife who is a well-versed Scholar with pious mind. The play is characterized by folklore stories and mythological events and historical concepts. Pungent satire runs throughout the play.

The story of the play takes place even in *Vykuntham* (Heaven) while the Goddess Lakshmi criticizing her husband Lord Vishnu for not taking action against the bad and cruel. Lord Vishnu along with His wife Lakshmi comes to *Bhooloka* (Earth) to kill the Minister who is corrupt and selfish. But He never puts an end to the Minister. Frustrated by the inaction of her husband, Goddess Lakshmi vehemently blames Him for his indifferent attitude. Then Lord Vishnu says that when the ruler was treated as the deputy of God, it was

His duty to punish him but today the rulers are representatives of the people and it is their turn to do it. People have the most powerful weapon in their hands that is election ballot. With this weapon, they can make a common man as an emperor and an emperor as a pauper. That is the strength of ballot which is more than the strength of His *Sudarshana Chakra*. It is a rare blend of mythology, folklore and political satire exemplifying the mastery of the Playwright over creative experimentation. First produced in 2008, it has won Golden Nandi.

Whenever, there is turmoil in the society and social unrest, awareness to the public is given through with mythical or spiritual approach in solving of the problems. And better understanding of the human values of those myths help with the spiritual aspect of the God, which is there in the subconscious mind of the people or audience which works a dramatic ritual. The inner struggle of the man is nowhere seen in the Indian literature like that of unrest in metaphysics. It is only the external struggle what is seen in Indian life. Every playwright has his own approach in instructing the public. If the playwright takes the mythical or spiritual element, he is likely to capture the attention of the audience; by giving his vision of thought in regard to the culture prevailing at the times. Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo and T.P.Kailasam have started this type of writing before independence. In taking these essences in the stories, they have written the plays with highly symbolic in their approach and style. They use spiritual and puranic element to teach morals to public and to instruct them to know better about the life, in a philosophical way. Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Chandrasekhar Kambar and others have taken similar approach in their place and are popular in using of the myths and spiritual stories.

Vizai Bhaskar too believes that the Indian drama is deeply rooted in mythical stories, spiritual anecdotes and *puranas*. He is found to take the spiritual elements in exhibiting the thoughts on the present condition with inner or external struggle of a human being. He may

believe in that the spiritual thoughts give more meaning, and they widen the horizon in a more thoughtful way. Socio-cultural patterns reflect the harmony of life in the modern society. Since, spiritualism has abundant storage of stories; Vizai Bhaskar may have depended on these themes relating to the present condition.

Indian culture and tradition has not changed much compared to that of Europeans and Americans. Hence Indians' thought is fully fore-grounded on Hindu religion. Although modernity has invaded, Indians have not left their culture and tradition. Even today to them the religious ideals and thoughts give meaning to the existence. And there is no existential anguish like that of European thought. The problems which are highlighted in the plays are of social and spiritual. One such problem is taken in the play *Brahmarata* by Vizai Bhaskar to highlight contemporary social disorder.

The plot is simple. As per the report of that *Narada*, the nomadic sage of the Three Worlds, as *Brahma* the creator, chooses to scribe lines of poverty over the foreheads of millions of human beings, everywhere he finds labourers making hand to mouth existence, despite their hard work throughout the day, factory-workers spilling their blood for one-time bread to their family, miserable fellows dragging on their lives with half-naked bodies, womenfolk stooped to debauchery just for their food, the child labourers who are supposed to relish their childhood, lifting the heaviest rocks with their embryo hands, barbarous criminals butchering the necks of kids just for a paltry sum of Rupees Ten, and the impecunious lot who offer for sale their limbs for a hundred-rupee-note.

Consequently, the horoscopes scribed by Brahma turns out to be an intoxicating liquor to forbear with tight lips any injustice and unethical deeds. The fore-headlines also become a Will-dead for monsters, grabbers and selfish fellows to assign their unlawfully earned riches to their heirs. The lines on forehead are taken as a ruse for the rulers, elders

and other intelligentsia to escape from their obligation to reform the society from time to time with fresh economic and social dogmas. The legendary *Narada* is presented as a revolutionary, questioning his father, Brahma on the propriety of His writings dictating the human fate and makes Him to realize the sad plight of His creation. The disillusioned Brahma announces that He will only be the creator of man and the man shall be the creator of his own fate. This is another brilliant example of re-interpreting mythology to highlight contemporary social disorder.

3.1 PORTRAYAL OF SOCIETY IN VIZAI BHASKAR'S PLAYS

Vizai Bhaskar plays are mirror images of contemporary society. They are picture portraits of societal stigmas with their solutions. They deal the societal issues through various angles and put forward a thought provoking insight to the audience to think in their own way in order to draw conclusions for the problems. Vizai Bhaskar is very much interested to use drama for social change and let people to understand the medium is for solution for societal maladies. Dr. G. Gangadhar, Chairman, Social Justice Forum, Andhra Pradesh, rightly points it out in his foreword to the book *Spring Thunder an anthology of dramas of Vizai Bhaskar* as

He honestly believes that the art form of Play or Drama is particularly not corrupt with commercial values unlike the other forms, for example Cinema and hence it could be effectively utilized for spreading the message of social change. Many a time, he invokes the backdrop of religious mythology and brings about very appealing and thought provoking plays on various evils and problems plaguing the Indian Society in general and the Telugu Society in particular.⁴ (7)

Vizai Bhaskar's plays bring out the message of social concern in various angles. They also bring out various social issues in different angles.

The play *Kaalakootam* discusses cruel rule is venom on Society. The theme of this play is that the poisonous venom should not spoil the society. The Play is the picture presentation of how violence becomes an illness and psychological syndrome to dilapidation of society. The Play has clearly shown the pathetic practices of present day politicians for power. It is an account of immoral activities that are being held in the name of politics and how leaders are lecherous for the power or post in the present day politics. Securing seat and post through all unfair means, rule for all corruption, murdered in selfish politics and becoming ghost failing to keep its heinous quality of advising the young politician to follow the tactics of present day politics are excellently knit by the playwright. The play has succeeded in bringing out the cruel policies and unlawful practices of politicians that spoil the harmony in the society. The Playwright has shown the audience the true picture of present day politics. This pathetic politics gives paths to societal deprivation and eventually how it becomes as an insane quality of creating imbalance in society and how dangerous its outcome in the society is shown in the play. It also asks democracy should be protected and should become holy nectar but not poisonous venom.

The Chair is a play that symbolizes of social equality. *The Chair* presents how the Dalits' power has been robbed of by landlords. This play also clarifies how bureaucrats, capitalists and landlords with their self welfare do not allow the constitutional right of a deprived class of exercising power though they are elected according to the reservation given to them. The playwright shows that the education, background or legacy alone may not make one being moralistic and honest. Its only goodness that keeps man always honest and respectable; for this Narasaih's character and its good conduct is exemplified.

Dalits heartfully respect Ambedkar as a demigod; agony and unrest of poor because of the attitudes of landlords are portrayed typically in the play. Vizai Bhaskar, through this play presents imbalance that prevails in the current society not through one but various angles. On one hand showing how selfish rulers become violent to practice sinful activities when they are politically away from rule, on the other hand the playwright sensibly comments the selfish attitude of a few *dalits* who want to join these classes for their unfulfilled benefits. By exposing the heinous attitude of various rulers how they try to hide their scams through various machinations and wiles, the play seriously condemns the hesitant attitude of dalit rulers who fail to exercise the power that has been won by them. The Playwright announces that Slavery should be eradicated and Morality and Honesty should be encouraged. Chair is a symbol of power and that power should be useful for welfare of people and universal peace. It also should reward the good and punish the evil by practicing social equality like Shakespearean concept of Poetic Justice.

Giving importance to Narasaih for his morality and honesty, the playwright highlights the age old dormant feelings of him. Playwright has created a clerk character to satirize the well educated Bheemayya's corrupt thought process. It is not only the issue of giving power to *dalits* according to the constitution but the sensitive issue of execution of this power by dalits is discussed in the play. Innocent *dalits* who are found following landlords' words and getting ready to do all humiliated practices should be changed. The play advises *dalits* to become the symbols of society expansion and development and they should be away from fear, hesitation and insecurity. The play *The Chair* by taking the actual reasons that exist in the current society, presents the reasons for not having social change though the education, power and politics are widely available for all classes. It also advocates social justice and social equality in their true spirit are always pillars for harmonious society.

Questioning the reasons behind unrest and disturbance in the current society, Man's attraction towards making money, selfish and corrupt practices, and man's losing peace; the play *Kinchitbhogam* announces greediness is a good reason for all these ills of the modern society. The play is picture presentation of sour outcome of easy money. It exposes how money earned unlawfully is causing all imbalances, mental agonies and depression to the modern man. By presenting the differences between good and evil practices, the playwright narrates the new revolutions that are taking place and how they are slowly sowing their seeds to be strongly established.

His own relatives, children and wife come forward to attack Manmadharao for the assets that he earned in several unlawful means and how it invites unwanted problems to him, eventually how his desired money could not give him mental peace, harmony in his last years of life are portrayed in the play very well. The present day man's greed of earning money and not having time to enjoy it results strange new waves of attacking, de-tracking and detaching from the society is freely discussed. By showing the society's welfare practices like protecting goodness, saving knowledge and also telling what sort of outcomes we have to experience if the above mentioned are not properly formatted into the society, they play demands everyone to follow virtues to live the life fruitfully.

How pathetic to see innumerable examples found now-a-days, killing one's own family members and relatives for little luxury. As *money makes many things*, in our society how money is ruling, if one possesses it how one's attitude is maligned; are staged successfully through this drama. For the sake of money and the comfort that it gives, people are self-paced and they are ready to kick off any one and punish anyone who denies it. This play stages in a realistic way all the evil practices of people who love to beget money. This play presents the real picture of people are not only subservient to money and but also ready

to do any amount of cruelty. By showing the difference between responsibility and luxury the play presents how good and evil exist in the society.

Similarly in all of his other plays society becomes the wider canvas for his theme projection. *Vizai Bhaskar* recurs frequently in his plays a malady of the society the inequality between the wealthy and the poor. He expresses his deep sorrow and sympathy for the unfortunate poor and their inability to cope with circumstances. He poses these problems of social iniquity at large and also attempts to seek resolutions to the social conflicts. His plays also aim at wiping away social barriers and orthodoxy, casteism and communalism. His themes depict the complex social structure of society which is devoid of humanism. His literary contributions map the pre-independence and modern India. They universalize issues which concern every man and every county. He produces a tragic vision of life but also finds resolutions to the problems it presents. In his plays he envisions a world permeated with love and good will.

3.2 CHARACTERIZATION

One of the reasons for drama's popularity is its characterization as an important aspect of the technique that is being used in the drama. E.M. Forster refers to two types of characters 'flat and round'. Flat characters are called 'humorous' in the 17th century, and are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality. In this connection E.M. Forster states: "One great advantage of flat characters is that they are easily recognized whenever they come in - recognized by the reader's emotional eye not by the visual eye which merely notes the recurrence of a proper name."⁵ (47-48) we must admit that flat people are not in themselves as big achievements as round ones and also those are best when they are comic. The case of 'round' characters is just opposite to the 'flat'. It is not constructed round a single idea or quality. It shows many

qualities and changes by circumstances. The round characters have big achievements in themselves.

There are different types of traits used for the revelation of a character by the dramatist, such as general, physical, personal and emotional. Techniques like conflict, action, self- discovery, motivated actions, contrasting characters, narration and confession help to make the character 'round' and three-dimensional. In the presentation of character, the dramatist uses direct or dramatic method. Direct method works best for the 'flat' characters and dramatic method suits more to the 'round' characters. The dramatist presents his characters at different levels as per his requirement. Thus, portraying a character is a complex process involving a lot of work on the part of the playwright.

Characters in Vizai Bhaskar plays may be categorized as the principal characters, the subordinate characters, the Link Characters and the Minor characters. In his plays usually the protagonist is the principal character, for instance, Manmadha Rao in *Ruthwik*, Raghava in *Kaalakootam*, Gandhi in *The Return of Gandhi* Narasaih in *The Chair*. The subordinate characters carry great importance in the context of their relationship with the principal characters for instance, Sekahar in *Ruthwik*, Kodanda Ramaih in *Kaalakootam*, Bheemayya in *The Chair*. The Link character is a strange experiment in Vizai Bhaskar's plays. They act as *soothradharis* who narrate the story or plot of the play for instance Ruthwik in *Ruthwik*, Raja Ram Das in *Kaalakootam*, Raaja Ram in *The Return of Gandhi* Clerk in *The Chair* minor characters are portrayed as insignificant persons, useful only in the context of circumstantial details. But, they are not ignored. Vizai Bhaskar has created a marvellous portrait-gallery of all these characters. His characters are realistic and lively. He has created characters like Ruthwik, Raaja Ramdas, Bheemayya as most memorable because they are ordinary men having high ambition for money, success, love and happiness. All the protagonists are individual but at the same time they have universal significance.

Ruthwik, the central character in the play is very interesting. His description in the beginning of the drama is very realistic and philosophical. Ruthwik is a preacher who appeals the audience to ponder over the truthful insights of human life. Ruthwik is immeasurably obsessed by the power of truthful living and he judges everything in terms of truth and peace. Being witness to the life of Manmadharao and his family leading, he urges to look into the value of virtuousness in human life. He gives vent to his mind that a man who habituates the virtue of goodness like the vice he practices need not worry much. He can live harmoniously with all the knowledge he requires. He can also give way to the world dreamt by 'Tagore in Geethaanjali'. Vizai Bhaskar portrays Ruthwik as an engaging character from the very beginning to the end as R.K. Narayan's creation of an ambitious financial expert Margayya, a special contribution to Indian English.

Since most of Vizai Bhaskar's plays deal with contemporaneous subjects of the society, the characterization made by him also stands natural and usual. In all his plays we find characters that we come across in our day-to-day life, of course with different temperaments and attitudes according to the subject matter of such plays.

Characterization in Vizai Bhaskar's plays is such that each and every connoisseur identifies himself with such characters in the play, compares his own conduct with the play's character in such situations in his own family and corrects himself or herself positively. In the play *Jeevannaatakam* while the father Jagannadham, his wife and Ganapathi are soft and positive characters, his son, son-in-law and daughter-in-law are stubborn characters with a negative touch. The three stages of man, youth, middle age and old age are excellently projected through the character of Jagannaadham. Though certain animals are made to speak in the beginning and the deity '*Ganapathi*' appears throughout in a covert guile, such experiment is made by the playwright only because the subject matter demands it. Instances are not lacking where such reformed members of the family in the present society, meet the

artists and the playwright too and express their sentiments. A popular Telugu drama director and the NTR Awardee Sri Bhanu Prakash of Hyderabad opines—

The element of naturality and nativity in the dialogues of live characters in the play impressed me a lot! Out of very few plays which satiated my theatre-thirst and quest, this play finds a prominent place.⁶ (22)

In *Minister* it is the character of Minister around which the rest of characters, his greedy wife, his unfaithful sons, his obedient servant Yadayya, his henchmen, the honest Principal, MLA Siddappa, Counselor Anjaneyulu rotate. Minister's character is such that, in the beginning, he believes that money is all in all in life, but subsequently, through the character of 'Mrutyuvu (Death)' his self-realization makes him philanthropic and self-sacrificing for the sake of the society. Chinni Krishna, the P.A. of the Minister though a relief character, acts as an indispensable link in the theme of the play. The phantasmic spirit 'Mrutyuvu' plays a pivotal role in the play. Actually, that character acts as a wonderful turning point for the theme of the play. As long as the Minister leads a selfish and dictatorial life, nothing happens, but the moment he turns out to be honest and began serving the people with sincerity and concern for them, the usual slogan 'good men breathing their last earlier' is deviated by the Deity of Death quite unusually and he is allowed to serve the people as an ideal and honest Minister. This type of characterization made the play eternal and commendable.

The play *Brahmaraatha* that is translated into Manipuri and staged there, centers on celestial dealings of the creators of the human beings. Something that could have happened on the earth only is taken to the celestial area. The Gods watch them in the same manner we watch the visual recording. Lord Brahma, Naarada, Minister, P.A., IAS Officer and oppressed farmers from the core are the characters of the play. It reflects how even the astrologers in the court of God are bought by the other characters. They could not give up the

habit that they had inculcated while living on the earth. It is called extension of social ailment. We have seen in our midst emergence of demi-gods or those who claim to have reached the status of Gods. The poor men and women consecrate to them the little they had. The rich men make good offerings. In return, these self-styled Gods throw gauntlet behind them. Protests galore. The masses shake but in vain. The solid rock of evils remains. Naturally, the question arises that there should be a God that shapes the fate of men would all these sufferings be seen. Even the creator of human beings had been manipulated as the play envisages..... 'The fate and destiny are one's own creation. In the Book of Life of each individual's pages have to be written with the ink of sweat of such individual.'

In the play *Hiranyagarbha*, the playwright, by reminding us of the nine hues or virtues named the characters as 'Joh', 'Yasho', 'Tyagi', 'Krodhi', 'Kuthoohalam', 'Udrekam', 'Sndeham', 'Asandarbhram', 'Chitra'. Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that those names proved to be apt to such characters in the context of things in which they participated. Then the character 'Mastro' reminds us of the Mahatma. Through that character, the author Vizai Bhaskar preaches that the norms of society's administration should stand amended analogous to the changing times, that even the convicts should be given an opportunity to reform themselves and to join the main stream of the society, that there should be no human being who is to be termed as an 'untouchable', and further that human values should not be forgotten at any time. Another magnificent character is 'Mestri'. With a pious intention, he marries a socially boycotted woman preaches and also practices that it is only education which dispels darkness in one's own mind and further promotes talent and wisdom.

Another notable character, 'Tyaagi' acts virtually as a disciple to the principles of Mastro and Mestri. Jawaharlal Nehru used to say 'a real democracy survives where there is strong opposition'. One such opposition character is 'krodhi'. He points out the omissions

and commissions in Mastro's style of functioning analytically and intelligibly to and, after deploring for the heinous way of treatment of her sect by the other members of society; He subjects herself to punishment voluntarily and exits. 'Indradeepu', Pandit, landlord, 'Ghanaapaati' are other characters who represent the so called high society with pomp and show and with any amount of vanity and vehemence.

'Keerthi' is a replica of a secluded sect of the society. She fights tooth and nail to attain social status for her community and succeeds in removing the dogmatic differences among the people and stands as a beacon light among reformers. 'Chitra' the daughter of Tejo revolts against her own father for her love with a boy. 'Tejo' is notorious character. He is a wisest fool. For the eternity of power in his hands, he creates different creators, keeps people under constant threat, by imparting them superstitious beliefs and panic of prevalence of devils, changes hues as the situation demands, adopts 'divide and rule' policy, and ultimately stands assassinated in the hands of those whom he treats as weaker sections. So, with these exceptional characters, Vizai Bhaskar makes a wonderful exercise of his alien theme and substantiated it to the appreciation of the audience.

The whole play *The Return of Gandhi* is an illusion and a hypothetical experiment, namely, if Gandhi is alive in this polluted political atmosphere, what the result would be. In that context, though Gandhi is a fictitious character, it is carved in such a way that one forgets for a while that he is dead and feels as if Gandhi is before us virtually. At the same time, the playwright maintained the magnanimity and respect commanded by Gandhiji when he was alive. Every word spoken by him is a sermon or a Gospel Truth. For the re-birth of Gandhi, it has become necessary to create the characters of Lord Yama, Chitragupta and for introducing Gandhi to the world, the character of Rajaram is erected. As a natural corollary, the other politicians like M.L.As, Opposition Leaders, Polling agents, Police Commissioner cropped up. Thereafter, for the court scene, the characters of Judge, Bar Members around the

horse-shoe became inevitable. Thus, whatever may be the intellectual exercise made by the playwright through the relevant characters required for the theme, the outcome is a picturesque scene prevailing in pre-independence days with today's political set up, taking the audience to about six decades back. This experiment is first of its kind.

All the characters in the play *Mabbullo Bomma* () are carved out on experimental basis. When the anchor presents a mime play and calls upon the opinion of audience, each spectator assumes the theme in his own way and the scenes of those themes will then be enacted by the same characters. It is not only a challenge to the talent of artists but also to the playwright. The result is a wonderful product.

The main character in the play *Devudu kaavaali* () is professor. He says that he is trying to see that there is only one religion, one caste, one God and one type of living. He declares his name as 'Shaik Jacob Sashty'. He preaches that religion should not kill the Man but it should make him to survive. Wishing for a God who is acceptable to all, he advertises for such God. Representing the Hindu, Muslim and Christian Gods, a 'Purohit', 'a Mullah' and a 'Christian Father' come on to stage. In a hot exchange of words and views when those three attempt to kill that Professor, the real Gods, namely Eswar, Allah and Jesus appear before them and pacify them.

By emphasizing the sum and substance of each of their religions, Eshwar says that one who is nearer to Nature is not concerned about any religion and that it is such person who plunges into the darkness of religion that searches for the brightness of God. Through this character, the playwright says that the only lesson imparted by Nature is the concept of love and that the hues of revenge, grudge, wrath, emotion are qualities imparted by religion and further that it is advisable not to think of those qualities. Through the character of Mohammad, it is said that it is only birth and death that are embodied in Nature, that dying and killing are the qualities of animals and further cautioned not to fall in their trap.

Ultimately through Professor, Vizai Bhaskar says that with the virtues of truth, love and good conduct each human being should become a God. There is another character 'steno' that supports the views of the professor. In view of the peculiar theme of the play we find the playwright mesmerizing the audience both with mythological and social characters.

'Raaghava' is the main character in the play *Kaalkootam*, with a wrong view that one can attain anything with violence. This character goes on doing atrocities, evil deeds and murders too, and appears as a terrorist. Rajah Ramdas, the father of Raaghava, is a man of magnanimity. This character tries to condemn the acts of Raghava but all in vain. Through this character the playwright emphasizes that democracy resurrected from the ashes of freedom-fighters and that it makes the common man as emperor and further that it is the enliven nectar which install him as a mason of the socialistic pattern of society. So while casting the vote one should not think of caste or religion or region except the welfare of the country. The power and posts should only be in the hands of the deserving and further the mother like democracy should not be transformed as Kaalakootam (venom).

A character 'clerk Venkatarao' is who commits murder on being instigated by Raghava. The character 'chairman Kodandaramaiah' is a replica of the present political scene with crooked ideas, and with the qualities of conspiracy, collusion, opportunism and power-mongering. The other characters include the lawyer and doctor who stoop to do anything to make money. Dawood is henchman of politicians while Subbarao, journalist and gunman represent the common men in the society. Maria the lady character marries Raghava under coercive circumstances, tries to mend Raghava but ultimately yields to his policies. Yet another character is 'Satan' which exposes the evil conduct of Raghava and is a fictitious one.

In the play *Ruthwik* while the Ruthwik character elucidates the philosophy of life with interesting anecdotes in between the scenes of the play by following the 'Alienation Theory

of Brecht, Manmadharao's character is an embodiment of corruption, bribery and unlawful earning in the main play. By the time he realizes that his wife and son follow his abhorable conduct and repents for the unpardonable mistakes committed by him, the deity of death knocks at his door. While the characters of his brother-in-law 'Abbulu' and Lawyer represent opportunism and greed for money, his wife Manikyam is equally an avaricious character though a house wife. Therefore, even in this play, Vizai Bhaskar relies on characters which commonly appear in the society. Exceptionality is his experiment through the character 'Ruthwik', which obviously ventilates his own wonderful school of thought.

In the play *Kinchithbhogam* () Narayana, Madhava Rao and Sreeraamachandra Murthy are soft characters bearing good virtues. Naagamani is a vampire character who in collusion with her father and son always goes on hatching plans to amass wealth and stoops to kill her own husband's brother to retain the riches belonging to him. The young character 'Chanti', as a seed of evil qualities is sown in him; it becomes a huge tree and ultimately encounters him with death. Another character is 'Chintamani' who is an opportunist and while endeavouring hard to gain riches unlawfully, he too will die. Therefore, through these bad characters, and with some virtuous characters, Vizai Bhaskar runs the play with utmost tension and turbulence to spell out the truth that wealth is instable and that virtue matters much.

In the play *The Chair*, Vizai Bhaskar chooses to take up all the live characters which come across in day to day life in villages. The character 'Narsaish' represents the Village Surpanch from Dalit community. Through this character, Vizai Bhaskar brings out how illiteracy in them becomes a curse for their prosperity though reservations, certain powers and posts are given to dalits. 'Dora' and 'Patel' represent the rich community who always try to corner Narsaih.

But, Narsaiah, without surrendering to their threats, without giving scope for ambition and without yielding to temptations always endeavours to serve the society selflessly and becomes an exemplary character. His wife, Sunkulamma, closely follow Narsaiah in thought and deed. The abundant love and affection shown by her to her husband as a dutiful wife, the exceptional motherhood shown to Bheemaiah treating him as her son, the bold decisions taken by her in the exigencies of the situation and the element of innocence and fairness exhibited by her, usurps the hearts of the audience often. His educated brother Bheemaiah dispels Doras' plans, educates the other members of his community, stiffens their spines and wages a cold war against the rich and cunning people and ultimately endeavours to uphold the view of Ambedkar. 'Jogulu and 'Tippadu' constitute the henchmen of the Dora community, while the clerk's role is virtuous and wishing the welfare of the society. All the characters are carved in such a way that apart from establishing the exceptional theme of the play, they conduct the play in such a way that one feels that things are happening in his own village, in his own house and in his own presence.

The characters in the play *Riding the Tiger* (1997) are knitted mostly to represent the factitious atmosphere in Rayalaseema. Ramireddy and Peddireddy are factionists-leaders, who tame the weaker sections by pouring money and liquor over them and quench their thirst of power-mongering, also by creating panic in the society while Rangadu, Mareppa, Dastagiri, Veerannaswamy, Obulesu, Kistappa, Thirupathaih, Khaader are their henchmen. Munemma, the wife of Mareppa tries to mend her husband to eschew violence, but all in vain. At one stage, a D.S.P's role is introduced to enlighten the weaker sections, who blindly follow their bosses, to make them realize the fact that what they are riding is not merely the zeeps of their bosses but virtually 'tigers' and that the moment they stop obliging their bosses and get down the tiger, they become a prey to it and breath their last, keeping their wives and children in distress. Constable and Head Constable are inevitable characters, naturally. By

creating wonderfully such factitious atmosphere and through such good and bad characters, Vizai Bhaskar advocates that the factionists should reform themselves if they desire a peaceful living along with the other members of the society, that the weaker sections who become puppets in the hands of factionists-leaders should open their eyes realize the truth, free themselves from their bosses and save their families from peril.

The above are the examples which clearly indicate that Vizai Bhaskar chooses only such characters which not only help strengthening his themes but also those acceptable to the connoisseurs, convincingly, though at times he introduces mythological and phantasmic characters.

3.3 TRANSLATIONS

Indian Drama in English translation has made bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of both thematic concerns and technical virtuositities. It has been increasingly turning to history, legend, myth and folklore tapping their springs of vitality and vocal cords of popularity with splendid results. Plays written in various Indian languages are being translated into English and other languages as they are produced and appreciated in the various parts of the country. A closer contact is being established between the theatre workers from different regions and languages through these translations. Thus, regional drama in India is slowly paving a way for a 'national theatre' into which all streams of theatrical art seem to converge.

Translation and its complexity has always been an important feature to discuss when literature is not restricted to one target readership and being moved beyond the boundaries of language. The term translation technically connotes the art of recomposing a work in another language without losing its original flavour, or of finding an analogous substitute. According to Oxford Companion:

Translation is the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text.⁷ (1051)

Its complexity lies in it being like the transfer of perfume from one bottle to another. As careful as we are, some fragrance is lost but the challenge remains to capture the essence. All things in nature are subject to change – and so is all culture. Translation is always not a shift between two languages but between the two types of cultures.

India is rich and having variety in linguistic contributions. In India, it is because of several languages, there is a suitable phenomenon for translations. One ‘common idea of India’ is always a running force in the minds of a Bengali, a Tamil, a Telugu, a Marathi or any other equally well. Translation provides a cognitive map of India’s linguistic world in all its inter-relatedness as well as estrangement. A text, obviously written literally in one language in a given manifestation faces a multi lingual reader and thus reaches out to a much larger base, unifying experiences and opinions as it expands.

English has to be admitted as a vast reservoir of translation in contemporary India. It may no longer be a colonial language, but it is increasingly a link language. This link language has today a certain inescapable presence. Much of English translating works have been published in India in recent times than ever before, but our awareness of the need to ensure quality in translation has not heightened the same extent. According to K.R.S. Iyengar there are three types of Indian writers in English,

First, those who have acquired their entire education in English schools and universities. Secondly, Indians who have settled abroad but are constantly in touch with the changing surrounding and traditions of their country of adoption. And finally, Indians who have acquired English as a second language.⁸ (11)

Consequently, a large number of Indians are greatly moved by the genuine desire to present before the western readers an authentic picture of India through their writings. This desire of Indian writers in English too has become the force behind the much translation work that has been existed at present.

Any discussion of translation leads automatically towards the ideal translator. The writer himself would be better as an ideal translator not someone who has not been involved in the primary creative art. The task of the translator is to unfreeze the shapes that thought took in one language and refreeze them into another. A translator must take into account rules that are not strictly linguistic but cultural. Translators, even when trying to give us the flavor of the language, are in fact modernizing the source. As far as translators in India are concerned, most Indians who grow up in urban conditions and go to school and college tackle shifts from one language to another so often and so comfortably that translation seems second nature to them.

The aim of the translation is to reproduce meanings of the Source Text and the immediate effect it produces on the native audience for the readers and audience of another culture in whose language the text is to be translated. But, say, every other language word cannot have a counterpart in English because of its vast language and cultural differences in certain connotations and structures. Hence, the translator is expected to forsake the 'literal' translation of cultural/literary works.

On the other hand, transcreation or cultural translation means a partial or complete freedom to the translator in dealing with the Source Text. The translator has to render the Source Text in a recreated form in the Target Language. It involves reading every word and sentence carefully, but it is not only a literal rendering. The translator has to deal with the problem of finding equivalent words and expressions in the Target Language, which though cannot be substitute for the expressions in the Source Language, but can come

close to it, can raise similar feelings and attitudes in the readers and audiences of the Target Text.

Literary and cultural texts suggest rather than describe meanings. Cultural meanings are very specific and their connotations vary with words in other languages. Therefore, it is really difficult to expect equivalence between the texts of two languages separated by two different cultures. The translator has to interpret and analyse the connotative and suggestive of the Source Text and on the basis of his knowledge of the culture of the Target Text; he has to recreate the meanings in the new language.

Figures of speech, extended metaphors, idioms, proverbs and allegories pose a great challenge to the translator. Even translating dialogues, forms of dressing, different kinds of food can be difficult when it has strong cultural roots. For example, words like 'saree', 'chudidhar', 'pan', 'pallu' cannot have an English counterpart. In India, there is a specific word for every familial relationship. For instance, 'chacha', 'mama', 'phupha', 'tauji' are all called 'uncle' in English, similarly 'nana-nani' and 'dada-dadi' are simply 'grandparents'. Also, the suggested meanings of these relationships can never be translated into any other language. To show how the differences in cultural facts can cause difficulties in the translation of metaphors we may look at the symbolic meanings of certain words in different cultures. 'Owl' in English is the symbol of wisdom whereas it symbolizes 'ill-fortune' in Persian and is associated to superstitious beliefs in India.

Lord Macaulay's Minutes on Indian education in 1835 and Lord Bentinck's decision to promote European literature and science among the Indians instigated the Indians to use an alien tongue for creative expression. Inspired by this policy, a few Indians from the English-educated elite class such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, and Sarojini Naidu were stimulated to use English for creative expression. They realized that by using English, they could reach pan-India and even to the

world audience. Thereafter, the Indian writers in English accepted English as a medium of expression for political and cultural reasons.

Yet, one cannot deny the fact that the Indian literary culture has been fragmented into several regional languages as the creative writers in India have been writing in regional languages. Therefore, Indian literature has become pan-Indian. As a matter of fact, no one can overlook the contribution of regional literatures to Indian English literature and vice-versa. But for the writers of Indian English literature, English is the language of the expression of their creative urge.

There are many writers who have brought out vividly the different cultures of India through their writing in vernacular languages. It is the voice of this marginalized section writing in vernacular languages and this is possible only through translation which gives them recognition all over the world.

The plays written under the Pre-Independence and the Post-Independence phase were originally written in English. Among the plays translated into English, there are a few, which were first written in the regional languages and subsequently translated into English by the authors themselves. Though, strictly speaking, these works cannot be called fully English plays, they can be mentioned under the topic, in view of the fact, that at least some of them are transcreations and not simply translations. Rabindranath Tagore, Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad have remained the most representative of the Indian English drama on the pan-Indian level. For the past two decades from Telugu, Vizai Bhaskar is also contributing to Indian English drama through his plays which are translated into English. Most of his plays that are translated into English serve the purpose of promoting the vernacular culture and its value.

Vizai Bhaskar's plays highlight the various aspects of human life. The translations of the plays cover the contemporary human follies and foibles. The translation work brings out the distinctive aspects of the way in which the playwright perceives different experiences: *Ruthwik* deals with human relationships; *Mabullo Bomma* has symbolism blended with mysticism; *Hiranyagarbha* argues man is the amalgamation of good and evil; *Jeevannatakam* is known for stark realism. Through his translated plays Vizai Bhaskar seems to be a cultural administrator and an emissary of Indian culture in Foreign lands, as he goes back to Indian traditions to evoke social dynamics; *Return of Gandhi* brings the politics of India to drama; *Bommalu Cheppina Bhajagovindam* is a visual presentation; *Mahatma Jyothi Rao Phule* is a significant historical play; *Kaalakootam* and *Kinchitbhogam* deal with the urban middle class society. Through his plays Vizai Bhaskar seems to triumph in transforming the social and religious contexts of Andhra Pradesh to rest of the Globe.

Translation work in the plays of Vizai Bhaskar is over-emphatic in presenting an unmitigated love towards down trodden and his recurrent theme is poor should grow overnight. Vizai Bhaskar's plays deal with human personality trapped within the periphery of a mundane existence. Vizai Bhaskar's answer to the pain of downtrodden is the identification of himself with something beyond the narrow limit of his self-centredness, though momentary.

S. John Peter Joseph, in the article *Aspects of Indian English Drama*, questions the authenticity of spoken English in Indian theatres, feels that Indian English drama is no more than an area of translated texts, lacking the vigour of action⁹ (8). Unless the audience is English-knowing and matured, a drama in English is unlikely to elicit a proper response. Of course, the playwrights have taken up contemporary issues in the social and political arenas such as corruption, evils of the caste system, widow marriage, and psychological conflicts. But the point is that some of their dramas lack stageability, despite their using innovative

techniques. But Vizai Bhaskar plays that are translated into English and several other languages are more successful on stage in carrying their sublime theme. Most of his plays are English translations of the original works written in Telugu. The question arises whether they can be truly called Indian English dramas. Maybe, one should differentiate between Indian plays and Indian plays translated into English.

Translation, says T.S. Chandra Mouli, is “integral to Indian psyche,” arguing that our epics have been translated into all Indian languages. Translating “culture and literature from one speech system into another has been an integral quality of the Indian mind and India has the ability to absorb,”¹⁰ (7) contends Mouli.

The translation work in Vizai Bhaskar plays is replete with the views of Indian culture and life. To cite a few: ‘children won’t grow as we dream for, they grow as we do’ in *Jeevannatakam*; ‘If corruption creates Capitalists, adherence to ethics capitalizes the meaning of life’ in *Minister*; ‘Political field is a rehabilitation centre for cheats’, ‘To become rich is not there in our hands, but to become ethical, it is there in the deeds we do’ in *Kinchitbhogam*; ‘Pearl won’t shine if it is with dirt, to an obstinate mind, Truth does not strike’ in *Hiranyagarbha*. Such unbiased and substantiated opinions add value to the level of Vizai Bhaskar school of thought.

The following preachings of *Ruthwik* are amply relevant to prove the literary spirit of Vizai Bhaskar and his philosophical school of thought beyond one’s own imagination— ‘Just like the multiple diseases dominate the body when it loses its element of immunity, certain evil qualities in Man get developed from his very childhood in consonance with the environments and circumstances and when there is conspicuous omission in the way in which he is brought up.’

As a matter of fact, in all the Plays of Vizai Bhaskar, at some place or the other, we find social, orthodoxal, philosophical or emotional literary content that is effectively

translated beyond imagination, in consonance with the theme of the Play, and such literature acts as an arrow to dispel the evils in the society, the superstitious dogmas, the blind beliefs, and the pessimistic views in the society. The dialogues rendered by Raja Ramdas in *Kaalakootam*, Sriramachandramurthy and Madhava Rao in *A Little Luxury*, Yasho and Masto in *Hiranyagarbha*, the god's role in *Jeevannatakam*, the Diety of Death and the reformed minister in *The Minister*, contain highest literary values beyond the boundaries set up by any sane person.

3.4 DIALOGUES

Play is an art-form which easily enlightens literates as well as illiterates about the welfare and well-being of the Society. Whatever may be the talent of actors, a play will be mostly relished through its dialogues. Vizai Bhaskar is well aware of his responsibility as a playwright, the thirst of artists in the scenes to be glorified, the taste of audience, and the literary inhibitions while dealing with social stigmas. That is why his dialogues are laudable and readable too.

Language is the vehicle of thought. Dialogue gives meaning to the actual words by adding feeling and emotion to what is being said. The element of sharpness or sweetness in a dialogue can better be swallowed only in the same original language in which it is couched.

Dialogue illuminates character faster than any narrative because dialogue is a function of character.¹¹ (1)

Hence Playwright has to take care in writing of dialogues to help the reader or spectator who understands the character of the person speaking and to increase their awareness of the acting that is taking place. Vizai Bhaskar has also succeeded through his dialogue by giving what the readers of the drama need. But, to make one grasps and relish the commendable content in the dialogues in Vizai Bhaskar's plays and his pungent attack on social stigmas, it becomes inevitable to quote them here.

In *Ruthwik*, he writes—“In one’s own life, when fear-complex captivates, any amount of cruelty looks logical for him!”¹² (41) “If you prove yourself to be good at heart, your children will become the best in wisdom. If you are generous enough in your thought and deed, your offspring will become more magnanimous. If you keep your ‘Atma’ pure, your son will become Mahatma”¹³ (43)

Further in the same play with humorous insight into the Modern man’s way of life Vizai Bhaskar explores the traditional Indian values and their importance in a Globalized and technologically advanced situation. His satirical dialogues aglow with philosophical import are interesting and instructive. The following are a few examples..... Lawyers won’t lie for themselves; I swear on you, this is not a heart it is iron safe please tell me. Facts come out when liquor goes in; Secrecy is your slave only till it goes out of your lips; His B.P. means not Blood Pressure, it is Bed Pleasure.

In *Kinchitbhogam*, Vizai Bhaskar throws a political satire as political field is a rehabilitation centre for cheats; in his country, since the literates are lethargic the illiterates are obstinate, one can easily fly his flag in political arena; while the element of luxury makes you happy for a moment, and then, perishes, displeasure embraces you firmly. It is not only our failure to respond to a noble deed, but to forbear silently the evil deeds, is also a vice

In *Kaalakootam* he scribes... In democracy, one may treat his foe as a corpse, but stoop not to make him a corpse as such. Vizai Bhaskar convinces those who misunderstand the concept ‘Home’ with his dialogue as: HOME means not a hotel to satiate your hunger, or a guest house to quench your lust. It is an almamater which imparts your duties. A Pious Hermitage which prepares you to perform the matrimonial ‘Yagna’. It is a meditation hall which stimulates your Inner Spirit. It’s a Temple of Wisdom which makes room for Introspection. It is a Mother’s lap which cajoles you to the ecstasy.

In the play *Minister Vizai Bhaskar* tries to attack the life of present day politicians and sermonizes through his dialogues about need of ethical living of a leader....How many days we lived in this world is not the criterion; How good we lived, even for a day, is that matters. God will not dwell in hills and hillocks. Every leader who sincerely serves his people gets adored as God in their hearts.

In the play *Jeevannaatakam*, we find.... It is not the capacity to preach Sermons that is appreciable, but it is the splendid patience to listen to them. In the play '*The Return of Gandhi*' Vizai Bhaskar, through the character Chitragupta who makes an untenable accusation against Mahatma Gandhi that he committed an 'unpardonable sin' by securing independence to India, directly attacks the chaotic conditions of the Society with an intelligible and self-explanatory dialogue: that anybody does feed pickle to a milk-sucking baby on the very first day of feeding food or can we allow a vehicle to be plied by a driver without a license or training. In the same way, do we instigate a child learning to walk to participate in a running race. Similarly, is it sane to award freedom to a Race which, on account of its drudgery in a feudalistic pattern, developed human worship and dynastic adoration and is it lawful to introduce democracy in a Country which is getting boiled with racial discriminations and religious fanaticism.

In the same Play, there is a collection of all current practices in the veil of power. A ruling party leader's dialogue describes Vizai Bhaskar's satirical comedy as... If the mischief-mongers among public raise hue and cry for the hike in the Current Charges, Water Charges, Bus Charges, etc., the best solution is to increase the 'Lathi' charge. This opens up soft turmoil in the mind of the audience or the reader about the practices of leaders in the democracy we live.

Vizai Bhaskar directly attacks on the social stigmas in his play *Shramanakam*, the caption given to a Buddhist's dogma, facilitating womenfolk to adopt Buddhism or

Asceticism, in relaxation of the rigid rules of Buddhism. Even in his play *Hiranyagarbha*, Vizai Bhaskar depicts certain pungent dialogues, thus: Man is Mortal! No exemption even for Mahatma; Progress does not mean teasing like a thorn. It is like a flower's blossom. It is not like stabbing with a dagger; it is like spreading shade to one and all. In the same Play, Vizai Bhaskar further expresses his anguish over the way scavengers are treated by the society by saying Mother is the first servant. She cleans the stool and the urine too.

About the powerful impact of stage-plays over the Society, Vizai Bhaskar elucidates quite philosophically, in his experimental Play *Mabbullo Bomma* through the anchor's dialogue, As per the law of Nature, the five sensory organs hidden in us, represent the five life spirits. It is only for the five sensory organs that are possible to transform man as monster of mahatma. For clarifying all these philosophical doubts, Vizai Bhaskar makes the anchor also speak that we find several arts before us. For that philosophic thirst, many art-forms stand incarnated. One such conspicuous art-form is the stage-play. That is why, of all the worldly treatises, Play is prolific, prominent and protrusive.

While saying so, he dramatizes the details of Women's Property Rights, as also the concept of 'surrogate motherhood', and ultimately, he exposes the women power and thus, rouses the inner spirit of the society. As aptly appreciated by Sri Gangisetty Lakshminarayana, former vice-Chancellor, Dravidian University, Kuppam—

Even from artistic and technical point of view, nearer to naturality, this is the rarest of rare play-lets. It stands as a beacon light on account of its interpretation human psychology and naturality rather! With literary brevity, it is appropriately captioned by the author as 'Mabbullo Bomma'¹⁴ (35)

The celebrated Director of Telugu Plays of this Century, Sri Bhanu Prakash, who carved innumerable number of stage-plays laudably, appreciated Vizai Bhaskar's art of writing dialogues as.....

The element of naturality and nativity in the dialogues of live-character in the play, '*Jeevannaatakam*, impressed me a lot. Out of very few plays this satiated my theatre-thrust.¹⁵ (22)

3.5 MEDIATOR CHARACTERS

Almost, every play written by Vizai Bhaskar is experimentation over the minds of the audience, and the characters carry the charm in consonance with the concept of the Play. Similarly, in all Vizai Bhaskar's Plays certain anchoring roles or mediators are conspicuously discernible. These mediator characters are either as one of the characters in the play or one that may cleverly be inserted into the play from outside arena. Those anchoring roles aid the running of the theme of the play, for analyzing the scenes and for naturalizing the drama. In certain plays those mediator characters occupy a distinct position with utmost prominence. A fair and straight example is the character of Ruthwik which has become the title to the play *Ruthwik*. In the prologue and in the epilogue and in between the scenes too, the character of Ruthwik projects huge amount of knowledge, wisdom and Vizai Bhaskar's school of thought in conformity with the theme of the Play. Without that mediator's role, the play remains only as common play, of course maintaining its dramatic and literary content. As mentioned above, it seems to be an adaptation of Brecht's Alienation Theory, quite successfully.

In the play *The Return of Gandhi*, the character of Raja ram, introduces Gandhi to the world after His coming out of the grave by breaking it out believably. Similarly, he introduces the present world to Gandhi too. He closely follows Gandhi's role in all the situations, analyzing the unlawful and even miserable scenes which happen before Him, including the political hotchpotch, viz., rigging, booth-capturing, ballot-tearing, open ballot. It is he who takes Gandhi to the Legislative assembly and exposes the political vendetta. He

not only protects Gandhi but also defends him in crisis. Ultimately, Raja ram's role becomes an indispensable link in the theme of the play.

Mabbullo Bomma () is also equally relevant to the context of discussion. Its anchor is virtually the hero of the play. As a means to convey his messages, he tunes the characters to play a mime scene like a doll in the clouds and throws to the audience's minds as to how do they interpret the mime-theme, and then, while one spectator asserts that it is a dowry issue, the other makes equal assertion that it is about partition of properties; a third on-looker declares that it is nothing but craze for pregnancy. Then, the anchor frames the very same scene on the spot and makes the artists to play their respective roles extempore, covering the three themes, mooted by the audience, giving the reigns of direction to the very same audience and ultimately it is made up as a wonderful play.

This herculean experiment seems to be attempted only by veteran artist-directors or by those writing plays for decades together. But, Vizai Bhaskar in the very early stage of scribing scripts, by attaining command over the concept of extemporism dares to do an experimentation by applying three different themes for a single frame-work of scene, by providing apt dialogues to the respective roles and making all the character prize-winning since each artist has to play three different roles in the same play, and further involving audience also. This seems to a mammoth exercise that a few playwrights venture to do these days.

In *Devudu Kavali*, the characters Professor and Steno act as mediators and run the show. Inviting the Gods by way of an advertisement, receiving the God men, hearing their arguments, pacifying their temperaments, analyzing the substances of each religion, getting his version affirmed by the respective God and ultimately giving out the universal message, all this exercise is done by those two Mediator-characters, intelligibly. Many years later after this play well staged, it seems that the similar theme is found in the movies made in Hindi

and Telugu entitled *Oh My God* (2012), *Gopala Gopala* (2014) which appealed the attention of audience and become great hits competing with the other films of their contemporary times.

In the Play *Minister*, it cannot but be said that the character 'Mruthyuvu' acts as mediator. It is that character which is responsible for transforming a money-minded Minister as an honest man and makes him to serve the people sincerely. Virtually 'Mruthyuvu' brings out a wonderful twist and becomes a key role and further becomes instrumental in upholding democratic values and for the safe sailing of the society.

In the play *Brahmaratha*, Narada's role subscribes any amount of assistance to the theme of the play and also for enlightening the Gods about the plight of the ill-fated victims and about the elite who shirk their responsibility to develop the society, taking shelter under the 'fate-lines'. It is this character which paves the way for giving fresh rulings by Brahma for a reformatory living of the members of the society. Without this mediator's role, the play would be said as stale.

In *Jeevannatakam* Ganapathi's character constitutes as Mediator between animals and God and also between God and Man. When God gives out long life to Man, he questions God whether it acts as a boon or curse to the Man. Then, God appoints Ganapathi himself as an observer to know the Truth. In that way, Ganapathi appears throughout the play, guiding and chiding Jagannadham, and ultimately it is Ganapathi who facilitates the issuance of message by God, and wished to be given by Vizai in the play.

In *Kaalakootam*, Raja Ramdas's character represents as a mediator between the virtuous and the vultures. It emphasizes the truth that nothing can be achieved through violence, threats and rowdism, and further that extremism and terrorism act as *Kaalakootam* and destroying democratic values. But, the other bad characters, including his own son

Raghava pay a deaf ear. The result is the disruption of Raghava's own family and his becoming a lunatic.

In *Kinchithbhogam*, Chintamani's character in a way acts as mediator. He guides and mostly misguides the other characters with his pessimistic views, adopts all treacherous gimmicks to encash them at every stage and ultimately becomes a prey to his own conspiracy and is killed with bullet.

In the Play *The Chair* Bheemaiah and the clerk act as mediators for all the twists in the play and for running the theme of the play. They raise the reformatory slogan and strive to bring out a positive change in the Dalit community. In *Riding the Tiger* the roles of D.S.P., Head Constable and the constable are evidently mediator-characters who leave no stone unturned in reforming the misguided henchman of the landlords and in establishing a non-violent and terror-free society. In the play *Kabirdas* apart from the title role Kabir, Lord Srirama himself is made a mediator to enlighten the philosophy of life and about the virtuous way of living, respecting each Religion.

The plays of Vizai Bhaskar within their complex of thematic structure and techniques invite immense possibilities of explorations and insights. Though there are a few number of studies undertaken on Vizai Bhaskar, the thematic aspects of his plays offer multiple interpretations and insights even in their traditional classification. Man and society form a variegated fabric of life. Within the complicated structure of society lie the joys and sorrows of man. Vizai Bhaskar with his exposure to various social theories and philosophies has incessantly attempted to present a just and righteous vision of life. His plays deal with socio-economic aspects of life. As a progressive playwright sympathising with the *Sarva hara* the deprived class of society, Vizai Bhaskar envisions a world of love and human concern.

Though Vizai Bhaskar plays confine to the themes and practices of his region and times, they may be defined as realizing of past perceptions'and should be understood as such

not merely in its restricted sense as supporting to the downtrodden. When one looks back after reading or watching the plays of Vizai Bhaskar, one is struck by the playwright's preoccupation with past human life, values and sub-human underpinning of the outcaste characters. These subalterns are mostly low class and their marginalization in the plays is the result of the upper class's obsession with themselves. The pressures of the changing times work on the upperclass but the sudras or out-castes are never allotted their due share in the social set up nor is there any effort made to redeem their plight.

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CHAPTER-4

SOCIAL CONCERNS

Concern should drive us into action and not into a depression.

Pythagoras

Vizai Bhaskar's plays make the common man to emote with his brain. They bring out the naked truths, diabolic characters, and real life situations in addition to the presentation of imagination given circumstances. His imagination reflects in all his plays naturally as it may be based on an observed fact. He himself looks to be a protagonist in every play as he uses this character as his mouthpiece. A popular theatre personality of contemporary times and director Dr. Chatla Sriramulu rightly points out in *A Special Book commemorating Vizai Bhaskar's Bahu Bhasha Natakotsav* that

Vizai Bhaskar's plays confirm to the norms of a well made play— clear exposition, careful preparation for future event, mounting suspense, obligatory scenes, logical and believable resolution. In addition, the plays have a haunting message chasing us for long.¹ (2)

Bhaskar's plays enshrine the political justice in order to have the down trodden with social justice. His anguish is if there is no political justice the so called and most sought after social justice is not possible. He does not only present the political situation through his plays, he wants to make his protagonists voicing a philosophy to bring the down trodden out of their drudgery and give them the solutions to come out of their problems.

The plays of Bhaskar voice the demand of liberation, emancipation for down trodden and they also reveal the demand of this downtrodden liberation is as serious as the demand of independence to India that the whole nation has cried during the Independence struggle. The laws are not encouraging this drudgery but why the society still encourage and force them to do this mean job to be still slaves in the independent India. It is observed that Vizai Bhaskar

is writing the plays with a fire and flare to have the common man's political and social justice. His projection of subjects and themes of plays is not casual narration of a political situation in a given society. Vizai Bhaskar's anguish is as serious as demanding freedom to India. Because attaining independence is meaningless unless these people are emancipated from the present condition or attained independence is not extended to these classes.

Based on his style and themes, Vizai Bhaskar plays can be subdivided into three categories 1. Dramas on Equality, Social and Political Justice *the Chair, Riding the Tiger, Brahma Raata, Mahatma Jyothirao Phule, Raajigaadu Rajayaadu* that may come under this category. 2. Dramas on Spiritual Significance *Ruthwik, Jeevannatakam, Bommalu Cheppina Bhajagovindam, and Kabirdas* may fall into this category. 3. Dramas on Family and Political themes, *Kaalakootam, Return of Gandhi, Mabbulloboomma, Minister* etc may come under this category. Themes of Vizai Bhaskar's plays are based on social concerns and they discuss the problems of society and try to give solutions to them.

Vizai Bhaskar's plays are like a mirror that reflects the individual's inner and outer world. While dealing with the social realities, he unveils a few major tendencies of Indian society: Equality, Social and Political Justice, Class conflict and Power Mongering. While projecting the down trodden characters play important roles, as important as upper strata, Vizai Bhaskar shows them exploited, oppressed and humiliated as in *The Chair, Riding the Tiger, Raajigadu Rajayyadu, Mahatma Rao Phule* and other plays. Even education or awareness doesn't bring any substantial change in their life. It produces sophisticated slaves like Bheemayya in *the Chair* or the social victim Mareppa in *The Return of Gandhi*, Rajigaadu in *Raajigaadu Raajayyadu*. These characters get educated become sophisticated and occupy the focus of the play in their revolt against the outdated conventional values and fashions. The play *Ruthwik* deals with the hypocritical attitude of modern man in India, where modern man is denigrated and venerated as suits for the material purposes.

Vizai Bhaskar's plays raise questions by providing a guideline or message to the solutions of the problems they deal with. A popular playwright of modern India Vijay Tendulkar says in one of his interviews....

By not giving a solution, I leave possibilities open, for whatever course the change may take ² (330).

But Vizai Bhaskar through his plays raises pertinent questions in order to give solutions. It is found in *Ruthwik* when he makes Ruthwik the central character of the play asks the audience what is the reason for the unrest everywhere in the world today. It is only to probe in saying that the fears and frustrations are the outcomes of the practice of our age old idiosyncrasies which develop hatred. As Shailaja B. Wadikar says in the book *A Pioneer Playwright*:

The playwright seeks to present the modern man with his predicament, his challenges, his difficulties, and his complexities ³ (43).

Vizai Bhaskar does this in his plays, particularly in *Riding the Tiger* it is observed that the predicament of factionalism in the region of Rayalaseema of Andhra Pradesh is overtly presented as the root cause for the huge loss of human life in that region for decades.

In the article, *Fake encounter on stage*, Kamala O rightly points out: While the masses were waging war those in power hatched conspiracy to eliminate the leaders of the masses one after another. Should such killings be taken as a fate that had befallen? This question is being asked in Vizai Bhaskar's *Brahma Raatha*⁴ (3).

All of Vizai Bhaskar's plays manifest the different aspects of the human character and complexities of human relationship. He thoroughly scrutinizes and explains the blood relationships on various levels in his plays like *Ruthwik*, *Kaalakootam*, *the Chair*, *Kinchitbhogham*, *Jeevannatakam* and other plays. The varying relationships in the plays *Kaalakootam* and *Kinchitbhogam* for example, wife-to-husband, brother-to-sister, father-to-

children, etc., expose how greed for money makes these family members wild and mad. The play *Ruthwik* portrays the hollowness of husband and wife relationship and the son and father relationship for money. In the play *Shatruvu* the noblest profession of Doctors bargains its own nobility for the fulfillment of material ambitions. Vizai Bhaskar has tried to bring great variations and innovations related not only to the plays and themes but to their forms also.

One more important aspect about the playwright is the existential tendencies which are clearly noticed in most of his plays. Raghava in *Kaalakootam* gets nothing even after the fulfillment of his ambition of becoming politician but insaneness because of excessive love in becoming politician through wrong ways; Sekhar in *Ruthwik* who doesn't believe in the institution of marriage becomes totally helpless towards the end of the play; the life of all the members of Manmada Rao's family exhibits that human life starts and ends in nothingness; the efforts of Madhava Rao in *Kinchitbhogam* to get name and fame in protecting at any cost his brother's assets from his own greedy family members in the play proves futile; Ganapathi in *Jeevannatakam* himself creates a hell for his last years of life through his hollow idealism. Except his wife, no one has any sympathy on him.

The social play *Brahmaraatha* explores corruption, violence, and evil deeply rooted in human nature, as it reveals the degenerated society, fractured selves and problems of living with compassion and cruelty. Lama Bam Gojendra opines, *Brahmaraata* ridicules the evil deeds done in the society⁵(4). The complexity of human nature with violence and sexual lust is also presented in *Kaalakootam* while the chief protagonist Raghava an upcoming politician is an outrageous, having all malevolent feelings molests Maria. In *Kabeerdas*, The bitter experience of life of the saint Kabeer has made him hard and violent. The frustrated high priest's attitude crushes his emotions and feelings and leaves him a rough man like desert cactus that stands the onslaught of stormy weather.

Whereas the play *Return of Gandhi* draws a picture of selfish, narrow minded, self-

centered modern society that doesn't hesitate to sacrifice their human values. In this play also once again Vizai Bhaskar raises a certain cardinal question regarding the value system of a so called modern success oriented society that is dying to get success at any cost.

The play *The Chair* has the background of the twentieth century history of the struggle over the practice of untouchability and the immediate phase of the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh and in the nation as a whole. It is a psychological study of the social tensions caused by casteism in India and the development of Bheemayya's character from a down trodden and unsecured childhood into a hardened officer rank from Dalit section in modern society.

Bhaskar expresses his view on single woman struggle in *Raajigaadu Rajayyadu*. Radha, a husband neglected, becomes a victim of the society that gives unsympathetic treatment to such mentally challenged person. Through the character of Radha the playwright attacks on the male dominated society and the pathetic condition of women.

Ruthwik (1999) is Bhaskar's significant experimentation to centre a *Soothradhari* as protagonist in the play. The play, based on the importance of spirituality, is "a play within a play". The play is social satire that describes the human follies in modern society. It deals with the problem of unrest in the world.

Return of Gandhi has a novel experiment of reentry of Gandhi in order to decontamination of the present day society. The action of the play takes place with Gandhi being protagonist and stands as a rebel against the malingered values of the society of post-independent India. Bhaskar treats the character of Gandhi with great compassion and understanding on one hand and vibrant on the other while projecting him against the selfish, hypocritical, and brutally ambitious politically dominated society. Gandhi comes directly from his tomb, shocks to see the selfish motives of independent Indians. In his exposure to present day Assembly, Gandhi displeases to see the leaders with their inferiority complex

reflect frustration and suffer from superiority complex for the desires of their life. They cannot understand, appreciate and share in the joy of others. The concept of Gandhi's rebirth is introduced by Vizai Bhaskar on stage well in advance before most of the successful movies are made on it. It is noted about this play in an *Invitation of Vizai Bhaskar's Bahu Bhasha Natakotsav* by Chaitanya Art Theatres & Samaikya Bharathi of Hyderabad as:

An outstanding example of the writer's humour, pun and satire, illuminated by a powerful symbolic experiment.⁶ (2)

Mabbullo Bomma is a play with a modified Brechtian technique powerfully presents the misery of womanhood in the present Indian setting. The playwright throws open a question: representatives of different section of the audience, rather of present society, answer it with their own creations reflecting the blazing flames into which the modern Indian woman is thrown.

Vizai Bhaskar throws light on the evil practices inherent in human nature like crookedness, cruelty and violence. In most of his plays the white collar, middle class educated and civilized people become aggressive and violent against their fellow companions, the down troddens entertain themselves at the cost of their honour and dignity. In the play *Return of Gandhi*, Gandhi suffers for the crime that he has not committed as he says: "politics without scruples, scientific knowledge minus humanity, happiness without conscience, worship without sacrifice, business without ethics, wealth without hard work and education without character—are the seven VICES which our politicians have acquired⁷ (66)". Gandhi's tragedy reveals the fact that we are more ambitious towards material benefits through evil practices even though we are living in the most sophisticated, civilized section of the society which may help us to live harmoniously. In the other plays also some way or the other the playwright sharpens his pen in unveiling these evil practices of modern society.

The play *Riding the Tiger* is intensely morbid in the portrayal of its characters and action. It is a play that stands apart from the other plays of Vizai Bhaskar, because it ruthlessly dissects the human nature. It depicts the inborn violence, selfishness, sensuality and wickedness in man's life. But this play is well received by the theatre going public of Rayalaseema Region, feeling that it addresses the factionists to leave the dangerous sport of murdering. The enactment of the play could be compared with the blasting of bomb. In other plays like *Ruthwik*, *Kaalakootam* and *Kinchitbhogam* too, the playwright has taken the middle class modern family members as characters and has dissected their nature towards their greedy goals.

In *Kinchitbhogam* Narasimham, Chanti, and Chintamani are always ready to cheat one another and never hesitate to seek each other's lives to extract money. Each one is suspicious of the other and lacks the peace of mind. All the family members except Madhava Rao lead a life that is comparable to eagles. Nagamani wife of Madhavarao who follows the footsteps of her son and father asks her husband to cheat his brother in business and to acquire prosperity and affluence. The atmosphere is completely charged with disbelief and viciousness. Madhavarao's statement bears evidence to it: 'whatever may be the width or vastness of your edifice; you need only three feet to sit two feet to stand and six feet to sleep, perhaps eternally. For this why these murders, cheatings'⁸ (105).

Greed compels Raghava in *Kaalakootam* to go against his noble father when he rejects him to enter politics. He also molests the chastity of Maria who works as typist at his father and threatens her. For the votes of Christians, he marries her. When he feels that he doesn't become successful in politics if his opponent Kodanda Ramaih is alive, he in anguish murders Kodandaramaih brutally. Towards the end of the play, Raghava becomes insane. The actions of Raghava, going against to father, the forced marriage of Maria and killing of Kodanda Ramaih reflect the fundamental hatred that he has developed for fulfilling his greed.

It is viewed the play as in Shakespeare's plays; the tragic hero is responsible for his death. In the same vein we feel sympathy and pity for them. Further in *Kaalakootam*, Raghava is essentially malevolent without having a single good quality responsible for his downfall and insanity. In *Ruthwik* also Sekhar's character more or less like Raghava's which is held responsible for his own downfall. Sekhar becomes a vagabond son by hurting father for money and not ashamed to have an illicit relation with Manjula a clerk with whom his father earlier had the same relation. It seems this play openly exhibits the sexual relationships, the scenes of violence, and abusive language that shocks the sensibility of its viewers but Playwright's choice of presentation of the character of Ruthwik to overtly present the modern world maladies and unrest is a laudable effort.

Through *The Chair* (1999) Vizai Bhaskar seems to present the angry, frustrated, rebellious youth of contemporary society. The protagonist Bheemayya is against the established morals of the society and shocks the sensibility of the dalits hope in their educated masses work for their emancipation. His sister-in-law brings him up since his childhood as he is motherless. Rejecting such motherly love, he gets ready to marry Patel's daughter for the sake of money. The marriage institution remains an insignificant thing for *Bheemayya*. He wants to establish a good status to his race. That is indicated through his reply to the clerk when he is educated on his joining hands with Dora: 'a person born in a slum area should suffer and die in the same slum forever.' He pretends to be a savior of his race but actually he is just an egoistic epicure. He is an educated officer but his character looks similar to any of his race's slave. Later he realizes and comes up to state that he would like to spell out the prologue for the history of downtrodden castes. He also announces that the down trodden like him should not run after petty pleasure by leaving the community welfare aside.

Bhaskar points out that human life in which cruelty is possible only if the self is forgotten in the stupor of mal-intention. Pleasure is possible only through inflicting pain on the others. At such fear captivation any amount of cruelty looks logical to human being. Self-awareness is the only weapon to rise against to inhuman subordination or supremacy. There are certain incidents of the plays like Bheemayya's realization in *the Chair*, Shop-keeper's rejection to touch saint Kabir's wife Loyi show the goodness and sensitivities of human being's heart. It proves the human being a victim of bitter circumstances not of his inherent weaknesses, thus the playwright presents life in all its ugliness and crudity.

The plays *Kabirdas and Jyothirao Phule* are based on real life incidents. The biographical story of both the saints who strive for social reformation is an inspiration for the playwright to come up with the plays on these saints. By giving a glimpse of the real life incidents, the playwright presents the ghastly upper class vision towards religion, a harsh reality of our society. Vizai Bhaskar attacks on twin issues— religion and caste system and the social reformation. Both the saints come from a normal background fights against the domination and crave for social equality.

The play *Jyothirao Phule* points out an unbearable fact that Brahmanism, the so called means of quality that aims for equality and social reform. But it is transformed into an object of getting pelf and power. Simultaneously, here Vizai Bhaskar has attacked on the caste system. Kondiba is an embodiment of the downtroddens who is treated either as slave, menial servant, or stepping stone of the upper class counterpart. Boycotting of Phule's entry into Kondiba's house reveals the upper class egoistic, deceitful nature.

The play thus, exposes slavery of *Sudra* and other communities in the class dominated society in India. The down trodden characters in the play depict simplicity, innocence, sincerity, generosity and the spirit of devotion to their companions of upper strata. The character of Jyothi Rao Phule suggests that even an educated man is not as free as their

Brahmin-counterparts in their contemporary society, as he has to follow their Brahmins whims and caprices in and outside the coexistence of life. Phule becomes aware of the fact that his dignity or position lies in reforming the society around.

Towards the end of the play Phule becomes the hope for oppressed. Vizai Bhaskar exhibits selfishness and hypocrisy of the age old Brahmins and brings out the revolutionary nature of modern young generation of contemporary society. For this he has used Phule as the representative of the modern society, where the craze for both equality and success renders him satisfaction and peace.

Through most of his characters, Vizai Bhaskar throws light on the total indifference and apathy shown towards them by the society. The whole discussion above leads one to say what Emile Zola states about naturalism, very well apt to Vizai Bhaskar's plays. According to Emile Zola:

It is necessary to accept nature as she is, without modifying her. The work becomes an official record, nothing more; its only merit is that of exact observation of life as it is.⁹ (70).

This is reflected in most of Vizai Bhaskar's plays where life is presented as it is, with all its drawbacks, vices and weaknesses. The audience is left to find out their own remedies for the problems that remain burning in all the times and climes. Vizai Bhaskar's plays reveals that the dramatist has a desire to strive for perfection of life like Anton Chekhov, he aims at creating a kind of emotionally refined, integrated and conscious world¹⁰ (5).

In the post-Independence Indian Theatre, Vizai Bhaskar contributes his share to society by projecting the stark realities of life, relationship and existence. Seeking to present modern society with its real worth, predicament, challenges, difficulties and complexities in true colours, his characters are drawn on the canvas of originality without any attempt to add additional colours to them. Most of his plays are written in naturalistic vein and reject

idealized portrayal of life while attaining complete accuracy in presenting the life realistically. He has discussed and touched upon every aspect of life, not only the happy, gleeful but also on human weaknesses, follies and foibles. His plays are neither moral, nor immoral in tone but may rather be seen political. Vizai Bhaskar seems to be a silent 'social activist' who covertly wishes to bring about a change in people's modes of thinking, feeling, and behaving. As an optimist he is willing to make people conscious towards life with all their vices and limitations.

Vizai Bhaskar explores the realm of Indian drama by the new world of magical possibilities fusing the reality and the mythology. His experiments with humanity, honesty, virtues on one hand and reasoning for human follies, attack on derailing human values on the other hand demonstrate his success as one of the most successful playwrights in the contemporary Indian English drama. Through his dramas, Vizai Bhaskar acts as a torch-bearer for truth lovers by synthesizing Vedic culture, human philosophy with that of modern man's craving for mental satisfaction. As the modern culture hurtles forward into newer trends, Vizai Bhaskar transports us into an imaginary world by introducing an ever encouraging tool – truthfulness and its needful uses through traditional situations.

The play *Ruthwik* deals with ailments that are so common in the life of the modern man who suffers from the desire of power; money etc., It sermonizes the people to live harmoniously by protecting *dharma* which in turn protects human life. The dawn of new tendencies and vogues affecting the very truthful way of human life is the crux of the story. By making 'spiritual anchor' Ruthwik a character in the play, Bhaskar dexterously demonstrates *dharma's* co-presence in the contemporary Indian home, street and office which marks the *adharma's* co-existence of their lives.

While appreciating Vizai's wizardry as a playwright, Dr. P.V. Ramana, Head, The Department of Theatre Arts, Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad, in his foreword to *Ruthwik* comments on the play as "superficially a message oriented, creative, entertaining and very real account of an attack on present day societal ills and mistrust."¹¹ (10)

Ruthwik is a play that satirizes corrupt practices of the day and gives a message of the importance of moral living. *Ruthwik* seems to be more philosophical and invokes God while he addresses the audience from behind the curtain in the beginning of the play. There heard the words of *Ruthwik* as in the global stage, human's life drama constitutes the soul of 'Yagna' and he also asks the audience to be graced with that dramatic *yagna* to ponder over certain insurmountable issues of ideal but deteriorating human relations, of de-tracking virtues, of evaporating ethics and of the abhorable greed for money throwing such people in tragic trauma.

Immediately after that invocation, the character *Ruthwik* while describing the status of America, Russia, China, presents directly other states' dangerous ways of living, corruption, unrest and rhetorically asks the audience to know the reasons for this unrest.

By questioning why man repents for yesterday, anxious for today and worry for tomorrow, *Ruthwik* asks us to know the reasons for these questions. After that, the play begins. Sharing of the money that is earned through corrupt practices, even in sharing that money searching for opportunities, creating misunderstandings, fighting for upper hand, compromising, accusing, gossiping, criticizing are the happenings on stage.

Again *Ruthwik* enters and describes human weakness towards money. He also says how man becomes mad of having all ill-wills. It also advises how life should be enjoyed like a sport. He says if life is a 'war' it is inevitable you have to fight it, defeat the foe and destroy. Suppose life is a literary forum or a dance-ballet, there will only be ecstasy but not excitement, and trance or tranquility but not craziness. Man will never become maniac. It

will be possible for him to enjoy life like a sport. It is that state of mental equilibrium which we should attain.

Later in another scene, a husband's deceitful nature towards his wife is played. A corrupt officer Manmada Rao's practice of saying 'official camp to Berhampur' to have secret affair with his clerk so often, is revealed out. Manmada Rao's brother-in-law breaks this news out to his sister and tries to get transferred the building on his name that is acquired by Manmada Rao through his corrupt practices. Manmada Rao blames his wife who is the reason for his secret affair. Wife Manikyam picks up a quarrel with her husband impatiently. She argues that the building should not be transferred to the clerk whom he kept with him and also asks to transfer it to her brother Abbulu. Manmada Rao scolds his brother-in-law and slaps his wife. With a fit of anger, she also says that she books him up to Income tax officers. Becoming emotional Manmada Rao shouts on his wife and collapses with heart pain. Ruthwik re-enters and sermonizes Manmada Rao not to be emotional and to think sincerely as.... "Unless one completes doing hundred misdeeds, one will not be slayed like Sisupaala. Till you commit ninety ninth mistake, the characteristic ego of Sisupaala hidden in you feels that you are supreme and nobody can do anything against you. The moment, the hundredth mistake is completed, then, appears the 'Sudarshan Chakra' before your jaundice eyes! The dormant diseases in you will repulse and revolt against you. Your spine gets shivered and all energy in you gets evaporated. Don't go egoistic."¹² (20 -21)

Manmada Rao's Brother-in-law is being so proud of having power is transferred into his hands. He also does not want to care an opportunist lawyer who generally advises him for all his crooked plans. Then Ruthwik re-enters and explains good and evil deeds of man. It also appeals human beings to follow good qualities. Again play begins Manmada Rao punishes his brother-in-law for his unruly behavior. His wife quarrels with him and later they move to Madras for medical checkup. Lawyer subjugates Abbulu Manmada Rao's brother-

in-law who has acted proud until then. Ruthwik re-enters and says that the good should also be habituated as the vice does.

The playwright scribes how selfishly a friend, wife, son and brother-in-law think and behave for property or money. Manmada Rao shocks and gets hurt to know how the clerk is now having sexual affair with his son as Manmada Rao becomes old and having lost his rights on all properties.

Ruthwik re-enters and explains the human tendencies. He explains the nature of a man when he is in possession of power and money. On the other hand, he also explains how man behaves when he run short of money, power and age. He also presents the pathetic picture of human being when praises God and throws brickbats on Him. He also explains God's grace and asks us to think if God's support is not there how would be the life of human being.

In the final scene, selfishness and opportunism is portrayed. Manmada Rao's wife is hurt in the hands of her own son and brother. Shocking to see her with wounds and blood, Manmada Rao collapses by repenting that he has been punished for his weakness. Ruthwik ends the play by bringing mythical truth into light. By highlighting the qualities of mythological characters *Harischandra*, *Draupadi*, *Rama*, he asks human being to exercise his sagacity. Also he envisions human life should be flourished with virtues like concern, love, and sympathy.

By sending a valuable subject into the hearts of audience the playwright expects those minds to speculate that there should be change in the present day inconsiderate ideologies. Having a combination of noble and human qualities, Ruthwik character that comes before and after every scene, explains honest living, spiritual qualities, and idealistic life with apt examples is a new experiment. By telling what should be there in human life, it has shown through various events that the human life is for doing meaningful activities. It seems the

playwright has used *Ruthwik* as his mouthpiece to directly attack corrupt practices. The play appeals everyone to aspire for developing goodness in human life by knowing the realities.

The Playwright has selected the present day's problem of how the corrupt practices lead to disastrous situations. The play portrays the difficult situation of what happens if the pious way is missing in human life. Peter J. Kreeft a popular preacher and psychologist says "evil doesn't exist but a wrong choice"¹³ (1) in his article *The Problem of Evil*. Vizai Bhaskar too presents this problem similar way. The choice of practice is result of man's problems. Evil practice leaves man in hell like environment. At the end when one's own people do not care for him man blames himself for his mistakes. All these problems are artistically presented in the play

Ruthwik which is structured into scenes presents the liberal and modern family with their modern tendencies of greed towards money. There is an anxiety over the desire of spending money among the members of a middle class family of Manmadharao. He has a weakness for which he hypocritically lives. His vagabond son Sekhar who is an embodiment of all modern ills has no care on familial relationships. It is found in one of his utterances.....

"If it is not this father, I would have born to some other Father! It may be a Royal family. Who knows?"¹⁴ (38)

Manikyam, wife of Manmadharao is more selfish and tries to be more practical. In the beginning of the play she looks a faithful wife but later when monetary issues rise, she grows to be more rigid and immoral as it is said in her own dialogue.... "If something odd happens to you tomorrow due to my misfortune, will anybody around me come to my rescue and allow me to enjoy the property? How am I to survive?"¹⁵ (48)

Abbulu, brother of Manikyam, is a great opportunist who lives under the grace of his brother-in-law Manmada Rao. He always takes the opportunity to exploit the conditions and shares the money with Lawyer Rama Murthy. His opportunist quality is found as the following.....

“No more sharing hereafter Mr. Ramamurthy. Management comes into my hands. Brother-in-law will not recover from bed in near future. So, no need for manipulation and no scope for your share.”¹⁶ (22)

Ruthwik, a character that comes up with a sermon and advice has become the name of the play. Ruthwik highlights the importance of spiritual living and truth loving in human life now-a-days. He opens up the play by sermonizing with a Sanskrit verse *Durjano Parharthavyo Vidyayalankruthopisan Manina Bhushithassarpa Kimasow Na Bhayankara* to invoke the inner conscience of the audience to think about the deteriorating human relations and de-tracking virtues for the cause of power, money, greed etc., He also warns that we are losing faith in world peace. He demands us to enquire the root cause of this prevailing unrest everywhere as.....

“Man is losing his Power and Promptitude in triple ways! Repentance and discontentment for the deeds of Yesterday! Panic for Tomorrow’s uncertainty and waver for Today! Why these fears and frustrations? We have to probe! Yes!!”¹⁷ (04)

Like Shakespeare’s Polonius, Ruthwik is a man with observation, confident in his knowledge, proud of his eloquence. His mode of oratory is designed to ridicule the practices of the contemporary times. Similarly like Polonius Ruthwik has the power of honest insight and special discernment, he therefore perceives solutions to the new problems. Unlike Polonius Ruthwik excels in general principles and their application. He is good at introspection and foresight. He also announces that the human race is now suffering from a great disease of feeling jealous of others; in turn such race is creating problems to others.

Hence he demands us to be sportive in living the life to its brim by having ecstasy and tranquility. He says that the Home must be a place for practicing peace but not the battle field. When Manmada Rao collapses having strife with his wife, Ruthwik rightly defines home as.....

...not a hotel to satiate your hunger or a Guest-house to quench your lust. It is an alma mater which imparts your duties. A pious cottage which prepares you to perform the Matrimonial Yagna. It is a meditation hall which stimulates your inner spirit.¹⁸ (20)

Ruthwik also criticizes modern man by saying he would get ready to practice any amount of cruelty for the sake of his wellbeing. He doesn't struggle for healthy society and for his fellow human beings. Being he is a sheer anchor of spreading spirituality, Ruthwik pungently attacks the modernity by saying in one's own life, when fear-complex captivates, any amount of cruelty looks logical for him. He also asserts the evil plans of modern man as "For a good project, there may be only one path! But, for executing an ugly plan, there are hundred and thousand ways."¹⁹ (42)

Ruthwik highlights Global Family conditions by sermonizing the onlookers of the drama. The scientific study of Ecology describes the interconnectedness, the interrelatedness and the interdependence of living creatures in a given environment. A study of Ecosystem deals with the concepts of mineral sharing, energy flow and population control. Living organisms belong to social communities. The understanding of ecological principles would help us to come together as one large global community and it would enable us to treat life with a sense of respect and appreciate the intrinsic beauty and value of all living creatures. Similarly Vizai Bhaskar's play *Ruthwik* also strives to see the whole world should be like a family by helping each other to aspire for Universal Peace. It appeals the truth lovers rhetorically to know the reason behind unrest among all the Nations today. The play is

demanding all of us to get united as we have to practice the concept of *Vasudhaika Kutumbam*. *Ruthwik* is a contemporary play with humorous insight into the Modern man's way of life in turn explores the traditional Indian values and their importance in a globalized and technologically advanced situation.

When something is moving towards modernity, there are always a few new techniques come into existence and the plays become experimental. Mahesh Dattani, India's playwright in English, in the article *Mahesh Dattani's Dance like a Man as an Epic Theatre*, comments on the relevance of Indian theatre as.....

I think there is going to be a good positive development, because as we get into the internet age which isolates human beings, the act of communication will be premium. Theatre is our cultural activity directly related to human beings' communication with each other...²⁰ (16)

Ruthwik also belongs to this category of experimental plays which has adapted a technique of alienation through which it undertakes a serious research about the validity of truth. It promotes *dharma* that keeps the society intact. It announces the *dharma* of past would not remain the same. The *dharma* of past would be observed as it would be fitting to those conditions and with the time, life style, and with the hopes and expectations of human beings, *dharma* would also be changed positively. For example, once upon a time the practice of untouchability was observed in the name of cleanliness as *dharma* and now it is known as *adharm*. So is *sati*, *child marriage*, *kanyasulka* etc. Finally the play *Ruthwik* ends with an appeal that we can live longer if we eschew lust, loathsomeness, fury, jealousy, by cultivating the elements of love, generosity, forgiveness and universal fraternity. The play ends with universal santhi mantra "*Sarve Jana Sukhino Bhavanthu Lokassamastaa Sukhino Bhavanthu*" This ending may suggest that the playwright fondly hopes the end of the play shall give a new beginning to the society.

“I shall be alive in the grave and what is more, speaking from it”²¹ (89). The essence of this quote is very much the central idea of Vizai Bhaskar’s play *The Return of Gandhi*. The play aptly attacks the rot in present day political system. The play has won Nandi Award in 2002 given by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in the Best Drama category. This Play is written well before the most popular hit movies in Hindi as *Lage raho Munnabhai* and in Telugu *Sankardada MBBS* were made on the re-arrival of Gandhi to Earth. This play is translated into various languages. It is staged in the name of ‘*Gandhi Jayanthi*’ in Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Gujarathi and Hindi. In English it is translated as ‘*The Return of Gandhi*’ in Tamil as ‘*Gandhi Pirandanaa*’ and in Marathi as ‘*Punahaa Gandhi*.’

Yama Dharma Raju..... Hell..... Gandhiji’s arrival to Hell on an invitation..... Happy mood in Hell because of Gandhiji’s entry... *Chitragupta*’s allegation with a fear on Gandhi as a sinner.... *Yama Dharma Raju*’s unwillingness to convict Gandhiji..... Chitra Gupta’s reiteration of promoting Gandhi as a sinner because he who is held responsible in bringing freedom to an immature nation.... *Yama Dharma Raju*’s decision of sending Gandhiji to India for a month in order to witness people’s behavior, attitude and their exercise of his sought after freedom.... are the background elements of the Play. The implied expectation of the punishment is that Gandhi has to suffer like a father of disgraceful children does.

The Playwright presents strongly, boldly, directly and apparently how today’s politicians exploit the name, statue and birth and death anniversaries of Gandhi for their material benefits in the play. On his birth anniversary, Gandhi comes back by breaking his tomb. Gandhi’s follower Raja Ram looks at Gandhi with an adoration but in the Gandhi Jayanthi Celebration the present day politicians make a mockery on Gandhi and ask him to go and beg on the roads.

Later Gandhi watches present day Assembly Sessions and shocks to see the behavior of ruling party and opposition party leaders. Gandhi expresses his gratefulness for his name being placed still in the voter list by providing him still a chance to elect the leader for his nation. But he embroils when he knows his vote is being cast by someone. The total polling system comes before Gandhi. Current political, economical condition of his nation, policies of politicians, their interest towards corrupt practices, their love towards power etc., comes before Gandhi.

Everybody wants to get benefit out of Gandhi so they request Gandhi to join their own party. A few parties even get ready to give Gandhi a rich bungalow and a luxurious car as bribe to make him the part of their parties. But Raja Ram alone follows and understands Gandhi. Later in the play, Gandhi is convicted with a murder and deceit. Strong evidences would also be created against Gandhi. The case moves to court and there were arguments to punish Gandhi. Gandhi himself is lawyer for his case.

The play allows audience to witness many realities that are happening today. The play shows picture of consequences he has to face if Gandhi is alive today. Gandhi repents of his freedom fight for this kind of nation and gets hurt to witness this unnatural condition. Court proclaims death sentence on Gandhi. Before implementing the punishment *a pushpaka vimana* comes from Heaven to take Gandhi back. By then at the end of the play Gandhi announces that he comes back again as a revolutionary force to set the conditions in his nation. During his last birth, Gandhi advocated purely non-violence, as he believed *Ahimsa Paramodharmaha*. But tolerance is being construed as inefficiency. Now Gandhi prefers to adhere to No-Violence '*Nirhimsa*', which is greater than *Ahimsa* in which violence would be tackled firmly to protect the good and innocent.

It is a welcoming fact to see some neo-Gandhians are found today and Centers for study of Gandhi are appearing praiseworthy. At this needworthy phenomenon, Vizai

Bhaskar's play *The Return of Gandhi* appeals the youth of this nation to have a great faith in the ideals of Gandhi as pointed in a pamphlete *Life Positive* as.....

Gandhism is becoming the flavor of our times as a newly awakened youth discovers the eternal relevance of values like love, truth, and non-violence.²²

(70)

Gandhi is a paper figure for those who are born after independence. People have started learning of Gandhi as a subject in lessons, a pale picture on books and in quotations of wall portraits. His ideology would not be fit for the nation which is running after a swift transformation in attaining the developed country status. His acclaimed policy of village-model economy is surprisingly forgotten immediately after independence in the name of industrialization that has given rise to numerous hindrances like pollution, corruption, class conflict. Having discontented the youth now have begun to see there should be a change in the path of living, as that is quoted by Gandhi 'Be the change you want to see in the world'. The Play, *the Return of Gandhi* is also highlighting the same in provoking the youth to understand the sheer power behind of Gandhism to bring the change in social order.

Through the character of Gandhi in the play, The Playwright criticizes the present day trend of using Gandhi for one's own material benefits. Name of Gandhi, his Picture, even his Birth and Death anniversaries are shown how they are exploited to its optimum. In the return of Gandhi, while various party leaders try to get the support of Gandhi in order to popularize their party Poor People Party Leader (PPPL) says "Gandhiji alone is the true representative of farmers and labourers"²³ (58) Ruling Party Leader (RPL) focusing at his own aim of attracting the followers of Gandhi towards his party shamefully utters to Gandhi "We are not bothered whether you are real Gandhi or a fake one. But people believe that you are real. They are ready to obey your orders. If you support our party, we will give you a decent house in Jubilee hills with a car and a phone. We will arrange yearly four foreign trips

for you. For your benefit, we will turn a profit-making public sector undertaking into a sick unit and privatize it in favour of your people.”²⁴(58)

The Play *The Return of Gandhi* may be said to be a perfect transcreation as Gandhi is shown as a symbol or an idea or a practice. As he is believed to be a following ideal, the playwright sharply presents Gandhi as a revolutionary in the end of the play. Gandhi is also presented in evaluating the message of truth and non-violence that he has left for his nation.

In the Play, Gandhi comes out of his tomb when a character Rajaram, a stern follower of Gandhiji alone recognizes Gandhi's re-entry. There are several displeasing practices like present election polling, vote franchise to Gandhi still, leaders' will and wish in adopting various untruthful ways to attract voters appear before Gandhi for his utter dejection. There is an allegation raised for a theft and murder on Gandhi. He himself is a lawyer for his own case. Gandhi's argument in the court opens up a Pandora box. Finally Court issues a death sentence to Gandhi. In all these situations, Raja ram is alone who understands Gandhi's agony and in turn explains back to the audience. Thus the character of Rajaram acts as a link to bridge the gap between the character of Gandhi and the audience.

This play is an unusual transcreation of an idea into a presentation on stage. It is regarded as one of the laudable efforts taken by the Playwright. He tries to put all the Indian love, adoration and spirit of following towards Gandhi. Putting the same veneration into the heart of *Yama Dharma Raju* and presenting it before the audience looks lively. Playwright's idea of picturing Hell fills with peace with the entry of Gandhi is away from imagination.

Though there is some imagination in describing the selfish deeds of present generation, the playwright is successful in mocking the situation. On the other hand he is also successful in presenting the modern man's deep love, admirable adoration, and sincere sympathy on Gandhi's ideals. Politicians' collection of subscriptions by putting *Hundis* and spreading gossips in the name of Gandhi's re-entry to save Gujarat Earthquake victims is

presented effectively on the stage. The murder of the leader who has put this *hundi* and convicting this offense on Gandhi is a crucial turn in the play. Gandhi introducing himself and promoting his own ideals and presenting his inner conscience to the present day public is crucial in the play. Actually, the playwright makes all to envisage the situation if Gandhi really comes to earth now. This may be an outstanding experimentation of the very idea of many to expect a savior like Gandhi to come to guide the present generation. By translating this play into several languages he may have succeeded in influencing many.

Vizai Bhaskar's *Kalakootam* is based on present day murderous and pathetic political system. Its plot is based on politicians' enigmatic envy towards power-mongering. Raghava kills Kodanda Ramaih, a popular politician, in order to become a politician through murderous way. Here Vizai Bhaskar adeptly uses the ghost as a symbol to bring out the abstract concepts of present day politics. Kodanda Ramaih's ghost speaks to Raghava like 'Yorick's Skull' to Hamlet. It advises Raghava as.... "In democracy, you should make your opponent politically dead, not physically. You should disable him, not kill him."²⁵ (141) indicating his fascination towards the power. This idea is important motif throughout the play as Hamlet frequently makes comments referring to every human body's eventual decay.

Playwrights should know about the hearts of their viewers. The experiments of the playwright can not become experiences of viewers unless they are influenced by the feelings of a playwright. Through *Kalakootam*, Vizai Bhaskar gives life to such an idea that is received by his audience.

Keeping the society and its system healthy and ambrosial is always there in the hands of its people. Hence everyone should aware with their wisdom of today's violent corrupt practices that make the democracy a *Kaalakootam* or venomous and should protect the very honey like democracy that allows a common man to live harmoniously. If that trail is started even God shall be with us is the theme of the play *Kaalakootam*.

An amiable old and traditional leader Raja Ram Das is one who lives as an exemplary leader having people's welfare as his dream. He is a real leader who is loved by all other leaders as he dedicates his life for real time social service. Contrary to it, His son Raghava develops an attitude of violence as his profession and does all cruel deeds. He has a network of friends having same selfish qualities who are ready to do any amount of cruelty. Raghava outrages the molesty of Maria a clerk works at his father's office by giving her a drug.

Raghava, contests directly for the post of Municipal Chairman. He deploys Dawood to get Muslim votes and marries Maria in the name of ideal marriage to get Christian votes. He also commands the characters Lawyer and Doctor to follow him in all his treacherous plans. When they are deviated from him, he cracks them down to be loyal to him. In his unethical and secret plan he blackmails a clerk Venkata Rao to be his tool of doing all heinous activities. Believing in Murderous deeds is only make one successful in politics, he plans and murders his opponent chairman Kodanda Ramaih.

Being dreadful Raghava doesn't listen to his father's words. Acting treacherous and supporting to all his cruel plans, Maria's trails of changing him too would also end in vain. Rajaramdas, father of Raghava and honest political leader, announces Crude and having no concern and kindness, Raghava contesting in elections seems developing a dacoit in order to get rid of a thief. Through this, the Playwright succeeds in saying democracy should always be for good but not for cruelty.

Being fanatic towards the power, hoodlum Raghava run short of his psychological balance and loses his mental balance becomes Satan like at the end and would like to end himself. Ghost of Kodanda Ramaih stops and saves him. It is visible to only Raghava and sermons him about politics as:

Your own violent nature is marring your future..... I am revealing a strategy through which the people are kept under the toe of Politicians not only in the days of yore but also even today..... Peace shouldn't prevail, if there is peace and security in public life, put you to task, create disturbances and evoke agitation. But, power should be ours. Nation should not go to the hands of the good.²⁶ (141-144)

Listening to the ghost, Raghava retards mentally speaks like a psycho. Raja Ram Das says that this kind of psychological imbalance is inevitable to those who like his son Raghava tries to have power though there is no ability and eligibility. Power.....Posts.... are weapons like, they should be there in the hands of people who are eligible to deal with them and responsible to use them. This simple truth is not being recognized by the public today. Raja Ram Das says and repents.

Democracy is born to keep a common man as a judge for egalitarian society. It gives an impervious freedom to him. So it should not be diluted because of a few evil plans and lecherous leaders. Raja Ram Das envisages, if we are mute to this, all moral truths and humanity would burn in that Kaalakootam, hence everyone should open their third eye and start protecting democracy and honesty.

Vizai Bhaskar presents emotionally how Kaalakootam, venom in Shiva's throat, appears in the democratic system when leaders forget the basic ethics. He also shows how the love towards power brings madness. The present day pathetic condition of the society that mingled with malignant ways is shown. On the other hand the playwright shows the ways how to save the democratic society from them. He also presents various pieces of advice to safeguard the democratic system.

Treacherous ways that are practiced in democracy today give rise to a new trend. Those who could not succeed in education, who could not flourish in business and who could

not work hard in agriculture are looking towards politics and trying all lecherous practices to obtain the power. Leaders today for the sake of power do any amount of cruelty leaving all honesty, nobility and morality aside. All of this is the essence of the play. This dangerous problem is slowly sowing its seeds into the modern world. Though there is goodness in the form of father before him, Raghava following cruelty and becoming a Satan at the end is the very common phenomenon today here and there.

Though the playwright uses the character Satan so less in the play it symbolizes the devil's character in human beings. It looks like a mockery on the present day life. Interestingly the ghost comes on to stage and attackingly describes the cruelty, rot and decay in present day politics and democratic system. It speaks as if it were a mirror image of the present day politician. It also admonishes Raghava that the power should be in the hands of honest leaders but it should not be transferred into the hands of honest leaders. The Playwright introduces the ghost as an example for saying habits die hard or Man's attitude would not be changed even if he is died.

In the play, though there is no reference to Gods, there depicted a devils' pandemonium as the play-theme. Though all caste-men and even Religious Heads assert that God is one, every sect has their own Gods separately. The funniest thing is every sect has one belief regarding devils or demons, as obviously, this practice has no caste or religion. In this play, by way of an experiment, Satan, the evil spirit is introduced as character while preserving the social element in the play. In democracy one may treat his foe as a corpse, but stoop not to make him a corpse as such; it is envisaged through a speech rendered by a phantamic spirit.

Another insoluble hard-nut in the play is the main character Raja Ramdas addressing the audience straight away with a message in the climax scene in urging them to take it seriously to discard apathy and lethargy. Democracy has taken its birth from the ksheera-

Saagara Madhanam of the Freedom Fight. It is the 'ambrosia' that injected life into the enervated nation rejuvenated its devastated souls. It is 'the kaamadhenu', the Divine Cow, which bestowed upon us the boons of Liberty and Freedom. One should not embitter its ethics, morals, principles and ideology with venomous passion for power.

It is permissible under 'Natyasastra' if one of the characters in the play has a link with the audience as 'Soothradhari', but the above act of speech to audience by a character coming out of his role does not look reasonable. Except that, as Dr. Ramana Head, The Department of Theatre Arts, Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad comments in an article *Worship through Drama*: "The play *Kaalakootam* is a revolutionary experiment, depicting in its dialogues, the deceptive outlook of today's leaders and their demagogic clap-trap. Since the writer is endowed with the talent of transforming his views and view points as qualities of characters, the proposed theme, in a concise form had its shape before the audience"²⁷ (14)

The dialogues of the play show how cruelty spread out in the society like *Kaalkootam* venom in the throat of Lord Shiva. Similarly against to *Kaalakootam* how one has to get ready to protect democracy is also presented through its dialogues. For selfish needs how the present day leaders change the face of politics is presented through its dialogues. A character murders the other character. The murdered character comes as ghost. Even after it comes back as ghost it announces that cruelty should grow for getting power. It seems unique that the death would not change today's politics.

'Factionalism' is prevalent in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh and it is a burning topic of the day. Vizai Bhaskar's play *Riding the Tiger* deals with this factionalism from the people friendly perspective. The title denotes one's predicament when one starts riding a tiger, if he gets off the tiger, it is sure to devour him. Hence he has to continue riding. This is the condition of the faction leaders of Rayalaseema now.

In this play, two faction groups are headed by Peddinaidu and Ramireddi. They vie with each other to gain control on the region. The landlords keep their poverty-ridden henchmen happy by feeding them with chicken biriyani and liquor. They promise land and money to their kin, in case they get killed. Thus the landlords make them pawns in their faction games and reduce them to slaves.

There is a character of Swami who abets the crime of his master Ramireddi and then plays a destructive mediatory role between the two faction leaders. The play is all about how a sincere and intelligent police officer solves the problem and brings the factionalists under his control, and then plants reformist ideas in them, to help eradicate this evil permanently.

Henchmen of factionist leaders who kill anybody mercilessly are all common poor people of that region where the factionalism is prevalent. Excessive love towards power drives the poor and oppressed to be murderers and murdered in this life killing dangerous sport political selfishness. *Riding the Tiger* is the gist of such excruciating real dangerous journey that these poor people of this region undertake.

In its first year itself this play is staged about fifty times. It is an experimental and influential play that has attracted thousands of audience. Witnessing the performance of *Riding the Tiger* at a faction village of P.Kotakonda of Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh about seventy widows of the assassinated or axed factionists openly broke down and burst into tears. Just this truth is enough to state how powerful the play in highlighting the present day stigma.

The play begins with a revolutionary anthem. Confusion out of factionsim, its indescribable results, plans of murders, love and blind belief on their factionist leaders are the running elements of the play. Ranganna and Dastagiri are gangsters. They try to kill Mareppa, a henchman of Rami Reddy a factionist leader but Mareppa escapes from them. Munemma, his wife advises him to go away from this dangerous sport but he doesn't listen to

her. He says that his boss Rami Reddi is important to him. He also says that he dies for the welfare of Rami Reddy.

Mareppa loves his daughter so much. He also says that his family is important for him. But when Munemma asks to get rid of the clutches of factionsim, he beats her. He says Rami Reddy is a God like to him. If he goes to daily labour, he gets twenty rupees a day. But Reddy offers him biryanis, liquor and a jeep. He also pays him hundred rupees a day for his expenses. For all of this, he asks him to murder once for a month or two. Munemma tries in vain to change him. His daughter complains and weeps for she is being called a daughter of a murderer. He consoles her and says that it's because of this duty he would be able to feed their family well. He also assures that his boss Rami Reddy will look after them if at all he dies in this sport. Then innocently the little child asks him.....

If that is so, when you die and reach the God, if my heart throbs to see you once, will he be able to show you me²⁸ (173)

He bursts out and embraces her with all affection. He says that he is riding the tiger. If he gets down from tiger it kills, if not he has to offer him to the dangerous sport of factionalism. If he leaves the job at Reddy, Reddy kills. If Naidu knows that he has no support of Reddy, he kills. He tells that death is inevitable for him as he cries "I am doing now is a 'Tiger-ride' my life is a ride on the Tiger Once we start riding the tiger, it is impossible to get down from it. If we attempt to get down, it will simply devour us. And, even if you don't get down from it, after going on riding on it, we have to breathe our last on its back only..... I am helplessly between the evil and the deep sea."²⁹ (174-175)

Playwright introduces Police the protectors of law and order in a laudable way. The police counsel these henchmen and educate them saying that they are involved in a sport where they lose themselves for the sake of factionists' well being. The character, DSP addresses as "Try to realize it. Mutual bickering is theirs and blood-shed is yours! By getting

into these bloody factions, you are unnecessarily spoiling your own lives, getting your own families destroyed. It is you and you alone who are the ultimate sufferers.”³⁰ (216)

Henchmen learn realities. They decide to stop riding the tiger and want to get down of it. The awaked henchmen announce that they are going to kill their bosses. Rami Reddy asks not to cut the hand that provided food for them. A henchman Tirupatayaa says “Where is the question of your providing food to us. It is we who plough the land. It is we who raise the crop and it is we who harvest it. It is we who are providing food and shelter to you, you know?”³¹ (222) Naidu requests Kistappa to prove his faithfulness as he trusts him alone among all the henchmen. Kistappa outrageously responds to Naidu, “Trust, and Faithfulness.... They are the bloody words which are spoiling our lives.”³² (222)

Vizai Bhaskar through DSP character conveys his thought. He makes DSP to announce the factionists are cancerous growth or spreading virus like to society. Killing is only the right punishment for them. Having innocent men as henchmen, bombs and a few guns, shall these challenge public and government? Let these be food for their own riding faction tiger. .

Reddy says that he would like to work at his own henchmen if he is allowed to live. He also announces that he has understood the pride, egoism are useless when death comes to him. Naidu announces that the value of life is understood only when there is a sword on his neck and says that he would go away and live harmoniously. DSP describes that the oppressed class is changing its attitude and their blind following of factionsim has come to an end. He also says that the henchmen of Naidu and Reddy are future leaders of our nation, ambassadors of peace.

Soldiers those protect the boarders, Police that keep up law and order should be praised but not the factionists. People should not hold weapons; they should avoid violence and fight for peace and universal brotherhood. Saying all of the above DSP invites all

towards revolutionary change with a song that aspires for universal peace. *Riding the Tiger* is a highly laudable work that spreads the message of social concern. The playwright sincerely wishes through the play that there should be a change in the people who lose everything in supporting the faction leaders.

In Andhra Pradesh the Telugu Film industry is guilty of making several loathsome commercial hit films idealizing this notorious criminal trend, which de-humanizes people and left millions of innocent and unfortunate people victims of violence just for the sake of upholding the authoritarian status of a handful of landlords and warlords. Some unscrupulous film makers and film writers have unabashedly idealized this unhealthy, violent, barbarous and infamous ‘factionist trend’ for purely commercial reasons. They have the compulsive tendency to depict one side as the Heroes and the other side as Villains. But this Play shows both the sides as the Villains and projects the innocent victims and sufferers as the Heroes and doesn’t stop at that. It goes on to urge them to stop riding the tiger and annihilate this tiger of factionalism once and forever. In a State where these factionist leaders are unscrupulously violent and powerful, so powerful that some of them have become people’s representatives MLAs and MPs, Ministers even Chief- Ministers; this requires some courage on the part of the writer. The courage shown by this writer in dealing with the subject would be sufficiently noticed and understood only when it would be known to the people that the writer personally dared to see it that the play was performed dozens of times in those very factionist areas of Rayalaseema region.

The character Mareppa rides on the tiger of factionism. Mareppa is an example of those oppressed class how they are used by the factionist leaders. The Playwright succeeded in saying this kind of characters get ready to murder anybody or develop group factionism or indifference for the satisfaction of their cruelty.

Mareppa is exemplary for loyalty towards his boss. Though he has love and affection towards his family his faithfulness towards his boss is indefinable. It is his foolishness. As he is reached to such position, he also believes that his boss will look after his family if at all something odd happens to him. He boasts that his boss Reddy will give everything what he wants. For that, he simply does one or two murders. This reveals how innocent the people who involve in this dangerous sport. By proving his character is sensitive, he bursts into tears when his daughter asks him if his boss would show him to her after his death. He explains that he is a character that watches out landlords group differences. He says that riding the tiger is synonymous to death. It is a sport of killing or killed.

Though Reddy cuts his leg, he respects him. His character is ready to offer his life for the sake of Reddy. It is such a character that believes in sacrifice blindly. Finally being killed, his character alone reveals how dangerous the outcome would be when one involves into factionism. He also announces that the death is right punishment for the characters like him.

Notable fact is that factionists will not permit the performance of a play if it does not please them. While so, when this play is staged for about fifty times in the very same factionists' vicinity of Rayalaseema itself, it goes without saying as to how very successful is its writer in its offering. When the play raided over factionism itself, diluted the extremism remarkably, secured reformation even among the ferocious factionists, tickled the hearts of not only the bereaved families of the victims but also those cowardly crowds and tracked their minds towards socialistic pattern of society with rendezvous renaissance, the police officials themselves arranged most of its performances palpably.

At this juncture, it is relevant to refer to a wonderful fact, the best type of bamboo used in the make of the heartening musical instrument Flute, is mostly available in the religiously trifling State of Punjab and in terrorist country of Pakistan. Similarly, the soft-

hearted legendary figure 'Sita' had her birth in a kingdom called 'Midhila', which is now part of the ever-burning Bihar State. Therefore, the resultant proposition is that factionism crops up not from the land we have our birth, but from our own volition and weak-heartedness and obstinacy rather. "Because my birth is in Rayalaseema, I am the king of factionist" is the slogan of yesterday. It seems this play, without hurting anybody, dispels the false notion of such sloganists, and makes them to say prudishly that Rayalaseema is notable for diamonds and not for dacoits.

The Play *The Chair* is meant for understanding the love and anxiety for an orderly society that comes with the gaining of greater respect and prosperity. Narsaiah, a poor dalit, who becomes surpanch of a village, undergoes different experiences, which ignites in him interest and sympathy towards the dalit masses that have come to a state of attaining greater power. The play also deals with the responsibility of the educated dalit youth at this important juncture of their history. This play received NANDI Award from Govt. of Andhra Pradesh in 1999 as a best play.

The chair signifies the power and it fights for social, economic and political democracy. Backed by the knowledge of keen observation of real politicking from close quarters Vizai Bhaskar presents several strands of socio-political reality in a theatrical weave. It unfolds how the vested interests of high and mighty come in the way of Dalits enjoying the fruit of power acquired through the constitutional means.

The play revolves around the empowerment of Dalits and the machinations of local affluent leaders to exploit the hapless dalits. This script secures attention from all classes to visualize the truth behind of the story and prevalent practice everywhere where there is reservation given to political power. The Rayalaseema dialect is adopted for its dialogues which appeals the attention of the audience uniquely.

The Chair strives for the protection of Dalits rights in the constitution. It has envisaged establishing *Dalitcracy* like democracy. It shows a strict path to implement Ambedkar's ideals. There is no hesitation to state that this play opens a new beginning to the race that has been robbed of for the ages. It strives for the welfare of that race. The chair strongly lays the foundation to set Dalits free from the clutches of upper classes. Vizai Bhaskar presents his dream of racial development in the play effectively.

The Play *The Chair* comprehensively deals with the subject of political reservations given to the Dalits in India. Though the policy of reservation empowers the Dalit class to some extent there is still lacunae to be filled in the process of the implementation. Vizai Bhaskar very effectively exposes the *Chanakya Neeti* double tongue of the Indian ruling classes in this play. He makes even the common folk understand how the power that has been given to the Dalits by the ruling gentry with left hand is being taken away with right hand. With astonishing ease and simplicity he thoroughly and skillfully makes it thread bare as Dr. Ambedkar lamented, how the social and economic inequality has been destroying the edifice of political democracy in our society.

Power has been given to the dalits and backward people only for name sake and in reality the unequal and undemocratic social and economic conditions are making that democratic political power toothless and useless. Just as Martin Luther king did not live to see a black becoming the President of United State of America, Dr. Ambedkar also did not survive to see with his own eyes a Dalit occupying Rashtrapati Bhavan in India or becoming the Prime Minister or even becoming the Chief Minister of a State. There is definitely a lot of difference in the situation of empowerment of the Dalits and backward masses which could not have been even dreamt of prior to Ambedkar. This play acknowledges this difference and largely emanates a positive hope of improvement in the situation, and in fact

calls for it by creating awareness among the deprived and underprivileged sections of the society.

Not only that, the playwright even notices and discusses the negative trend of not caring for their own people in the upwardly mobile Dalit section and warns against such bad trends and pulls up the educated dalit people. When watching or reading that part of the play, one would be reminded of the words of Dr. Ambedkar...

I have brought the chariot of social change so far with great difficulty. If you can do it, take it further, if not leave it there. The next generations would take it forward. But never ever push it back or take it in the reverse direction³³ (11)

This play seems to reveal the Playwright Vizai Bhaskar as a gifted critic of the contemporary political situation and as a great visionary of the peaceful, non-violent social revolution.

The playwright promotes Constitution bestowed power on Dalits through the play *the Chair*. This play presents how the Dalits are not allowed to occupy the chair the symbol of power by various landlords and selfish leaders. In each step how they are creating hindrances, this play depicts.

A village..... in which there is a Dalit colony. A Hut..... Their God is Ambedkar whose photo is left on the wall. Lady of the house a poor Dalit Sankulamma believes in Ambedkar's grace that helped her husband becoming surpanch of the village and her husband's younger brother whom she treats a son like studying engineering. So she offers namaskarams to Ambedkar photo.

Narasaih the head of the house and surpanch of the village is getting ready to go to the panchyat meeting. Meanwhile, Jogulu a follower of Dora brings in a chair. For the past twenty years Dora sat in this chair and ruled the panchyat. Jogulu wants Narasaih to do it now. Narasaih doesn't want to sit in the chair that is used by Dora. It is his inferiority complex and fear too.

Jogulu and Tippadu are the henchmen of Dora and Patel. Both of them are also dalits. Though their man is president to their village, these will listen to and follow those landlords only. Bheemaih, brother of Narsaih who is an engineer comes to village on official duty. Narasaih feels happy to have a great respect because of his educated brother.

Dora asks Narasaih not to deal with Panchayat, Patel demands to do. In this dilemma, Narasaih worries and weeps before the photo of Ambedkar and asks him does he write it anywhere what to do at this kind of a situation as:

Oh, my God-father. Did you observe how I am getting sandwiched between both the landlords? If one says 'Yes', the other says "No" Why should I be made a scapegoat for their politics, for their vengeance on each other? You wrote many things about our caste people. Have you written any solution for situations like this?³⁴ (99)

The Clerk advises Narasaih as following and asks him to educate his masses. Only with education slavery is eradicated.

Your God-father thought it enough if the goats acquire horns to protect themselves. But he forgot to note that there are paws to tigers. That's why he wanted all of you to be fully educated. Then only you get relieved from slavery!³⁵ (99)

It is interesting to note that a clerk sermons and helps the oppressed understand their need based requirement. Bheemayya brother of Narsaiah comes to investigate Dora and Patel's corrupt activities. Realizing it, Dora exhibits all false love on Narsaiah. He praises Bheemayya by saying that he looks like Ambedkar. Narasaih hurts when Bheemayya sits before Dora. With an inferiority complex, Narasaih and Sankulamma ask Bheemayya to go back to town. They are afraid of his security from those cruel landlords.

Patel comes aggressively by scolding Narasaih shouts at him. He says that Narasaih has been listening to Dora's words as he has given the chair to him. He also throws a thousand rupee note on his face in order to support him. Bheemayaa crosses Patel and says that he has come to investigate the reason for collapsed school building. He says that Patel's this attitude is enough to take action against him. He also educates his brother that they would file a case against those who scold or hit or blame in the name of their caste.

First Bheemayya can't attract to the machinations of Dora, later for his money Bheemayya goes towards Dora. Clerk says that Ambedkar was born to save oppressed class. Bheemayya who has come up in the path of Ambedkar should be like another Ambedkar. Educated Bheemayya should put his class of people together for equality but he should not be a slave to his selfish needs. The Clerk also appeals Bheemayya to go against Dora and Patel who are the devils like for their village. All his attempts are useless.

Narasaih comments his brother Bheemayya who is being corruptive for the money of Dora and Patel. He also says that he wants to resign for Sarpanch post. He says Bheemayya who is trying to use his power for money should not be there in his home. So he asks him to go away from his home. Bheemayya asks his brother to know about the trend of the day. He also comments that his brother is living like a frog in well and advises not to think himself as a great honest man and leaves the home. Narsaih innocently shouts that his brother is like a tiger that tastes blood while they are dumb and meek goats like.

While Dora attracts Bheemayya with money, Patel tries to attract him saying that he would like to give away his 50 acres of land and his daughter in marriage to Bheemayya. Bheemayya likes to marry Patel's daughter. Sankulamma doesn't want to accept it because she brings him up for giving her sister to him in marriage. In order to avoid Dora and Patel's supremacy Bheemayya wants to marry Patel's daughter. He says that he has that eligibility. He also consoles his brother and sister-in-law by asking them to be happy as they get rid of

slavery.... “Tell me in what way we are inferior to them? We had a similar birth like them! Do you mean to say that I am not aware why this fellow Dora joined hands with me, why that fellow Patel declared to offer his daughter in marriage to me? Whatever may be their line of thinking, the target is only one! Social equality! Their supremacy should get reduced”³⁶ (136-137)

Patel and Dora fight with each other for their supremacy. But they become one to kill Bheemayya as he is involving in their affairs. They want to indict Sankulamma of this murder and put Narasaih behind the bars. They plan this murder with Tippadu and Jogulu. They captivate Narasaih and Sankulamma by putting the crime of killing Bheemayya. Narasaih weeps with anguish that his life is spoiled. He also shouts why the chair and power that has been given to him that set him away from his family. Jogulu and Tippadu leave Bheemayya. He appears before Narasaih and asks him to pardon him. He says that he would utilize this re-birth for Dalits welfare and social equality. He wants to sing prologue for Dalit history.

As long as the Backward Classes and Dalits go under the will of landlords, how many Ambedkars are born, there would not be any change in the life of them. He wishes to fight against the landlords who intentionally create troubles among these depressed classes. He describes the chair is a symbol for sought after freedom. It is a powerful weapon for us hence he requests his brother to sit in it and start ruling their village.

The Playwright finishes the play by making Narasaih to sit in chair by saying the injustice that happened in the past is recognized and reset. He also assures Revolution may come at any time.

The Play *Kinchitbhogam* is a take on human relationships. Vizai Bhaskar deals with a complex situation as to what to do with the money earned by one person but invested wisely by another person. Should the other person also enjoy a share from it is the question. While

dealing with it, the playwright extends it to different angles only to say that human relationships are far more superior to money. As a case study, he presents the example of Rama Chandra Murthy and his younger brother Madhava Rao.

Rama Chandra Murthy migrates to Dubai and makes money. He sends his savings to his younger brother madhava Rao to buy some property in India. Madhava Rao does the work. But, Madhava Rao's wife, a jealous woman, pleads with her husband to take a share in the amount for rendering his services. But Madhava Rao feels they should take money only if his brother voluntarily gives it.

But she is not the one to stop at that. She schemes to kill her brother-in-law and mixes poison in a cup of coffee and serves it to him. Sensing his wife's moves, Madhava Rao drinks the coffee to save his brother. For some small pleasures or little luxury that is *Kinchit Bhogam* none should destroy lives is its message. Though the title itself sounds mythological, it advocates impressively, with creativity and nativity too, a social truth as to how a man craving for money becomes monstrous in his nature.

The Play fills with satires on social evils. Love of money, desires shall lead man into mire of problems is the central idea of this play. Today in the society there is love towards easy money though it is not possible. If at all it is possible people do not want to lose money that comes to them in whatever way. To keep up that money they get ready to do any amount of cruelty. This is the trend of modern living. The playwright attacks these problems in his own way by saying.... "Political field is a rehabilitation centre for cheats. In this country, since the literates are lethargic and the illiterates are obstinate, one can easily fly their flag in political arena!" He has also made an interesting interrogation as "Why coronation of an un-blissful Almighty?"³⁷ (8)

Except Rama Chandra Murthy's character all other characters of the play strive for malevolence. Narasimham wants money for political positions. Being dissatisfied, he gets

ready to do any misdeed. His grandson is a vagabond and practices petty thefts who want to become great overnight. His daughter Nagamani gives away all ethical values and plans to murder her brother-in-law for his assets. Chintamani, driver Narayana are opportunist characters who also try to have a share in assets by helping Nagamani in all her evil plans. Madhavarao alone who tries to save goodness from all these evil practices. He wants to save his Brother Srirama Chandra Murthy's assets and he wants return them safely to him.

The play opens with a picture of one character strives for money.... the other searches for political position. The attitude of these characters displays their desires. Nagamani's entry itself shows how proud she is. Driver Naryana's response shows that it is irritating to know how money changes even a normal fellow like him in the society. Almost all characters take the story so naturally to attack the evil practices of the society. They show how good, honesty, nobility are being troubled among the qualities of desire, opportunity, impatience, and ill-will. This play puts a pathetic picture before audience how one has to struggle to save goodness and sacrifices oneself among one's own people's abnormal qualities of ill-will.

The plays *Jeevannatakam* seems to be a satire, in which Vizai Bhaskar contemplates to show how human relations are touching a new low in all aspects of family and social fabric. The play combines fantasy with real life drama. A donkey, a dog and a monkey make a request to God to take away twenty years of their life, as they were being subjected to suffering. God obliges them and gives this sum total of sixty years of life to one Jagannadham. But an elephant protests this. Then God converts it into a man and makes him witness the repercussion of the bonus year he gave to man. Jagannadham leads the first twenty years of his life slaving like a donkey in office. Then after retirement he serves his next phase as a faithful dog looking after his son's assets. Then in the last phase of life in his

Nineties he leads a bizarre life like that of a monkey. It then showed how insensitive family members are to men in old age. Praising the Playwright's ability R.K. Rao G opines as

Each one of his plays has something new in them-treatment, characterization or technique. The Play *Jeevannatakam* is quite innovative and is full of symbolism.³⁸ (4)

Brahma Raata is another interesting play which is more comical but purposeful in the sense it preaches that each individual writes his own fate by his own acts. The play presents deterioration of human life-style. Brahma's office is like any other office room in the secretariat, with corrupt assistants and Brahma acting on their advice. As the persons move before him, he writes on their forehead his or her future, looking at their *prarabhda patram* in their hands that carries details of what he did in his previous life. A government employee tries to bribe them asking them to write a better future. Narada informs Brahma that the numbers of poor and downtrodden are growing because of these corrupt people and shows a skull of a poor man as an example. Brahma then dismisses his staff and says that he shall give life to each one of them and leave peoples' foreheads blank, which will be later filled by the individuals, by their acts.

Brahmaraatha is translated into Manipuri as '*Laibakki Wa*' by L. Biswanath and it is designed and directed by M.C. Toiba, and also staged on 27th September, 2009 at the JN Manipur Dance Academy Auditorium. In the play, making celestial life and earthly life a close-knit world, the Creator of the World, Brahma, was questioned for the deterioration of human life-style! It seems, keeping before him the revolutionary slogan for equality the drama was written. He makes contemptuous fun of Indian political culture, and the rampant corruption. He focuses on the hapless and the down trodden section of the Society. Apparently, he believes in Gandhian philosophy and in Gandhiji's campaign to abolish

untouchability. Forsooth, he depicts such noble thoughts in his other plays. Discrimination and degradation meted out by Dalits are aptly exposed in the Play.

Vizai Bhaskar opines that unless steps are taken to end casteism in a transparent manner, India would never become a powerful Nation. The acclaimed Journalist Budha Chingtham of 'Sangai Express' writes, "Telugu Play as it reached Manipur through Banyan Theatre with the splendid craftsmanship of noted Director M.C. Thoiba could see comparison between Dalits and the people of Manipur"³⁹ (1). Another connoisseur Nani in Huiyen Lanpao opines, "Banyan's Play is not only pointed like sharp spears, it provokes thoughts also. In this world of restlessness, where life is at the barrel of the gun, living without knowing what will happen next; this drama instills a new idea to the viewers."⁴⁰ (1) As Dr. Lama bam Gojenddra, Pokanpham critic, puts it, "The ever widening gap between the haves and the have-nots, between high and low, the ruler and the ruled, and the urge for restoring peace and harmony are wisely rejected in the play. It ridicules the evil deeds done in the society, superstition that is followed and rampant indulgence in corruption. The fake encounter responsible for elimination of poor and innocent people is depicted in the play."⁴¹ (3)

In *Devudu Kaavaali* the playwright adopts melodrama with a liberal component of myth and fantasy. The play stresses on truth, brotherhood and love. In the play Vizai Bhaskar emphatically pleads for communal amity. He also advocates God shall exist for the sake of man. No man shall die for the sake of God. Every man shall transform into God through truth, love and affability.

In the play communal imbalances and religious perversion are shown. The desire of Universal Manhood is given a shape and there created a beginning for a new God is required for such new world. God who is liked by all equally is to be selected and he would be given all power to lead the world. This new discussion is raised in the play through which society

should not be spoiled in the name of caste, creed, religion is highlighted. God must be there to see universal peace and brotherhood is the story line in the play.

In the play it is shown how various religious practices have been filling chaos into the minds of people and their baseless discussions have been attacked. By showing indirectly how the power-mongering is in the present society and for it how the religions support is explained explicitly. The play has attacked the very foolishness of religious gurus those who can't believe that all Gods are equal. They can't accept it when all Gods appear before them and stated it. It is highly appreciative that all the Gods are made to say the Godly element is nothing but Universal brotherhood. Truth, Love and Character are the qualities of God and one should bear all the religions with equal love. The Play announces that each man should possess these qualities and become a God.

The play *Minister* is a satire against on how the politicians change according to their needs. The fear of death is the weapon that changes one from bad to good is the gist of the theme of the play. Minister Raja Gopala Rao is highly corrupt and receives money packed in flower bouquets. One day he visualizes 'mrityuvu death' standing before him and announcing that his time is over and hence leave with her. But he pleads for postponement of his death for another three months. 'Mrithyuvu' concedes and then takes him into an adjoining room, where he overhears his son scheming with his gunman to kill his father so that he can get that political seat. His mother also joins race. The minister becomes wiser and starts giving away all his money to the poor and needy. He also reads out a will bequeathing his property to the government. People start loving him and the 'god of death' extends his life span this time. The script is hilarious.

Though it bears an English title, a hundred percent Hindu Philosophy forms its background with political theme. It seems mythological while the character the deity or demon of Death appears and disappears through the wall of the building. The very element of

dread for death constitutes the dependable character in this message oriented play. While the proverbial saying goes 'Blood is thicker than Water', it is said that bureaucracy is thicker than blood! Be that, as it may, when certain party-workers shed their flesh and blood and get elected an undeserving fellow as leader, with blind belief over him, and if, after occupying the alluring chair, the so-called leader gets accustomed to using filthy language, embraces the ruling party and if addicted to bribes, takes shelter in the dissident group, pins down the democratic values under his toe with utmost vandalism, neglects his wife and children too, and stoops to live on with a wrong notion that money is the eternal goal of lie, the deity of death incarnates before him, enlightens him as to the instable span of life and also apprises him about the selfish, avaricious and cunning fellows conspiring behind him, puts him to introspect his misdeeds and repent for his unpardonable crimes and sins and ultimately, makes him realize the sanctity of human life.

After reaching that transcendental stage, the said Leader, in his quest for truth, gets opened his inner eye, purifies his political career and turns out to be an ethical and ideal leader. As a natural corollary, he not only cognizes and professes that 'leader is he who does colossal sacrifices for the country's prestige' and further that earning money is a vice but spending such money for philanthropic deeds is a virtue and further preaches his beliefs to the people around him. Through the character of Minister, the playwright endows to us certain propositions thus: "Introspection is like the peak of a hill. We can reach there, but cannot stay there for long." "If corruption creates Capitalists, adherence to ethics capitalizes the meaning of life."⁴² (16)

The biographical play *Jyothi Rao Phule* depicts the struggle faced by a social reformer from Maharashtra. The suppression of Phule by upper caste Brahmins in his village and his turmoil is well-portrayed. The story revolves around Phule, who was born in a Shudra family in Maharashtra and moves on to show how he fights the rigid caste system

singlehandedly apart from making an effort to educate women and uplift the down trodden. He suffers many atrocities at the hands of the upper caste men in the village and his family too disowns him.

Phule wins finally when he adopts an invincible strategy—he teaches his wife to read and write so that she could in turn educate the girls in the village. He also convinces the barbers to give up the practice of tonsuring widows. All attempts to do away with the revolutionary Phule, is in vain, even as he continues to seek rationality behind the blind practices. Radha, a popular Kuchipudi dancer after watching one of its performances at Hyderabad shares her opinion —

The Play was an eye-opener for me since I am shocked to find lower-caste people being treated so badly.⁴³ (14)

The sequences are well-designed in order to allow the artistes managing to keep the audience rapt with attention when drama is staged. It is a difficult task when it comes to biographies. But Vizai Bhaskar has taken a lot of care in creating the sequences well. He blended many sub-plots well with the story. The dramatic dialogues with racist undertones highlight the ill-effects of the caste system. Though it is controversial to write for such kind of sensitive issues, Vizai Bhaskar has succeeded with his dexterity.

The play *Hiranyagarbha* has a strange subject with a different frame-work filled with a high degree of intelligible interactions. The play begins with one of the ancient stage-form *Burra-katha* an oral storytelling technique. *Hiranyagarbha*, the playwright intends it to mean Earth, just as the Indian soil is termed as ‘Ratnagarbha’ by elders. In the days of yore, a fellow who earlier dragged on his living as a slave or convict or secluded member of the society, if he were to fight with the foe in a war, in order to inculcate in him a strong faith that he is equivalent to the foe, and also for inspiring warrior-ship in him, a mode of worship

known as Hiranyagarba is introduced. This is to perform in the play as a wonderful experiment.

A typhoon or a Tsunami occurs whereby all the human and inhuman races get annihilated, leaving a few in an island and those few human beings rehabilitate themselves and reconstruct or re-erect their properties under the leadership of one Maestro ignoring the barriers of casteism or religious feelings but subsequently on account of their inherent ill-feelings, they again get separated with self-imposed inhibitions such as high-caste and low-class, the secluded and the seduced. Further they get addicted to all vices and go to the extent of killing their 'Maestro' even and also stoop to make a barbarous and uncivilized living.

At that stage, under the guidance of a female revolutionary known as 'Keerthi' their eyes get opened. They realize and repent for their sins. They also now want to build up a casteless and de-religious society to transform their 'Hiranyagarbha' as Ratnagarbha. There are nine characters that remind us the names of nine virtues as Joh, Yahso, Thyagi, Krodhi, Kuthoohalam, Udrekam, Sandeham, Asandarbham and Chitra. The play runs in an alien direction. The play is not only experimental but also exemplary. Certain controversial issues like untouchability, seduced girls are not only traversed but certain acceptable solutions are also discussed and suggested by the playwright as "Man is mortal, No exemption ever for Mahatma." "Professions became Castes; Castes became Groups, they breed enmity between Man and Man."⁴⁴ (28-29)

It seems the playwright, by keeping the past and present in view, would have written the play fully understanding Human Evolution and its development. He tries to take the audience into an imaginary world. By making the audiences imagine that it would have happened sometime back, the playwright attacks on contemporary problems and social issues. In a special frame work, the playwright creates the characters and makes them speak the bear truths of contemporary society. The Play highlights the importance of an ideal

society that should be envisaged by everyone. The Playwright's deep affliction about the present day's deranged society is effectively found in the play. Not only the revolution of human race but also the theory of social justice is presented in the play. The Play shows a picture of pathetic outcomes if we cannot practice equality by neglecting history and its evolution. The play looks as if it were a caution or a warning. It is also a theory for driving the society on a righteous path.

The play *Chitram* is an attack on the values of Cinema making that presents the real picture of how the movie industry is now has become with crude business techniques. Dooradarshan TV, Hyderabad has made this play as Tele-film and telecast so far many a times. The play dramatizes and makes strikingly discernable all peculiar personalities in Film Industry adopting opportunism and changing their hues from time to time, its naked truths idiosyncrasies and vicissitudes. Even in this social play, a phantamic spirit appears at the end. It facilitates to blow up the climax incidentally.

The Producers and directors who do sex business on celluloid, the irresponsible cine-writers who consider the art of cinema only as a lucrative business, the cine-industrialists who are ambitious to amass wealth, exploring obscene stories with exposure of a woman's private parts even detested by any cultured society for all such money-minded people this play *Chitram* stands as a lesson, warning that they too shall face a day on which they shall swallow bitter pills of truth in their own families. As observed by P. Chandra Sekhar Azad certain movie-makers hold the following false philosophy, "Those who believe in ethics may get deceived and that those who rely on obscenity, will not!"⁴⁵ (31)

The play runs on comedy track with hilarious humour, jolting chatting and satire. It also contains certain philosophical and thought provoking ideologies. Peculiarly while the dramatic association may have questioned themselves as to what they get if they expose the ins and outs in cine-field, the cine-stage-artistes could have kept themselves mum as to why

they should poke their nose into it. So, none of them could not have taken up this play that remained unstageable.

The Play *Mabbullo Bomma* is experimentation in presenting the views of common man on the life of woman. The Play begins with anchor showing a situation through mime in which a young lady is about to be murdered in the hands of a young man, a lady and a man. The anchor asks the audience to tell the reason for the situation and also announces a gift for the best answer.

The play begins and one spectator says that it is of partition of properties. Woman should have an equal right in the property. Somebody says it is dowry issue. Another says that it is craze for pregnancy. One more spectator says that it should not be played by exercising violence on woman. Then the anchor comes out saying that it is only our aim of playing. He also says that woman is treated as an object in different ways as she has a home but her surname has to change, she has been satiated with just only ornaments but not with her real freedom, she has been made a goddess. Like this, each one of us would come to say a new problem of woman but the anchor wants to say through the play how to save and protect that meek woman.

The playwright has de-theatricalised the scene on stage by erasing the distance between stage and audience through this play. The Playwright is appreciated for his attempt of the herculean experiment of applying three different themes for a single frame-work of scene by providing apt dialogues to the respective role and ultimately making all the characters as prize-winning since each artiste has to play three different roles in the same play. This play is translated as *Modeda Gombe* into Kannada, as *Baadalom Me Chitra* in Hindi and in Tamil as *Mogilin Bommai*. The play has been rightly summarized in one of the invitations given for Playwright's *Bahubhasha Natakotsav* conducted in 2009 as.....

“With a modified Brechtian technique, the play powerfully presents the misery of womanhood in the present Indian setting. The writer throws open a question: representative of different sections of the audience, rather of present society, answer it with their own creations reflecting the blazing flames into which the modern Indian woman is thrown.....”⁴⁶ (2)

Man and man come closer with a word. Broken hearts also are due to words only. With the above prologue the anchor begins the play *Bapu Cheppina Maata*. In it, the path of the playwright is not of any philosophy but a fantasy coupled with patriotism and Gandhism. The phantasmic part is Bapu coming out of his statue and giving messages to his disciples. Not only the followers of Gandhi but also certain opportunists, land-grabbers and officials addicted to bribery also have roles to play. To those Indians who part with religious disputes such as ‘Mandir or Masjid, the playwright gives out an exquisite message through Bapu’s role thus: “At present, it is not the Temples or Churches or Masjids are to be agitated for. Illiterate children are in lakhs in the country, and for them, you better construct schools. Thousands of poor people suffer from multiple diseases and are leading miserable life. For that unfortunate lot, you build up the required number of hospitals..... Just as man needs for his livelihood the firmament, the oxygen and water and soil the elements of peace and non-violence are equally necessary for him. If you protect peace, it provides you protection.”⁴⁷ (32)

This play is played about fifty times in the nook and corners of Andhra Pradesh State. Popularly known as the Stage-Gandhi, a Telugu film and stage artiste Editha Gopala Rao popularized this play by playing in all major cities like Hyderabad, Vizag, Vijayawada, Guntur and also at Delhi. The famous Telugu cine-artist Chandra Mohan, having been much impressed by its pungent script, plays the role of anchor once. In Delhi, even today in the *Khaja Kuthbuddin Darga* on a festive occasion known as *Phoolwalonki Shyre* and in

Yoga Maya Math too Hindus and Muslims jointly dedicate the hand-fans. The playwright's dream of truth seems to be that people around him should also swallow the fragrance of such harmonious atmosphere.

The play *Bommalu Cheppina Bhajagovindam* is a spiritual entertainer. As the title is the play carries an old folk art form *Tholubommatala*. In this art form Kethigadu, Bangarakka are the main characters that carry the story through toys. The Playwright introduces Aadi Sankaracharya's *Bhajagovindam* as a folk art in the play. Sankaracharya with his *Bhajagovindam* attacked the superstitions, ill-will of those days through the spiritual chanting. He also says that the life is ephemeral. In this short span, one should not have revolutions and anxieties. Illusionary world is not permanent hence Sankaracharya asks us to be spiritual. All of these are said by Kethigadu to Bangarakka. The play begins with description of the greatness of Sankaracharya's *Bhajagovindam*.

Later in the play a few questions like if selfishness enters Democracy what kind of Government it is, what is to be done when the leaders are selfish and forgetting the welfare of people are found. The characters Minister, his P.A. and his Secretary are symbols for corrupt practices that are found in the present day politics. Machinations of Officers, Leaders love for money, power-mongering like all kinds of ill practices come on to stage. Gayathri, wife of Minister is a character that digests Sankaracharya's *Bhajagovindam*. She sermons the noble ideas of *Bhajagovindam* to her husband in vain.

Through Kethigadu the story moves to Vykuntham where the God of Existence Lord Vishnu existed. His wife Goddess Lakshmi criticizes him that he is not taking his action against the corrupt practices at Bhooloka (The Earth). Lord Vishnu says that his Sudarsana Chakra is exercised by Him when the victim does 100 mistakes. He also says that Minister has made ninety nine mistakes so far, at his hundredth mistake he has to face death punishment through sudarsana Chakra. After the hundredth mistake of Minister,

Vishnumurthy is unable to exercise Sudarsanachakra to kill him. Lord Vishnu says that Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakasipa, Ravana, Sisupala are the representatives of God therefore they are punished by God. Whereas the present day politicians are elected by people and they are representatives of people hence God cannot kill them. He also explains that the people have vote which is more powerful weapon than Sudarsanachakra. With the Vote they are able to make a common man Prime Minister and dissolve even Prime Minister from his office. He advises through one of the chantings of Sankaracharya *Maakuru Dhanajana Yavanagarvam* to elect good leaders for social welfare. In the traditional Indian Literature any little word carries an ample motivation, if people experience it, they shall become Mahatmas. Saying this, Kethigadu ends the play. Sankaracharya's expectation of noble society is again appealed by the playwright through this play.

Shatruvu highlights the importance of leaving ill-will in the human life which is momentary. The story line of the play is basic principle for friendly living. By exposing the present day's selfish practices the playwright presents healthy policies for society's welfare. In the opening scene, by presenting the ill-will that is practiced by common man, the playwright presents life changing principles. Markhandeyulu and Chiranjeevi are the characters who are the rivals. They scheme the plans to kill each other.

The playwright attacks the present trends in the working style of corporate offices and hospitals. He also criticizes the business attitude of Doctors. Doctor Appaji is the mouthpiece of the playwright to introduce the nobility in the profession of teaching. When Markhandeyulu comes to kill Chiranjeevi, Doctor Appaji says that Chiranjeevi is suffering from cancer and makes Markhandeyulu withdraw from his evil plan.

There is a picture presentation of the problems faced by patients now-a-days in the hospitals. When a poet comes to hospital with stomach-ache, he is asked to get tested with several medical tests in order to make money. Doctor Appaji advises the goats which taste

leaves may climb mountains and the man who is habituated to eat meat may go to sick bed. He also says to the poet satirically that the result of limit less eating is not poetry but stomachache only. By this Playwright succeeds saying the profession of Doctors is noble and it should not be materialistic with business needs. In order to avoid enmity between them, doctor Appaji says to Chiranjeevulu that Markhandeyulu is also suffering from Cancer.

Each of them understands that the other has cancer. Slowly they leave their animosity between them. They start loving each other. They reach to the state that love each other as one's own family members do. As Doctor Appaji says that they have cancer, their love grows towards each other. Both of them feel they are enemies once upon a time but they feel pity on each other as the death is fast approaching and they are now going to die of cancer. The panic of death makes them to live for each other. They reach to a position that they don't want to stay away from each other. Markhandeyulu prays God and asks him to give them only love, concern, benevolence towards each other but not ill-will, dishonesty and animosity. Chiranjeevulu says that their life, even if it is a year or a month or even a second, should be showcased with love and affection. Their love and unity makes the poet to come up with heartfelt poetry.

Markhandeyulu and Chiranjeevulu plan to kill each other. They are now friends when they hear about their death. Does the fear of death bring people together? Birth and Death are not there in our hands. Life and living should be in our thoughts. We are all friends. We live let others live. Enmity is created by us for the satisfaction of one's ego. It should be left away and everyone should live harmoniously. There should be universal brotherhood. For it everyone should try. With this message the play ends.

The playwright questions why there should be vengeance, machinations, fraud in life. He also makes the audience feel if man has to love his fellowmen that he has to know the other is on deathbed. There are Characters that play for selfishness, greediness and animosity

and also for social balance, people's welfare. Between both of these characters there lay enmity. By knowing their enemy is near to death, they change and they become friends and start living harmoniously. This play begins with hostility and ends with friendship as Robert Frost poems start with conflict and end with wisdom.

The play *Kabeerdas* is a show of saint poet's spiritual shades. Saints are a revered class in any culture. Their lives and works shape attitudes in society, which not just serve their times but get morphed into legacy worth emulation for prosperity and a star in this rare galaxy is Kabirdas. The play *Kabirdas* is a trial of Vizai Bhaskar to wake up the people to go towards spirituality that is away today from a social stigma of religious imbalance. At one of the performances of this play Valcheti, in his article *Kabirdas Play: A show of saint poet's spiritual shades*, says that it is a bold attempt as.....

The Artistes of Rasaranjani, Hyderabad made a brave effort at depicting the life and works of the great sage through their play, Kabirdas as part of ongoing Dakshin Natakotsav at KalaBharati.⁴⁸ (10)

The Play opens with the scene in a dispute over the manner, in which Kabir's last rites are to be carried out, as Muslims and Hindus disown him as one in their fold. The scene after the scene unfolds narrating the ups and downs of his saintly life including the one that depicts the urge of a soul involved in devotional fervor for the realization of supreme spirit. Then follows the emotional trance of Kabirdas as a staunch devotee of Lord Rama, the unease of a blind wedded to spiritual pursuit that has to lead a mundane life with all its attendant travails and love all unswerving surrender to the will of God, which helps row the boat of life smoothly in other-wise tumultuous sea of earthly existence. All the shades of the saint's life are well-presented in this play.

Vizai Bhaskar's latest play *Rajigadu Rajayyadu* focuses on the socio-economic circumstances of members of the backward caste artisans and service providers, who find it

difficult to live in the modern market-driven economy. Vizai Bhaskar says that it is his ambition to write a play on the lines of '*Kanyasulkam*' the first Telugu play to deal with social issues and one of the longest plays written by Gurazada Apparao. Similarly Vizai Bhaskar has written *Rajigadu Rajayyadu* on the same line. The play has forty persons working, both before and behind the stage and the play itself goes on for four hours. Vizai Bhaskar confesses that it is a six-hour play but works on it to bring down to four hours.

Thus, Vizai Bhaskar's plays are not innovative for innovative sake. They are intuitive and intellectual at one and the same time. Each play focuses on confrontation and its resolution, either addressing a conflict or achieving a comfort level that is less threatening for character.

According to Thomas Hardy "the advantages of telling a story (passing over the disadvantages) are that, hearing what one side has to say", one is "led constantly to the imagination of what the other side must be feeling, and at last are anxious to know if the other side does really feel" what one imagines⁴⁹ (260). Similarly Vizai Bhaskar seems to imagine through his plays what other side that is audience receives from his characters, theme and performance of the plays. There are playwrights who address themselves to the contemporary social and political issues. Whereas, it can undoubtedly be said that Vizai Bhaskar is quite successful in crying for the social concern whose eyes and ears are fully open to see and hear what goes on around him.

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CHAPTER-V

LIBERATION AND EMANCIPATION

Changes and progress very rarely are gifts from above.

They come out of struggles from below.

-Noam Chomsky

People of the early civilization are highly innocent. This society with its advancement however, is class conflicted; therefore, a person of a low class is ill-treated and set an unwelcome for power. Classes have come down from traditional Hindu society in the name of *the Varna*. The Varna division is alluded to in the late Rig-Vedic *Purusha Sukta*. It is theorized to reflect a much more ancient tripartite society, ultimately cognate with the western “estates of the realm” – division into a priestly class, a warrior class and a class of commoners or free farmers.

The relationship between occupation, Varna and social ordering in the Rig Vedic period was complex. Thapar argues: “in the Varna ordering of society, notions of purity and pollution were central.”¹ (63) The phenomenon of the upper classes living on the labour of tribesmen was just emerging and was not ritualized or ideologically ratified until the *Purusha Sukta*. R.S. Sharma states that “the Rig Vedic society was neither organized on the basis of social division of labour nor on that of differences in wealth.....it was primarily organized on the basis of kin, tribe and lineage.”² (10) The Varna system became rigid in the later Vedic period.

In the post-Vedic period, the division is described explicitly and in great detail in the *Dharmashastra* literature, later also in the *Puranas* and other texts. The Manusmriti is the oldest of the Dharmashastra texts, reflecting the laws and society. The concept of dharma deals mainly with the duties of the different varnas. This had a basic division of society into priesthood (Brahmins), warrior class or nobility (Kshatriyas) and commoners (Vaishyas),

augmented by a class of unfree serfs (Shudras). The first three divisions are seen as Twice-Born. Jati is another concept of an outcome of Varna. Jati is caste.

Critics point that the effect of caste inheriting Varna is to bind certain communities to sources of influence, power and economy while locking out others and thus create more affluence for caste in higher classes and severe poverty for castes in lower classes and the outcaste Dalit. In the last 150 years Indian movements arose to throw off the economic and political yoke of an inherited class system that emerged over time and replace it with what they believed to be true *Varnashrama Dharma*.

Gradually circumstances are worse. A few castes alone are allowed to rule or enjoy the power. This value is increased further, and they begin to be regarded as they are only fit for ruling or exercising power. The position of the shudras is greatly undermined. In some circumstances they are barred from the society. There exist various taboos regarding these outcastes. After these practices in India, the low class becomes an exceedingly negative existence.

Independence to India in its perfectly developed state is generally in existence. The constitution gives these down trodden right to claim any patronage since the law of succession given them independent right of living with all inheritance. However, in spite of their favoured constitutional reservations, these classes are still not encouraged to take the leadership. The state is not the most intimate and enduring social relationship for them. The condition of the weaker section in the Indian Society continued to remain low.

Vizai Bhaskar is in favour of social and economic justice to these down trodden. The down trodden for him is not the weaker class. According to Bhaskar, the revolutionary form of life is *Dalit*. He projects his internal grief for the social justice through his down trodden characters in his plays. He combats injustice and ill-treatment meted out to simple sober, unsophisticated working class. He focuses on the tragedy of unsuccessful *dalit* surpanch, a

faction victim or revolutionary weaker section. He advocates the freedom, liberty and emancipation of downtrodden in order to extricate them from obsequious servitude and inhuman torture to which they are subjected by their counterparts in upper strata, and their own caste leaders. His plays voice the need of emancipation of these weaker sections. His reformist objective is fore grounded in his plays. He champions the causes of dalits or oppressed sections of society and exposes the deep mental agony of these classes in different spheres of their life.

Plays of Vizai Bhaskar seek to evoke pity and sympathy for the socially and politically set away outcaste who dare not raise their voice for deliverance from persecution. He attempts to explore into the deeper chamber of the mind that reacts passively and timidly to various forms of oppression. Vizai Bhaskar depicts the weaker classes living in an unfriendly society and among the oppressed counterparts feel subdued to raise their voice against the upper strata of the society due to their inferiority and the artificial slavery imposed on them.

Vizai Bhaskar is under the impression that there may be no difference between upper class and lower class earlier. Even the suppressed class is equally good on intellectual grounds. He believes that the weaker class can come out, of the drudgery only the opportunity should be given to them. As they are equal on intellectuality, they may stride along with any successful upper class human being. They also have quest for knowledge. Kabirdas and Jyothi Rao Phule are some of such role models from ancient Indian culture. Vizai Bhaskar wonders about the ancestral saints like Kabir and Jyothi Rao Phule who used to work like their upper class on the intellectual part and who evoke a revolution against the suppression. He wishes that present day oppressed class should prove their talents as in the way of ancestral intellectuals do.

In his plays Vizai Bhaskar depicts the image of the present day educated low class which is waiting for emancipation and liberation in a fast changing world with an awareness towards modern exposure. Numerous social and religious customs shackle weaker classes and render them unimaginable slavery. In view of their miseries, Vizai Bhaskar dramatizes weaker's cause with a view to developing their position and releasing them from the state of traditional servitude. He portrays the selfish leaders' plans and customs which enslave the weaker sections that put them in practically helpless and voiceless situation. He upholds the reaction of weaker sections and shows how they endure physical and psychological suffering simply by virtue of their innocence.

The playwright champions the causes of dalits or weaker sections by exposing the deep mental agony of such dalits in his plays. His play *The Chair* focuses realistically on the inner mind of suppressed dalit. The play seeks to induce pity and sympathy for the socially and politically suppressed dalits. This play attempts at exploration into the deeper level of understanding of this dalit who is to be instilled with confidence to fight against various forms of oppression. He depicts the defects of the society that takes the advantage of drudgery of this weaker section as a soulful duty of them. He has also shown how the exercise of constitutional right of reservations leads to utter failure in Indian society. He also depicts the greedy nature of educated dalits how they are becoming hurdles for their own class.

Most of the oppressed who live in their own drudgery feel inhibited to raise voice against aggressive dominance of the upper section of the society due to their inferiority complex and false fear imposed on them. Their ambitions, desires, sense and sensibility are faithfully expressed in Vizai Bhaskar plays. His plays show how such weaker class people in spite of being ethical and intellectual undergo psychological suffering due to complex of inferiority and deep sense of inhibitions.

Dalits or weaker class of present day is waiting for emancipation and liberation in a fast changing world. Vizai Bhaskar depicts this image effectively. Communities in India are being governed rigidly by the traditions. In view of miseries of these weaker sections Vizai Bhaskar committed himself to dramatize these suppressed because with a view to develop their position and releasing them from the state of unimaginable slavery with the increasing awareness of social equality as a new revolutionary idea, the trend of new writings persisted in Indian literature even after independence.

In his play *Ruthwik* Vizai Bhaskar depicts how modern man is losing his peace by neglecting the practice of honesty, faithfulness and loyalty. Vizai Bhaskar focuses on the conflict between tradition and modernity. Ruthwik represents tradition and the rest of the plot of the play represents modernity. The drama is a sermon of liberation. It demands man to be liberated from evil practices. It says truth is an all time antidote for the maladies of the modern world. Manmadharao and his family represent easiness in adopting all ill-wills like greed of money, unlawful practices, and emotional shackles. Ruthwik represents rationalism, new outlook and emancipation of these suffering.

There are two discordant concepts synthesized. Ruthwik is an embodiment of truth loving and honest rendering. Manmadharao a character in the play cheats his wife having an illegal relationship with his typist Manjula. Of course in the beginning he keeps it up as a secret from his wife. But later it bursts out. His son Sekahar is a vagabond. His duty is only spending money. Manikyam, a typical middle class mid-wife so greedy obtains her husband Madhavarao's illegal assets on her name. Abbulu her brother an opportunist changes parties always. Vizai Bhaskar portrays all these characters as symbols for modern living of insecurity.

The Playwright also reveals the revolutionary sermon through unusual character of Ruthwik through various anecdotes. Ruthwik refuses to accept the new tendencies of human

life. He defies the habits of the modern man living by cheating. He also makes the audience approve of this act of rebellion should be left away by the modern man.

It reveals that Vizai Bhaskar honours the valuable heritage in Indian life, simultaneously he protests against the absurdities and unwanted customs in the society regarding weaker sections. A Popular Telugu Movie Artiste Dr. Nuthan Prasad rightly says

“Vizai Bhaskar bears abundant concern and social consciousness. It is not only his ambition but also his fixed target and commitment to it that all the poor should become rich overnight. At the same time, he never intends that the rich should get perished. It is his aspiration that the bad elements in the rich community should get changed and they have to be transformed as noble saints of the society. Many people know only writing and preaching sermons. But this man knows how to practice them also.”³ (36-37)

The value of Indian tradition and culture protects and guides human life. Since India has been a tradition bound nation, its people are also shackled by numerous social and religious customs. Vizai Bhaskar seeks to draw audience attention to the silent reaction of the oppressed in the orthodox Indian society that denies them the right to live with freedom. He describes the plight of dalits in the orthodox Hindu society.

Vizai Bhaskar points out the evils in the society. He revolts against hypocrisy under age-old traditions which suppress sudhras for centuries. He brings light on problems of oppressed who are denied to express their wish and willing. The downtrodden people are restricted variously. They are restricted to enter temples, not to sit with upper class. Their opinions are less observed in the ruling even though they are in power.

Dr. Priyanka Singh in her article writes *Mulk Raj Anand: a Messenger of Humane Sensibility*: “Mulk Raj Anand used to say that his novels closely reflected the slowly

changing social system of his times. And it was the impressions he gained and experiences he underwent that shaped the narrative.”⁴ (1) Similarly Vizai Bhaskar is known for his humanistic writing as the characters of his plays reflect his humanistic approach for mankind. His plays reflect the realities of Indian society and Indian culture. In all his plays, Vizai Bhaskar stresses the need for a humanistic approach to life. Like most Indian playwrights writing in English, he is inevitably concerned with man in society. He is an artist saturated with a moral understanding of Indian masses. He understands their mute anguish and always succeeds in bringing out their insulted humanity. His plays expose the silent passions that burst in the hearts of the people who are forbidden to rise up and express themselves. His aim is to evoke generosity and compassion in the minds of the privileged sections of the society towards the oppressed class.

Plays of Vizai Bhaskar prove him to be known for his realistic and sympathetic portrayal of the poor. He portrays the trials and tribulations of the down-trodden, dispossessed and the poor with compassion. He feels the pain of the poor people, who belongs to lower class and weaves the thread of his plays around them. He makes his audience realize that the lower class, down-trodden and poor people are also human beings; they also have the right to live. In the Indian society when one is worshipping the animals like cows and bulls, the poor people are living in pitiable condition. Showing the worst condition of poor, Vizai Bhaskar appeals them to come out of their drudgery through education and possessing power.

Everything has a reason behind it in this world. Vizai Bhaskar's love and the feeling of compassion also have some certain reasons that lay in his past and in his surroundings. He has seen and felt the rural life of his region of those days. He has seen villages, groaning under poverty; he has seen village life sucked dry by parasites and religious priests. He

closely observed the pitiable condition of untouchables and down-trodden people living around. Vizai Bhaskar's will is to fight against the injustice with the poor. All these have cast a spell on his mind and he must have decided to write about those people who are continually being insulted and injured. Gradually he has become the mouthpiece of the underdog.

Vizai Bhaskar treats his characters, not patronizingly, but with the sympathy and gives them a status of the respectable human beings. the peasant, the labourer, the city drudge, all emerge alive from his play-anguished and hungry, yet human superstitious and self divided, vividly realized in spite of their thwarted purposing. Vizai Bhaskar portrays the poor peasant, labourers, untouchables and uneducated people, fighting the desperate and losing the battle of survival.

Heroes of Vizai Bhaskar's plays are the down-trodden labourers, the educated unemployed, the debt-ridden farmers and poor simple henchmen. Poverty and suffering is the badge of their class. In his plays neglected rural side, dirt, poverty, factionalism and disease-every drudgery is there, but beautifully expressed. Vizai Bhaskar leads this caravan of less miserable, and tells the society the story of the true India after independence -not the India of its own constitution, excellent reservation structure and its democratic values, but the real India of the majority of Indians. His purpose is not to draw sentimental tears but to show the true depravation that is hidden behind poverty.

The playwright is aware of the weaknesses, folly, dissipation and ignorance of his characters but he wants to show that these characters are good human beings in spite of their defective background. His feeling of sympathy for the downtrodden is so intense that he has presented in *The Chair* which presents the miserable condition of an untouchable in the power politics of present day Indian society. Vizai has no full faith in social norms. As Mulk Raj Anand observes that even animals are better placed on the earth of India than

untouchables, Vizai Bhaskar also feels sympathy for such people and he has also decided to be the mouth piece of underdog and does pain-staking effort to realize the reluctant people that untouchables are also human beings and they must be allowed to live with dignity. That's why in his play *the Chair* he portrays the characters of Narsayya and Bheemayya, with sympathy and attracted people's attention towards the problems of untouchables. Bhaskar entered into their soul and exposed their helplessness, frustration, anxiety and agony to the degree that he has become an embodiment of their characters.

Characters Narsaiah and Bheemaih could be compared to Anand's Bakha in the novel '*Untouchable*' who are not just imaginary characters in fact they resemble any living downtrodden persons who we see in the society. Vizai Bhaskar himself must have awareness on the problems of untouchables, weaker sections and various craftsmen who are look down upon in the society. This observation could have created a great impact on his mind as well as on his plays. Such kind of experiences makes Vizai Bhaskar a true humanist who comes up with the cry of untouchables and other down-trodden people of society.

Vizai Bhaskar always feels the pain and suffering of down-trodden and always tries to make people aware about the seriousness of the problems of them. That's why he tries his hand on the themes of equality, social justice, untouchability, factionalism, power politics, in all his plays. His play *The Chair* is based on the sufferings of untouchables to exercise the power of a panchayat surpanch between two opponents of other caste who rule that village with false ideologies. In the play *Riding the Tiger*, innocent henchmen suffering under the paw of their faction bosses is shown. Both the plays mirror the society of today how the evil of exploitation that becomes a curse for these downtrodden. Vizai Bhaskar presents the same social evil in these plays reveals his emotional involvement with the problems of downtrodden. He expects this down trodden to come out of this drudgery by emancipating

themselves through education, awareness and acquiring political power. He endeavors for their upliftment through his plays.

On one hand Vizai Bhaskar's characters show orthodoxy and inhumanity for the lower class people, on the other some of his characters give the message of humanity and universal brotherhood. Through such characters Vizai Bhaskar says that social norms are completely man made things, which makes a human being's life bad to worse. For example through clerk's character in *the chair*, DSP character in *Riding the Tiger*, Ruthwik character in *Ruthwik*, stand for the presentation of Vizai Bhaskar's humane approach for the oppressed and needy.

Through some of his plays Vizai Bhaskar brings forth the problems of upper class people who are psychologically imbalanced, suffer from excessive greed of money on one hand and on the other who suffer from their ideology of honesty and truthfulness. In *Kaalakootam* Vizai Bhaskar sympathetically portrays the character of Raja Ram Das who in spite of being very ethical upper class politician strives for keeping the politics free from malpractice. In the play *Mabbullo Bomma*, Vizai throws light on the problem of women freedom. Vizai Bhaskar's regret at the condition of down trodden and sufferers is clearly visible in this play. In the play *Hiranyagarba* also Vizai Bhaskar presents how suppressed people would come out with the revolutionary feel to emancipate the rest. The play becomes more touching when Mestri a reformer dies while he fights with evil spirit, Keerthi devaputhrika abandons sati being revolutionary to carry out Mastri's ideology. Through this play Vizai Bhaskar mourns not only for Mestri but also for thousands of Mestris who died untimely because of being the victims of this materialistic society. Through Keerthi, Vizai Bhaskar presents the reality of suppressed women feelings when they are neglected. He also presents when this so called materialistic world has no care for humanity how revolution

robotically arises. Vizai has vividly described the life of the labourers, their exploitation, their overcrowded dwellings and their innocent beliefs etc. The description is quite realistic and Vizai Bhaskar's portrayal of the deplorable condition of poor labourers presents his humane approach for mankind. Vizai Bhaskar believes that poverty of downtrodden and greed of the upper class is the main cause of human beings sufferings. It affects not only a person's life but also the life of whole family.

In *Ruthwik*, *Kaalakootam* and *Kinchitbhogam* Vizai Bhaskar depicts the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots, the exploiters and the exploited, the rulers and the ruled. In all these dramas, Vizai presents the story of a middle class family which exploits the relationship for power politics, greed of money. In *Kaalakootam* Raghava and in *Ruthwik* Sekhar who are the sons of noble fathers but because of their greed they become slaves and rude human beings. In *Riding the Tiger* Vizai Bhaskar portrays the mental state of the henchmen of factionists who feel jeopardized while working under the ruthless masters. They are destined to suffer because they are deprived of money. In *Hiranya Garbha*, Krodhi tries hard but could not get a support from Maestro. Vizai's portrayal of miserable condition of his characters is quite realistic. He successfully draws sympathy of the audience for his characters who roam in the whirlpool of their destiny.

Plays of Vizai Bhaskar evoke the human sensibility and make the audience feel the pain and sorrow of the characters. In many of his plays Vizai Bhaskar's concern for downtrodden and poor people has found ample expression. He writes the play *Mahatma Jyothi Rao Phule* to vindicate his concern for the peasantry. The play is not just the story of Phule and his spiritual journey in quest of identity. It is also a chronicle of Indian peasantry in the throes of exploitation as Phule presents the status of Indian peasants to the Duke of Connaught:

“They are not the representatives of the peasants who constitute the major portion of the population from the villages. The real India is seen in villages where people are penniless, foodless and shelter less. The majority do not have even rags to hide their shame. If your royal Highness wants to see true India, your Majesty should go to some nearby villages – there.”⁵ (432)

In his hopes and fear, Marthand, a barber who responds to the call of their association not to perform ‘siromundanam’- cutting the hair of a Brahmin widow- reflects the image of common Indian peasant who is compelled to suffer sometimes because of circumstances and sometimes because of exploiters like Brahmanas and British officers those days. In all his plays, Vizai Bhaskar presents poor people problems in completely different way but his portrayal always remains sympathetic whether he portrays the poor peasants struggling against conventions or struggling against fate or fighting for freedom.

Raajigaadu Rajayyadu is the story of a barber who becomes president for his village through his education by agitating against the feudal system prevalent in his village which keeps the innocent peasants away from power, freedom but in keeps them in the drudgery of their caste craftsmanship. Raajigadu leaves his barber kit aside and promotes *Naayipurana* - Purana of barbers that says they are Naayi Brahmanas who are equally intellectual. He does this without caring for the upper class in society who leaves death pain on him as he is not supposed to leave his barber craftsmanship. Vizai Bhaskar is carefree about the social conventions and traditions. By showing this fact Vizai Bhaskar makes the people realize that first it is important to be a good human being. Social conventions and traditions are not above humanity. Such is the philosophy of Vizai Bhaskar and it underlies everything he has written.

In most of his plays, Vizai Bhaskar condemns social evils like the evil of untouchability, people's orthodoxy narrow-mindedness, and their conservative thinking. Most

of the time when his hero is suffering, Vizai Bhaskar sympathises with him but his feeling of sympathy becomes more intense when he portrays the character a revolutionary to fight against the oppression. In the experimental play *Hiranyagarbha* Keerthi a female revolutionary who suffers under the paw of the tradition that is helpless against the ill treatment. Vizai Bhaskar has thrown light on the pitiable condition of peasant women in India.

Through Keerthi's character Vizai Bhaskar presents the picture of the helpless Indian woman who in spite of having the ability to give birth to a man, is oppressed by the male dominating society. In this play, Vizai Bhaskar adores Keerthi with a number of virtues like tenderness, and patience but still she is destined to suffer because of her birth history that leaves her in an abandoned class of that society *Devaputris* whose life is to be dedicated for the society. Vizai Bhaskar exposes the helpless low status of woman in traditional Hindu society. It draws sympathy for Keerthi. Vizai Bhaskar has presented her pitiable condition in a manner that he wants to see the improved condition of Indian peasant woman around him and thus writes the play on Indian woman fighting for her dignity. No doubt, the way Vizai Bhaskar depicts the sorrow, helplessness and struggle of the downtrodden or peasant woman of India is remarkable and Vizai Bhaskar's humane portrayal of Keerthi is worthy of all praise. He also makes this character to come up with a revolution to emancipate her class.

In his play *Riding the Tiger*, Vizai sympathetically portrays the miserable condition of the henchmen of Rayalaseema factionists, who suddenly come face to face with brutal civilization of killing people for pride sake. In this play, Vizai supports the demand for the progressive social and political groups in India but he is aware of the disastrous consequences of them if it ignores the welfare of the traditional village artisans and farmers. Vizai Bhaskar makes the readers realize that advancement and revolution is must but humaneness is the

most important thing, which one should not forget. Through *Riding the Tiger* Vizai Bhaskar presents his perception that although tradition gives customs and conventions which are so necessary for a well knit social order and basic social values but controlled modernization is necessary to give a proper direction to these values to be utilized for a proper human cause and development within already defined social boundaries. Vizai Bhaskar believes that revolution is necessary for human development and then this would naturally usher in happiness and prosperity but this development should not mar human emotions. Vizai Bhaskar makes the people realize that a control is needed in the transformation of the society from traditional to modern so that the basic values of the social governance are not lost out. Thus Vizai Bhaskar's concern for humanity and human beings has found good expression in *Riding the Tiger*.

Vizai Bhaskar writes his plays taking entirely different themes. Whether he writes about poor and untouchables or about rich people, the sorrow and pain is clearly visible in turn the sufferers become revolutionary force for emancipation or liberation. In his every play that force of liberation comes out either directly from his heart or through the protagonist, he gives expression to his own feelings.

Vizai Bhaskar not only writes about the poor and downtrodden people's agony of liberation but also he attracts reader's attention towards the pain and sorrow of so-called aristocratic people. Vizai Bhaskar's humanistic approach is not reserved just for untouchables or down trodden people; he equally sympathizes with the high-class people who are striving for the rights as Dr. Priyanka Singh writes about Mulk Raj Anand in her article: "The poor, the lowly and the untouchables were only one kind of outcastes. The middle section and the nawabs and the rajas are also to be included as a species of untouchables. Unfortunately, there has not been time to show the poor rich of our country, who deserve pity more than

contempt.”⁶ (4) For showing the real picture of this class of poor rich, Vizai Bhaskar presents the psychological study of a few characters like Raghava in *Kaalakootam* Sekhar in *Ruthwik* who lose both their riches and their personality and consequently their sanity. In spite of showing so many weaknesses in these characters, Vizai Bhaskar successfully creates sympathy for them in the mind of audience or readers.

Through *Riding the Tiger* Vizai Bhaskar brings out the dilemma, the pain, the stress of poor henchmen who are caught in between their ambitions to live on their profession on one hand and to avert clashes on the other. They are like outcastes who feel thrown out of their class but could not adjust to society. In this play, the psychological study of the henchmen is concerned not merely with the vagaries of this class and the dilemma, which the henchmen face in the faction sport, but with the intriguing relationship among the henchmen and their bosses and the dangerous ride that they are doing. In this play, Vizai Bhaskar portrays the character of Mareppa sympathetically and he shows that in spite of having many vices, Mareppa deserves sympathy as he is torn between the problems of his personal life and the problem related to his job. In spite of having all that he needs through factionism, he is in need of emotional support.

Vizai Bhaskar always remains sensitive about relationships. In *Kabirdas*, Vizai Bhaskar has described a grocery merchant Tulasi Ram Das's state of mind when he asks Loyi, Kabir's wife, to satisfy his physical need when she comes to buy groceries. Kabir, being a spiritual reformist, takes his wife to Tulasi Ram Das and explains the ephemeral value of physical needs and their relation with body. Tulasi Ram Das repents and worries much about his foolishness. The pain and sympathy, which Vizai Bhaskar feels in his heart, he put in his characters. He shows a profound insight into the souls of his character by presenting the innermost emotions of his people to change themselves. While appreciating

this play Dr. Chatla Sriramulu comments in *A Special Book commemorating Vizai Bhaskar's Bahu Bhasha Natakotsav* as:

Vizai Bhaskar has written this play based on the theme the man-turned God Kabirdas questions the authority of the institution of religion.⁷(2)

Two things are prominently found in Vizai Bhaskar's plays. The first is his keen observation of bitter experiences of human life that make him sensitive, which gives him a sensible and sympathetic outlook to see other problems and the second is his sensitivity which makes him cry for other's misery. Vizai Bhaskar sees people in deplorable condition, his heart weeps for their upbringing and he makes his plays a medium to present their anguish in turn revolution to liberate themselves.

From the time immemorial, Class Conflict has been one of the major themes of literature. Class conflict is a term long-used mostly by socialists, communists, and many anarchists, who define a class by its relationship to the means of production--such as factories, land, and machinery. Vizai Bhaskar's plays depict a realistic and sympathetic portrait of the poor class in India. They also highlight the class-conflict between upper caste people and lower caste people. Vizai Bhaskar continues his exploration of the Indian society in the form of class and caste conflict.

Vizai Bhaskar is a playwright of urgent social concerns and preoccupations, and the social impulse is at the heart of his writings. He is considered the exponent of the freedom of downtrodden, the unwanted and the unloved. Even in a random reading of Vizai Bhaskar's plays, one can immediately aware of such issues as the tyranny of the caste system, its injustice, and its social, moral and economic consequences, class conflicts, exploitation of various kinds of the poor by the rich, quest for identity, search for freedom, etc. Under colonial rule, a number of social and economic changes took place and as a result a feudal

society is gradually transformed into a capitalistic one. The class system in India has turned out to be a new kind of caste system. It is built on the cash nexus on which it thrives. It has created a society much more complicated and devious, and in some respects more rigid than the one created by caste. Therefore it has become a very powerful divisive force, far more damaging to social cohesion than caste, as it has tended to segregate people into the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots.

Hirnyagarbha is one classic example of the story of the underprivileged class of the society and of the oppressed people who cannot even make both ends meet. Its appeal is so much innate, humane potential. The story is told from the eyes of the playwright and brings to light the inevitable and hidden evils of the rule, right from exploitation, caste ridden society, communal riots, and social injustice. The play takes us to different place an imaginative island showing the inhuman and degrading treatment that the poor gets at the hands of the socially, economically and politically affluent and higher classes of Indian society and how he copes with all circumstances alone. Vizai Bhaskar is able to strike a chord in the hearts of the conscientious Indians with the beautiful and real to life portrayal of the down trodden masses of Indian society, the so called have nots.

Vizai Bhaskar is found as one of those people who are highly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. And this influence is clearly seen in most of his plays. True to his Marxist spirit, he always portrays the real India, and more specifically the poor India. Though the story line in the play doesn't mark its time in which year it has happened, it continues to enjoy the same contemporaneity in the present century India.

Generally Vizai Bhaskar's protagonists are from down trodden like protagonists of the novels of Mulk Raj; but they are made bold to report against the evil forces which tend to suppress them. These hero-antiheroes, no doubt, are endowed with certain admirable

qualities of the head and the heart; but the cruel, irrational social forces hamper the proper development of these qualities. The diligence, intelligence and sensitiveness of these characters are awfully suppressed that they can never gain confidence to wage a fight for their cause. They, however, do sensitively feel the torture of the unjust practices, but the reaction is limited merely to their acknowledgement of the social status which they are doomed to accept without a hope for emancipation. The knowledge of their helplessness against the establishment, social set-up, traditions, taboos and customs makes them writhe with acute mental agony. They can do nothing but accept their faith.

Mareppa in *Riding the Tiger*, Kondiba in *Jyothirao Phule*, Raajigaadu and Radha in *Raajigaadu Rajayyadu*, symbolize the suffering of the oppressed and those taken advantage of. Suppression takes major role in all these plays to show how pathetic the lives of the Indian people are under the suppressive forces. Through their saga of suppression, Vizai Bhaskar shows the decline and upturn in the life of those characters. Mareppa considers him as a loyalist for obtaining money for his family. Mareppa willingly receives his role as a slave and agrees to go to the dangerous sport of factionism with his boss. Raajigadu is forced to work of his barber artisanship in the house of Naidu a feudalist. Raajigadu's inborn desire of education is destroyed by the wife of Naidu. This lady is not good-natured and always abuses and curses the downtrodden without any reason. Kondiba belongs to mango race who is not allowed take water from the well that is used by his counterpart upper class of his society. He is beaten up violently for dipping a bowl in the water.

In fact, all these characters are burning symbols of millions of unfortunate souls like themselves – lost and bereft, abused and down-trodden. If Mulk Raj Anand and a few post independent writers hint at the gradual break-down of the caste system, mainly through the British, Vizai Bhaskar shows how it is replaced by our local class system – an evil no less

vicious than the former – an awful result of social revolution fermented by various forces like excessive greed for popularity, power-mongering, caste based politics, industrialism and the cash nexus. Central to Vizai Bhaskar's humanistic faith is that this class-consciousness born of money or social status can have crushing effects on those that are at the lower rungs. We can see in *Riding the Tiger* how the evils of poverty and cruelty crush a bud of youth before it could bloom to any extent. Hench men of other party having contempt cut the leg of Mareppa and kills him. Almost at every turn he comes across only pain and cruelty which make his life a painful saga of suffering. He is forced to become a sort of a purposeless vagabond with apparently no control on his destiny.

By studying all the above characters, it can be said that they suffer because they are poor and innocent. They also suffer because capitalists and other rich Indians exploit them physically and economically. Raajigadu is the representative character in the play. His longing to study, we can see in the play right from the beginning is suppressed by all means; we can say whether rich or poor, his class or the other, all persons are responsible for the suffering of the character Raajigadu. A reformist Brahmin Baamma who lights the vigor in him by making him educated and become an emancipator for his class.

Vizai Bhaskar suggests that a little more sympathy and a little more tenderness on the part of the society could turn the oppressed into a happy individual, and also avert his tragic end. There are many writers in Indian Writing in English who have dealt with the theme of untouchability and segregation has been able to suggest the same. Similarly Vizai Bhaskar with his literary power and perspectives tries his best to spring up the healthy human values and radical social transformation in our human society in which the haves and have nots both can enjoy happily the bliss of human life on the same footings and fraternity peace, love and justice.

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CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUSION

Vizai Bhaskar proves himself to be one of the successful contemporary playwrights. His view is sharp and pointed. His thoughts are innovative, his writings are qualitative and the output is therapy like script to cure the evils in the society. As it can be seen from most of his plays, Vizai Bhaskar's commitment seems to render equal justice to all the members of the society irrespective of their caste, colour, or creed and further to uphold and preserve deserving traditions and to set up idealistic society. For achieving this goal, sometimes he chooses a faction subject, sometimes a family subject, or a political arena or a religious or regional field. Whatever may be the line; he goes deep into the subject, analyses the problems or issues in it and offers acceptable solutions, which ultimately proves him as an amiable playwright. Many of his plays are translated into other languages and also staged in those linguistic states is proof of the fact that he is the writer with social responsibility and he seems to succeed in scrapping the boundaries of the States and uniting the people with national spirit.

Though most of his Plays run on socio-mythological lines, the concepts of myth and mysticism if any are plugged in infrequently only to track the connoisseurs to his school of thought but ultimately it is the social element that dominates the theme and the Play stands as beacon light to the law abiding citizens of the society. His writings constitute a cocktail of Vedic culture and human philosophy besides traditional episodes and patriotically spirited anecdotes. As a staunch lover of the society, he through his plays sheds tears for the deteriorating human relations, de-tracking virtues, evaporating ethics and for the people's abhorable greed for money, throwing such people in tragic trauma. His firm conviction seems to inject the quintessence of not only the Indian philosophy and historical ideologies

but also of legends and Epics and further to equip the society with that divine knowledge. This conclusion becomes irresistible, if we analyze each of his writings in the right perspective.

The present research mainly focused on social concern in Vizai Bhaskar's Plays' and each chapter aims at distinct aspect to explore and find the above mentioned subject. It has given a brief outline of Indian English Drama in particular and the origin of Theatre in general. It also have dealt with the life and works of Vizai Bhaskar which brings out some vital facts of about Bhaskar's personal life—his upbringing, his family background, education, literary incidences experienced in the early stage of his life. It concludes with different factors affected and influenced him as a creative writer. His research on growing differences among the races, his career as an officer, his reading and writing has made him socially committed democratic citizen and realistic and rebellious playwright. The themes that are associated with various social concerns like honest living, empowerment of Woman and suppressed classes, existential tendencies, various shades of human character are found in the plays of Vizai Bhaskar.

Social concern presented by Vizai Bhaskar with the help of the views of various plays written by him. It is derived that the concern has always remained central in the entire history of mankind. Vizai Bhaskar's conception of inherent predominance of concern for human life in the society has been reinterpreted here with substantial arguments. It is observed that concern is always necessarily constructive. Like all other virtues, concern can be used as vital, avirulent, constructive force in order to achieve better results.

Interplay of contradictions exhibited in Vizai Bhaskar's plays. Vizai Bhaskar's views on social concern lead him to understand the patterns of growing revolution of the downtrodden in the post independent India and his subsequent plays have also explored the very nature of violence operating in forms of caste, class, gender and sexual relationship at

family, social and at political level. It mainly explains how Vizai Bhaskar applied his theory of social emancipation in his plays with the help of his dialectical understanding of conflicts and unity of opposite forces. It is found that he displays and dissects the inbuilt contradictions of human life and presents its violent nature either in the form of character's personal dilemmas, interpersonal relationship or in the form of conflicts of all the characters with the central idea of the play. Chapters three, four and five are the specific case studies of Vizai Bhaskar's plays to show how he has dealt with his theory of social concern.

Double standards of caste-dominated society regarding power-politics, nationalism, honour, social responsibilities to subjugate down-trodden's desire are focused in the plays of Vizai Bhaskar. It is derived the downtrodden desire is moulded in such a way that they have to get sanctity of caste dominant society. The judgment of the society is pre-decided and downtrodden's desire does not allow to be fulfilled. They are enforced to remain silent forever.

Social concern is depicted in the plays *Ruthwik*, *Kaalakootam*, *Riding the Tiger*, *the Chair*, *Return of Gandhi* and other plays. Here we find Vizai Bhaskar shows desirable, vital and useful end of reconstruction of Man-Woman relationship on more equalitarian ground by deconstructing all stereo type phenomenons constructed around gender violence, political suppression and familial imbalance. It is also derived that the main causative factors of caste suppression, gender relationship, and political power game are the cultural and social stereotypes constructed by the caste dominated society which subjugate down trodden and at the same time pervert and depress their identity. And ultimately lead these relationships into violent explosions.

It deals with violent oppressive transformation of political power. It is derived that inherent hierarchical power structure creates an unavoidable violent force within oppressed

which ultimately leads them to achieve power to become an oppressor. It is the same ideology of oppression internalized by oppressed and he can never be able to liberate himself.

It is observed Vizai Bhaskar's own exposure to the harsh reality through his apprenticeship in the open university of life has definite impact of various experiences on his career, his activism, his world view and his works. Vizai Bhaskar's upbringing, life experience, his immediate environment and gradual change occurred in social, economical, cultural and political realities in Indian society play a definite role in making him one of the successful social playwrights. Examination of his plays throws a light on various events and factors which influenced him the most, such as—

1. Family background and its shifting values, experiences with parents, uncles, peers.
2. Childhood memory of suppression.
3. School-life experiences, political and social upheaval of various movements.
4. Education, reading and writing
5. His career as officer and his research on societal balance.

The cumulative effects of all these factors and his individual thinking about them shaped Vizai Bhaskar as one of the most renowned as well as successful playwrights of Andhra Pradesh.

It is fruitfully aimed to trace out the main events in Bhaskar's life as well as the development of his career as a playwright. It also attempts to deal with the various influences on him. The middle class liberal family and village background helped Vizai Bhaskar in getting education. It is also derived that warm, affectionate, liberal and literature friendly atmosphere of his vicinity helped him in cultivating his liberal views. The profound finding proves Vizai Bhaskar to be a fearless, torch bearer playwright, social activist and courageous commentator of the society.

Bhaskar's views on concern confirms with the views and derivations of established playwrights, social activists that concern has always remained central in the entire history of mankind. His argument is quite logical that man is part of the divine kingdom so the basic instincts of love, honesty, nobility are integrally linked with human being. It is also derived that Vizai Bhaskar considers concern as a basic need of human life. According to him concern and conflict are the two sides of the same coin. At the same time we find Bhaskar's characters are free enough to live and behave the way they like and don't seem to carry imposed ideology of Vizai Bhaskar.

It is further concluded that Vizai Bhaskar's writing reveals two aspects of his ideology as a playwright. One is his keen sense of conflict in life and the other is his deep faith in life. Conflict in his plays has many dimensions. Conflicts between two individuals, conflicts between the individual and his family, and conflicts between the individual and the social circumstances are skillfully depicted in Bhaskar's plays. However the subtle and significant conflict in his plays is within the individual himself. His thinking about society, human life and individual's conflicts are reflected in his writings. He writes about the defeated individual's struggle against antagonistic circumstances.

The plays of Vizai Bhaskar give an account of different types of practices of downtrodden for their liberation depicted. He depicts the images of human practices like torture, abuse, love, desire, betrayal, humiliation, atrocity, pain and success. It is found that Vizai Bhaskar's plays often explore the acts of human mental dimensions of love, faith and fighting for balance. For Vizai Bhaskar 'Freedom' is a basic need for human being, so it has to be expressed in one form or the other. Human being's urge for freedom can be seen as a mask which protects 'the self' from pain and memories of traumatic experiences. It is found that Bhaskar exposes the different forms of human practices for freedom and liberation in his

major plays. Vizai Bhaskar also shows how the spirit of freedom can be expressed through aggression. A verbal attack—insults, threats, sarcasm, and restrictions exist in Vizai Bhaskar's plays. Bhaskar believes that violence among middle and down trodden classes is quite often psychological in the nature which urges the concern of the society.

Social concern for Vizai Bhaskar does not mean simply a hope. It also means interpersonal relationship of dominance, not only male dominance over female but also vice-versa. Vizai Bhaskar finds human relations become power relationships and therefore they are based on in-built revolution. He believes that when circumstances arrive in a form of a rough exam, the mask of culture will be removed with a big blast and the oppressed will become a revolutionary. In that situation the oppressed may look like disordered and beast like but he deserves to react so. At this stage Bhaskar urges the society to have a concern on this sect as the suppression makes them to be that violent. Vizai Bhaskar in his plays depicts such a theory of revolution with psychological implications.

Another form of psychological human behavior with which Vizai Bhaskar deals is fear resulting in terror. It is derived that fear converted into revolution is depicted everywhere in Vizai Bhaskar's writings. A new point of view is concluded that when Vizai Bhaskar accepts revolutionary behavior as natural phenomenon it does not mean that according to him the revolutionary characters are necessary in our society. Actually Bhaskar wants to say that revolutionary attitude of raising one's voice against suppression, evil practices etc., is an essential living fluid in terms of triggering force.

The plays of Vizai Bhaskar focus on social equality as the single most significant aspect of history. Bhaskar always has a specific purpose for using hope for social equality in his plays. He uses revolution as a shock tactic to inspire his audiences not to sit idly by and to take action against the atrocities of life. According to Bhaskar there is no reason for

human revolution against human in the world. He believes that revolution is a natural phenomenon for human as species in the same way as animals. But, in the light of this idea he uses theatre as a think tank arena where he criticizes and discusses the cycle of meaningless violence and the crimes of humanity. Vizai Bhaskar accepts and portrays his characters with violent behavior as a nature of human being. He deals with gender inequality, social inequality, power games, false consciousness, with the devices of spirituality, myth and values in his plays.

Vizai Bhaskar uses plot as departure point which triggers violent interaction or interplay between characters and between stage situations. Vizai Bhaskar's characters have diversity. Some are oppressed and some of them rebel against the situation. Some of them surrender to the situation and some of them fight against the situation. Sometimes we find his characters are interchangeable in their nature. It is derived that family relationship is complex in Vizai Bhaskar's different plays. Family relationship is portrayed as a violent interplay of contradiction and it reflects the crisis.

It is found that Vizai Bhaskar beautifully depicts the interplays of contradictions of rich-poor egoism, domination, selfishness and hypocrisy of the modern success-oriented generation. Vizai Bhaskar brings out the dark side of human nature and finds an indirect method of removing the social evils by creating hatred into spectator's mind. It is concluded that Vizai Bhaskar ruthlessly dissects human nature and exposes its basic aspects such as lust, greed and violence. He uses violent interplay of contradiction in terms of self contradiction, person to person contradiction, group contradiction and contradiction within the society. For Vizai Bhaskar human beings are admixture of entire contradictions of existence.

The Playwright shows desirable, vital and useful end of reconstruction of Rich-Poor relationship on more equalitarian ground by deconstructing all cultural and social stereotypes

constructed around Class Conflict. By portraying the lower strata of the society, the desire, the lust for life, Vizai Bhaskar makes a significant mark in the prevailing main stream Telugu drama. Vizai Bhaskar one of the few Telugu playwrights introduces the life and characters of lower strata with all its ugliness and crudity which has been burning, shocking and unbearable for those who are accustomed to see the lives of privileged section of the society.

It is derived that Bhaskar's one of the main concerns is to expose sharply the mechanism of power operating within society rather than the economic and political implication and sources of power. Vizai Bhaskar observes the operations of religion, Caste, sexuality, deputation and politics as devices of power. It is concluded that these power devices are brilliantly depicted in the plays like *Kaalakootam*, *Minister*, *Return of Gandhi* that have become the icons of present state of affair. Vizai Bhaskar as a true theatre persona wants to make a strong political statement through the above mentioned plays.

It is derived that Vizai Bhaskar sharply exposes the exercise of power trade in terms of women as metaphor of exchange. It is concluded that the plays depict the loss and gains in the struggle for power which inevitably used female sexuality, caste, individual ego as powerful weapons in the hands of losers and gainers.

It seems, Vizai Bhaskar is a champion in arts of characterization, in theatrical devices and presenting the play. He is creative writer with social, political and psychological point of view. He deals with the elements of class conflict, caste based indifferences as theatrical devices. He articulates caste and religion in his major plays with reference to social, economical and political structure of Indian society. Vizai Bhaskar not only theorized the 'caste based politics' and class conflicts' but also successfully used as an essential theatrical device to express the inner soul of human relations.

Post Independent Indian English Playwrights have projected the true image of India and tried to establish its cultural identity by highlighting the prevailing inequalities both social and economic and the maltreatment meted out to the poor, the destitute, and the marginalized section of society.

Vizai Bhaskar elaborately describes the pernicious effects of class fanaticism, foolish factionism and power politics as he is concerned with the actual state of affairs. *The Chair* and *Riding the Tiger* show his anguish and protest against certain social evils like caste system, exploitation, superstitions etc., and these are presented so well that they sink deep into the minds of the audience with ease. The behaviour of the people of upper strata becomes the greatest subject matter of plays for the playwright.

The play *The Chair* mirrors the inhuman and heartless attitude of the merciless power players. It is an attempt to project the humiliation and agony faced by a subaltern in the Indian society which is divided into the graded inequality and hierarchical anarchy; where the tall claims of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” have proved to be merely a utopian dream. Vizai Bhaskar rails upon this centuries-old, and deeply-rooted inhuman practice which denies a subaltern ‘Dalit’ a right to be a fellow human being, a ‘touchable’ like Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable*.

The play however, shows that the downtrodden are still subordinated and live as subalterns. On a symbolical note, the play is a crusade against the inequality and inhumanity practiced against a subaltern untouchable—the triumph of good over evil. The play also condemns practice of casteism because it disgraces human dignity. The story revolves round the subaltern Narsaih, the leader of the untouchables of a village, condemned to take up the rule being the Surpanch of that village. *The Chair*, instead of becoming a way to enlightenment is converted into a place of human degradation.

The Playwright portrays not only the sufferings and agony of the subaltern Narsaiah

and Beemaih but also projects the upper caste in order to awaken, the world over, the conscience of the members of their community against the miserable and inhuman treatment which the subalterns, in society are subjected to. This play portrays, in surrealistic terms, the anguish and suffering of subalterns, 'Dalits,' who continue to be the victims of 'othering' and are forced to stand on the periphery by those in the 'centre'. The general conviction of Vizai Bhaskar is based on a severe critical examination of the ancient Indian heritage. M.K. Naik observes that the evil of untouchability is the result of years of suppression of a class on religious grounds:

The caste Hindu is armed with the feeling of six thousand years of social and class superiority—a feeling which refuses to accept the fact that the untouchable is a human being, but insists on treating him like a sub-human creature, to be ignored or bullied or exploited as the occasion demands¹ (29).

Perhaps the playwright thinks that Narsaih has to negate the culture which has made him a downtrodden. Vizai Bhaskar believes that only an adequate knowledge of modern outlook can be a source of strength in removing this social evil. The slightest acquisition of knowledge will bring awakening to them and so the playwright treats this act of denying education as the greatest conspiracy of religion to perpetuate the habit of servility. It is the conviction of Vizai Bhaskar that a caste-oriented religion can never cast away this social evil. The remedy comes from the assimilation of modern scientific outlook. Narsaih's plight is pitiable because he is found struggling without any satisfying solution.

The Playwright is concerned with a logical exposition of the conditions and situations in which Narsaih suffers and feels frustrated and humiliated. In spite of the best efforts made by some social reformers, untouchability remains a great social evil. We may call it social exploitation; exploitation carried on by the entire society on the low caste people known as

untouchables. Sweepers and cobblers are regarded outside the fold of Upper Castes; though they firmly believe in the canons of Hindu religion. Leather workers and Washermen do have the same status, though Sudras are regarded superior to sweepers. The very touch of sweeper is regarded polluting. This type of caste system exists nowhere in the world except in India. Vizai Bhaskar has painted very vividly and forcefully the mental anguish that Narsaiah a sensitive Dalit man, who is the hero of the play, feels untold agony owing to the treatment meted out to him by upper caste. He says that these people have got tremendous potential to grow but unfortunately they have never been allowed to show their caliber.

Vizai Bhaskar realizes that casteism cannot be wiped out easily unless the people are made aware of this evil repeatedly. His main mission as a social reformer is to lay emphasis upon mass action and collective transformation. He suggests education and modernization as possible remedies.

It is felt that the depressed class remains divided and they must organize themselves into a powerful group working towards a common programme of social action. The play thinks of a coordinated social programme involving work and activity. He projects a new ideal whereby people can work together for their emancipation from social stigma.

Unmindful of all caste barriers, people must place their faith in awareness. A new social dynamism through education based on human cooperation is what Vizai Bhaskar has in his vision. The depressed classes are caught in the cobweb of poverty and social degradation. They can secure social status and gain economic freedom only through the awareness and exposure through education. Vizai Bhaskar is interested in a collective social action and he thinks that the salvation of human beings lies through work. It is in this respect that the playwright raises the question of the future of the depressed classes. He feels that their social life must be actively involved in an ongoing programme of exercising the power that they have been conferred through democracy in India.

The playwright knows that education is necessary for emancipation of men like Narsaih from the social evil of untouchability. Their degradation is due to lack of education and their lack of education is due to the planned conspiracy of a corrupt counterparts. He thinks that the liberation of the depressed classes depends on their attitude to life. The salvation of the depressed classes is connected with their mental power to emancipate themselves from the cleverly advocated beliefs of Karma and fatalism by their counterparts of upper strata. If there is no critical growth of awareness in the depressed class, it will not pave way for their bright future.

Reason brought about a revolution in the West and it was useful in dislodging many superstitions and false beliefs. The spirit of modernity draws its inspiration from the purifying influence of reason. Vizai Bhaskar's profound conviction is that life must be revolutionized by the rational spirit of modernity. Caste filled power politics or Religion of conservatism is a hindrance to any development.

Apartheid, slavery and inequalities are also found in other countries in the past. But now they have surpassed all social inequalities. America abolished slavery and the Blacks are in power and in high position. As long as social inequalities are continued and there is no change in the mindset of the people, caste system cannot be eradicated.

Vizai Bhaskar believes that real religion must preach love and peace. When violence, war and hatred are accepted in the name of religion the only way to counter it lies in a plan for liberty and secularism. He thinks that society is like a prison dominated by custom, convention and the evil of caste system. Vizai Bhaskar sees a conflict between the individual and society. The caste-conscious society reduces the down-trodden's mere sub-human existence. It suppresses his inner energy. His life is a trial and a journey to an unknown destination. Vizai Bhaskar is of the opinion that society has the claws of tiger to injure human beings. Without a bold fight and revolt against society, life cannot be made

comfortable and peaceful for human beings. Vizai Bhaskar considers possession of freedom to be the ideal objective of man. The suppression of individual freedom seems to be the end of society.

Nevertheless, Vizai Bhaskar's dramatic aim is quite obvious. His plays *The Chair* *Ruthwik*, *Riding the Tiger* are a plea for love, Hindu's Ahimso paramadharma, Buddhist renunciation and compassion and Christian sacrifice and charity, which is the only way for the reconstruction of humanity to ring out hell and ring in heaven on earth.

The subaltern concern shown by Vizai Bhaskar in his plays reveals that despite all tall claims of social reformation and technological advancement, nothing really changes for the subalterns in our Indian society. Despite our progress to a more developed world, things remain the same let the statistical data and sociological survey reveals another side of the problem.

Vizai Bhaskar emphasizes the importance of personal experiences of the life of the artist who should cautiously look around him for understanding the world of the people, he happens to live with in order to make his picture realistic. He rejects the dictum of 'Art for Art's sake'. He upholds the idea of 'Art for life's sake'. In his view, a play should be concerned with social reality. He adheres to his own theory of diction that contemporary events and social realities are suitable for writing plays. So, he deals with contemporary Indian problems in all his plays.

Riding the Tiger presents a vivid picture of a society which has accepted exploitation of belief as a norm in form of factionism. It has unquestioningly accepted the Faction Bosse's eminence, and pushed the lower caste people to a periphery. Factionists are supposed to be the leaders and temporal guides, savours and exponents of law, whereas others are blind followers of them to do all misdeeds. These down-trodden in the form of followers are routinely denied even the semblance of equality. The abject poverty of their

life is also discernible. They depend on murdering others for their livelihood. Mareppa and Dastagiri participate in dangerous death sport of factionism. They are treated with indifference. Various incidents in the play highlight the extent of shocking malpractices in use in the contemporary South Indian society.

In his plays, Vizai Bhaskar presents the remarkable feature of Indian rural life. It is graphically presented to portray the villagers' attitude. He also presents the portrait of middle class families and their love of money, power and politics. The plays trace the villagers' belief in omens, superstitions, traditions and customs. The plays vividly portray caste sanctimoniousness, the smug hypocrisy of the local people and the inhuman cruelty in the name of power politics. The playwright presents many contrasting natures, affluence, and poverty, goodness and hypocrisy, power and helplessness. The plays decree the existence of superstitions in the age of science and technology, the role of tradition and religion, the sociological obsessions and psychological clashes of individuals.

The concept of the caste which is crystallized in the Indian social structure is made doubly rigorous by integrating it with religion. The cyclical theory of rebirth, with the possibility of birth in a higher caste being linked to faithfully carrying out one's duties as per caste rules generated a fatalistic acceptance of one's situation. The pseudo-religious practices of untouchability and endogamy which segregated one caste from another, apart from the various social privileges, drilled into the minds of people that caste is a preordained and hereditary institution which has divine sanction. *Mahatma Jyothirao Phule* indicates the relationship between the division of labour and caste.

In the entire play *Jyothirao Phule*, caste assumes central importance. The caste system is by common consensus the world's longest surviving hierarchy and is based on the principles of purity and superiority, qualities that one is supposed to inherit by birth. A

person becomes a member of a particular caste with his birth and dies in it. The Dalits or low castes are outside the caste system and their exploitation is common throughout India. They are looked down upon because of their low caste; birth in a low caste is supposed to be the result of their bad deeds or *karma* in previous lives. The caste system has been recognized by all sane Hindus as pernicious and deserves to be abolished, yet it flourishes due to the hold of racial purity on our minds. If caste system had been done away with, Jyothi Rao Phule would have been given a decent welcome in his Brahmin friend Shambhalkar's marriage.

Vizai Bhaskar through his plays *Kaalakootam*, *Return of Gandhi*, *Ruthwik* etc., reveals his commitment to the present world as he perceives it and convinces the viewer of his belief system. He analyses the relationship of individuals and the society, the rational and irrational elements in human psyche.

Mabbullo Bomma reacts against fatalism, as women particularly recognize the boundaries that society has placed upon them. Through this work social cultural, political, and sexual limitations are represented by images of physical and social enclosures. Vizai Bhaskar intends to show the realistic image of the world. He presents a panoramic view of society and understands the effect of history on the individual. The focus of his work is the vision of the struggle between individual freedom and physical, psychological, political, and social restraints. *Mabbullo Bomma*, *Hiranyagarbha* deal with the tribulation of women as daughter and wife in patriarchal society. Women have become victims of gender oppression.

The feminist in Vizai Bhaskar takes stock of the situation by partially dwelling upon the theme of gender bias by referring to man's discriminatory attitude towards woman. A daughter estranged from her husband is made to feel unwanted in her parents' home whereas an estranged son not only receives warm welcome, he remains the rightful inheritor of the family fortune. Profligacy in him is encouraged in the name of 'Man's Needs'. Whereas

identical behaviour in a girl decrees torture of being locked up in a room. What is desired and facilitated in case of a girl as evident from the discussion between the prayoktha and audience in the beginning of the play *Mabbullo Bomma* about the man-woman relationship.

Hiranyagarbha can be read as a story of crime and punishment, of pride and nemesis. Vizai Bhaskar examines how various characters in the play suffer as a consequence of breaking certain inalienable laws which human beings have to obey if they have to live in a civilized society. While he is offering a scathing critique of societal laws, which oppress the underprivileged, the marginalized and the defenseless, he also shows how certain laws, which human beings have to obey by virtue of their being human beings, have punishment written into them almost deterministically. A typhoon or a Tsunami occurs whereby all the human and inhuman races get annihilated, leaving a few in an island and those few human beings rehabilitate themselves and reconstruct or re-erect their properties under the leadership of one Maestro ignoring the barriers of casteism or religious feelings but subsequently on account of their inherent ill-feelings, they again get separated with self-imposed inhibitions such as high-caste and low-class, the secluded and the seduced. Further they get addicted to all vices and go to the extent of killing their 'Maestro' even and also stoop to make a barbarous and uncivilized living.

It seems the playwright, by keeping the past and present in view, would have written the play fully understanding Human Evolution and its development. He tries to take the audience into an imaginary world. By making the audiences imagine that it would have happened sometime back, the playwright attacks on contemporary problems and social issues. In a special frame work, the playwright creates the characters and makes them speak the bear truths of contemporary society. The Play highlights the importance of an ideal society that should be envisaged by everyone. The Playwright's deep affliction about the present day's deranged society is effectively found in the play. Not only the revolution of

human race but also the theory of social justice is presented in the play. The Play shows a picture of pathetic outcomes if we cannot practice equality by neglecting history and its evolution. The play looks as if it were a caution or a warning. It is also a theory for driving the society on a righteous path.

Hiranyagarbha is honest, sincere and uncompromising. It is imbued with deep feelings and compassion. The story spreads like wave on the viewer's mind and the oppressive sense of guilt that stalks the characters of the play and governs the narrative rhythm under the deceptive veneer of frivolity depresses him. Bhaskar's protest stems from his sense of outrage at the slave-like status of women and untouchables in free-democratic India. His engagement with the darkness—of power, superstition and ignorance—is a lone one; he has not made any pact with any ideology. The revolt of Keerthi in *Hiranyagarbha* Bheemaih in *the Chair* is against patriarchy, against the calculated torture and hypocrisy of the male or caste-chauvinist society. Vizai Bhaskar shows that these subalterns struggle not only against history but also their contemporary societal system alike.

Vizai Bhaskars exposes the hypocrisy of the upper caste communists, the dominant group, who talk of a casteless and classless society, and raise slogans for the unity of all working class people. They mouth Marxist platitudes but connive with the bourgeois elites to marginalize the subalterns, especially untouchables. This gap between intention and execution, its overt radical surface and its covert bourgeois nationalist unconscious warns us of danger ahead. This danger is thoroughly discussed in the plays *the chair*, *Hiranyagarbha*, *Kabirdas*, *Mahatma Jyothirao Phule*.

As is well-known, the patriarchal structure with its resulting class and gender hierarchy is a more or less universal phenomenon, which cuts across all nations, religions and races. However, in India, a further dimension was added to it with the origination of the caste

system about 2,000 years ago. This system which is an integral part of Hinduism, divides the population into four major groups. The Brahmin (priestly caste) at the top, followed by the Kshatriya (warrior caste), then the Vaishya (commoners, usually known as trading and artisan castes), and at the bottom the Sudra (agricultural labourers) some of whom are beyond the pale of caste and are known as untouchables. The caste system is not only structural, but has a cultural dimension as well. At the structural level it consists of a hierarchy of in-marrying groups, organized into hereditary occupations. As a cultural system it comprises belief in karma (that the circumstances of birth depend on actions in one's previous life), as Joanna Liddle argues: "commitment to caste occupation and lifestyle, belief in the hereditary transmission of psychological traits associated with occupation, tolerance of distinct lifestyles for other castes, and pollution. In the scale of purity and pollution, Brahmins are generally, but not always, the purest and Sudras the most polluted"² (55).

Vizai Bhaskar also portrays that the impact of the caste system can be felt even among the Christian community in India, which is indicative of the fact that the dogma of equality of this religion has not been able to dissolve it. Christians in India have internalized the idea of caste rank even though they live and operate in a largely Christian universe. Moreover, as far as caste at the lived in level is concerned, purity and pollution are far more important than *karma* and *dharma*, and this is true for Hindus as well as Christians.

In the democratic India, the inequality still exists. Even after six decades since India achieved Independence, the downtrodden are still oppressed in one form or another. If downtrodden in villages are subject to punishments such as lynching death, rape and other humiliation, downtrodden in urban spaces face a 'White-Washed' form of caste based-discrimination. If feudal society is responsible for the injustices meted out to the suppressed in the rural setting as seen in *The Chair*, crimes committed on subalterns in urban spaces

are perpetrated by the state as seen in *Riding the Tiger*. The words of Leo Tolstoy are relevant in the present society as quoted by V.R.Krishna Iyer. “The abolition of slavery has gone on for a long time. Rome abolished slavery, America abolished it, and we did too, but only the words were abolished, not the thing”³ (27).

Caste is a wrong notion. It is neither seen nor smelt. Though modernization and other factors we have eradicated untouchability to some extent. Now it has changed its forms and oppressed are being wounded psychologically and denied equal opportunities with other sections of the society. The monstrous evil of untouchability can be rooted out only through secular education and awareness among the people about man-made social inequalities. Reclamation of human personality enhances human values. We must realize that the ideal of one man and one value in all walks of life i.e., social, economic and political to establish egalitarian society.

Although India’s Constitution of 1950 abolished the practice of untouchability, the downtrodden continue to experience discrimination, segregation, and violence. The laws providing for the welfare of downtrodden are often ignored. The government of India maintains that the problems should be handled internally and do not represent a form of racism, while the sections of Dalit intelligentsia seek international attention to the problems they face.

The downtrodden, mostly landless agricultural labourers or menial labourers need greater political voice and participation in political processes to break free from the age old socio-culturally imposed bondage, segregation, and discrimination. Despite the advances brought about by the reservation system, customs and other social practices continue to hinder rapid and all around social emancipation of downtrodden.

Previously, religion and tradition could be blamed for downtrodden’ vulnerability and discriminatory treatment. But now, for all the help they are getting from government,

downtrodden seem to have become more vulnerable and much less self reliant than earlier. Instead of enhancing the level of self-confidence in them, affirmative action by the state would appear to have rendered them unwilling to resist domination by the upper castes.

The conventional Indian ethos is being subverted and redefined by the voices of the Subaltern. Dr. BR Ambedkar describes India is a multi-storeyed building without the staircase where the life on each storey remains untouched by the life on the other. He further had compared the nation with a dilapidated structure in need of the rebuilding not Just a white wash”⁴ (vii). There have been no efforts, what so ever, towards rebuilding the Nation, except, perhaps as tactical devices of political gain. Mulk Raj Anand says in his novel *Untouchable* “we must destroy caste; we must destroy the inequalities of birth and unalterable vocations. We must recognize an equality of rights, privileges and opportunities for everyone”⁵ (145).

The inexhaustible lore of myths, parables and legends that pattern and define our culture offers immense scope for the Indian dramatists as Shastri says, “Myth, at all events, is raw material, which can be the stuff of literature”.⁶ (229-230) Our early playwrights writing in English like Sri Aurobindo and Kailasam selected their themes from the myths and legends of Indian Literature. Though Vizai Bhaskar’s themes appear to build castles in the air, he takes refuge in the myths and legends and makes them the vehicle of a new vision. His childhood exposure to street plays in his village and his familiarity with dramas staged at various places around his village has induced him to retell the legends of India to suit the modern context. Vizai Bhaskar carries vigorous vitality that combs the past for apt myths to analyze the present.

Vizai Bhaskar’s creative genius lies in taking up fragments of historical-legendary experience and fusing it into a forceful statement that seeks social change. Issues of the

present world find their parallels in the myths and fables of the past, giving new meanings and insights reinforcing the theme. By transcending the limits of time and space, myths provide flashes of insight into life and its mystery. They form an internal part of cultural consciousness of the land, with different meanings and it reflects the contemporary issues.

Most of Vizai Bhaskar's plays are literary excavations of the social, racial, mythical, legendary and the historical elements of the society that have a strong contemporary relevance. By using these myths he tries to reveal the absurdity of life with all its elemental passions, conflicts and man's eternal struggle to achieve perfection. Vizai Bhaskar explores deep into the traditional myths to spell modern man's anguish and dilemmas that are created in his mind. He seems not to take the myths in their entirety; he takes only fragments that are useful to him and the rest he supplements with his imagination to make his plots interesting. His interest is not in recreating old myths and legends but in representing them to suit his artistic purpose. Vizai Bhaskar's plays seem to reveal that theatre can simultaneously be entertainment, political commentary and artistic statement.

Gifted playwrights have discovered source materials from myths and legends and have employed them creatively. Realism in drama is a totally new concept and it is alien to theatrical conventions. Myths and legends serve as a surrogate for plays as they may be used to narrate the particular story effectively. Chatterji in his book *Indian Drama* says.....

“.....the borrowed tales are given a turn of the screw, as it were, which works wonders with plays”⁷. (36)

In the play “*The Return of Gandhi*” Vizai Bhaskar uses myth effectively by starting the play with a scene in Hell where Lord Yama enquires about the sinners and surprised to know that Gandhi has made a mistake of setting India free. On Chitragupta's allegations, Yama sends Gandhi to India in order to see its state now. There are a few fictitious elements are found in this play. They are Lord Yama inviting Gandhi to Hell in the beginning of the

play with a great respect and at the end sending a *Pushpaka Vimana* to bring Gandhi back to Heaven. Though these are fictitious the playwright's ability of creating them is noteworthy.

Yama showing respect to Gandhi is the playwright's creation of Gandhism has value even in Hell. The myth and fiction used for Gandhi's return to India raises the pertinent questions like if Gandhi comes to present India how would he react, if he witnesses the uncertainty in the politics how would he digest and for changing of the society what precautions he would suggest now. For all of this, the playwright creates an imaginary world by inducing the realities into it in order to interlink the present status of India.

In the play *Jeevannatakam* philosophy of universal equality is presented. Starting the play with Elephant is to be considered that it is mythical. Various animals on the earth: Dog, Donkey, Monkey as representatives brings out their disastrous life style that each species has on the earth. God listening their appeal; man is presented on the stage being pointed out as the root cause for the suffering of animals; Presentation of Man's selfishness pride and indifference towards the suffering of other species on the earth; as part of giving solution to the problem of other species, God giving away their life span to Man as a boon to him; with that boon, man lives like a donkey at one stage, like a dog in order to watch the home at the other stage, at the old age becomes like a monkey being funny loving the life; are all the mythical episodes set in an order the playwright opens a discussion that God has given boon to human beings or a bane. When realities play before us, we understand that God has given bane to us. Vizai Bhaskar's use of this myth reminds the popular Telugu Playwright Panuganti's saying about the brightness of the life as "Childhood is a gold mine: youth is a wonderful waterfall and old age is darkness roofed with cluster for clouds and what else is life?"⁸ (20). In the beginning and end of the play, the role of God aptly delivers the expected opinion of playwright. The play ends with an appeal for universal peace. It is

general that anything is not accepted if it is said normally; hence the playwright must have taken various imaginative characters to instill inspiration in people for human life.

In '*Kinchitbhogam*' though there are no mythological characters introduced, the reference to *the Ramayana* is found. Madhava Rao the protagonist character of the play explains to his brother Sriramachandra Murthy about his difficulty in guarding the property that was left by his brother to him to look after while he was away. The Playwright uses the references of *Ramayana* skillfully in order to make the character of Madhavarao speak truths. Madhavarao says that Ravana has ten heads no head is useful for thinking; many hands no hand is left. He also says that he doesn't know how much struggle that Bharata has taken to give Lord Rama his state but he has taken lot of risk in guarding his brother's property. When Sriramachandra Murthy showing pity on him asks how he has lived among his greedy family members, Madhavarao recalls a reference from *Ramayana*. He says.... When Hanumantha asks Vibheeshana in Lanka the same question, Vibheeshana says that he has lived like a tongue amidst of thirty two teeth.

In '*Kaalkootam*' the playwright uses Satan's character. It looks as if it were used for describing the Satan's qualities in man. Though its presence is less in the play it leaves a strong impression. It reveals the implicit nature of human beings violence, dishonesty like vices. The playwright has used it to describe how the present day politicians feel that the violence and other methods are only essentialities to get power. Kodanda Ramaih a senior politician is murdered by Sekhar the protagonist character of the play who would like to become a politician murders Kodanda Ramaih. His soul becomes Satan and comes as a character on the stage. The Satan warns him that the power should not go into the hands of good people and violence; greediness; brutality should only be in rule. It stands as an example to that the one who wants to rule with violence, greediness, brutality would not change even after the death.

The opening of '*Ruthwik*' is witnessed that God is invited on to the stage. Ruthwik, a special character is introduced with a Sanskrit Sloka describing how the modern man is losing his ability through evil practices. Though the God bestows boon in the form of human life, how the man using this for all evil practices and losing its charm is shown in this play through the sermons of Ruthwik.

Ruthwik brings various mythological references related to Satya Harishandra and his wife Chandrmathi about their penetration towards truth, Droupadi's respect towards her mother-in-law, Rama's sacrifice for the father's wish in order to tell how wisdom comes. By giving examples of Prahlada, Abimanyu how they learnt goodness while they are in the wombs of their mothers, Ruthwik ends with a note of universal peace.

Thus Vizai Bhaskar has brought a lot of mythological references in his plays. In using such myth, he has followed an ideal. Though the use of myth develops a curiosity among the readers or viewers of the plays, he has used it like a tool for propagating dharma, importance of truth, social equality in human life. The reader or viewer may feel that the playwright has taken myth to cure various abstract stigmas that found in the society. The use of myth adds an extra beauty to the play or a film but it may not be an exaggeration to state that Vizai Bhaskar's use of it is for addressing the society for its ideals, ethical practices and for realities.

Drama has been widely acclaimed as a positive medium for mirroring society hence the popular cant exists 'drama is a representation of life'. So, while drama entertains it also teaches and informs. This powerful attribute of drama has been employed by playwrights over the ages to make constructive commentaries on the happenings in society and thus affect some positive changes in man and his environment. The dramatist is the gadfly of his society. Socrates is quoted by Okafor as saying that a dramatist is "the gadfly which God has attached

to the state and all day long in all places ..., am feasting upon you, arousing, persuading and reproaching you”⁹ (108)

As the watchdog of society uses drama as a tool to affect changes in his environment through his works, the dramatist aims at showing how things stand in his own society through his re-creation of events or in some instances by making postulations about the future. This is why the dramatist is sometimes referred to a visionary because he deals with contemporary situations, and also functions as a visionary who utilizes recent experiences as perspective on both the present and the future. Therefore, in using drama as a tool for social change, the artist makes an “objective evaluation, exposition or the critical assessment of the socio-political conditions in society.”¹⁰ (108)

The dramatist is therefore a social commentator and a critic. Although some theatre scholars like James Ngugi see the satirical artist as one who is “standing aloof, to view society and highlight its weakness” they urge the playwright to “try to go beyond this, to seek out the sources, the causes and the trends”¹¹ (69). The effect of satirical works in society overtime cannot be underestimated. This is aptly captured by Hope Eghagha in the introduction on the potentials for popular theatre for national development thus: “Because popular theatre (drama) has the capacity to reach all strata of society using a simple language, a simple method, its outreach could be the tonic the nation needs for the change in values which both the leaders and followers of the country are currently clamouring for.”¹² (210) The dramatist is able to achieve this through his works because he is “A member of society so naturally his artistic sensibilities are shaped and sharpened by the socio-economic contradictions and political happenings of his time”¹³ (179)

Vizai Bhaskar, like most contemporary playwrights has lent his voice to the call for a just and egalitarian society through the lampooning of the political leadership, the corrupt system of governance and the ineptitude of the ruling elite. He has made an expose of the rot

in our democracy and has joined other like minds in the call for a new vision. All most all the plays of Vizai Bhaskar lay idealistic, practical and universal paths not only to the present society even for next generations. Generally a drama has an element of social concern that appeals the society to have dharma, ethical living and psychological balance. Vizai Bhaskar's plays too have a special aptitude in not only expecting social change but also they say how to obtain it. In his plays whatever so the background or storyline or events the play would expect universal peace and brotherhood.

The plays of Vizai Bhaskar are discernable for his philanthropic conscience. His philanthropy is towards the down-trodden, the exploited brothers and sisters in the Society, and his anguish and attack is towards elements of selfishness, savage-like and sadist mentalities among the elite and politicians too. It seems his plays have a deep concern for Atheists who embark with misconceived notions and he appears to be a torch bearer of Truth-lovers. His writings constitute a cocktail of Vedic culture and Human philosophy besides traditional episodes, and patriotically spirited anecdotes, despite their social themes in main. Furthermore, his plays shed tears for the deteriorating human relations, de-tracking virtues, and evaporating ethics and for the people's abhorable greed for money throwing such people in tragic trauma.

The plays of Vizai Bhaskar are committed to an egalitarian society and always plead for equality and social justice. Vizai Bhaskar detests evil in any form in the society and advocates happiness for all people. Prosperity of humanity is the undercurrent of his plays. His plays, while discussing poignant social problems do offer prudent solutions to them. Thus each of his plays embowers a message with all dramatic excellence. Often he chooses a wider canvas to project his view point.

Vizai Bhaskar's plays are not edgy. They do not confront the audience with the author's simmering rage against the decadence of values in society but silently nudges into

thinking. They unveil complexities, confusions and contradictions and of course the hypocrisies through which many live today. Emotional vulnerability triggers an immediate self-protective response; the natural instinct to withdraw from the imminent confrontation. Vizai Bhaskar tackles it in his play *'Minister'*. It is about a minister who hones abuse of power and corruption into a sort of fine art in practice. A close brush with death and a dialogue developed with the spirit of death metamorphose the protagonist into an honest and caring human being. Selfless service and altruism are no outcome of repentance but must be inalienable feature of our character is the point that it straight drives home.

An officer in the corridors of power, Vizai Bhaskar has a distinct advantage of watching the power play from close quarters. He excels in presentation of a realistic picture of how it works in corridors of power. Backed by the knowledge of keen observation of real politicking from close quarters he presents several strands of socio-political reality in a theatrical weave. His play *'The Chair'* unfolds how the vested interests of high and mighty come in the way of *Dalits* enjoying the fruit of power acquired through the constitutional means. *'Kaalakootam'* is another play that exposes political class in all its wiliness. The playwright values democracy and rues for its decadence. He chooses the medium of play for its expression. His ability to encompass all the important traits of contemporary politician in thought-provoking way looks amazing that works for social harmony. Being innovative the plays are intuitive and intellectual craving for the wellbeing of society. Each play focuses on confrontation and its resolution, either addressing a conflict or achieving a comfort level that is less threatening for character.

'Life is no war to beget misery or bloodshed. Think it as a piece of art and it affords a bundle of experiences to cherish', expounds his play *Ruthwik*. Against the backdrop of a thick family drama, it highlights the futility of the pursuit of wealth in preference to values in human relations. With an acute awareness of the complexities of the most ordinary

occurrences, characters essay to rise above their inadequacies, embracing uncomfortable truths with the courage required. His satirical dialogues aglow with philosophical import are interesting and instructive. The dialect, tone, idiom, punch and wit are such that express the stark reality in directness and lucidity that captivates the beholders. Another play that deals with the power of money in life is *Kinchith Bhogam* 'To be rich may not be possible but to be honest is well within our hands' is the crux of its theme. '*Riding the Tiger, Hiranyagarbha, Brahma Raatha*'... any of his plays consist his concern for value based system and erosion of values in our life. This craving for society and its balance always floats up in all its depth at frame of all his plays as it is found in the words of Gudipoodi Srihari for his article in *The Hindu*...."D.Vijayabhaskar's in-depth knowledge about social problems and solutions of the same render his plays closer to reality."¹⁴ (4) Observation, first-hand knowledge of social conditions and ability to put forth views in simplest and effective spoken language are the exemplary characteristics of Vizai Bhaskar's plays therefore they always strive for social well being.

Vizai Bhaskar's plays are not only pointed like sharp spears but also they are thought provoking. In this world of restlessness where life is at the barrel of the gun, living without knowing what will happen next; his dramas instill a new idea to the viewers. All his plays are based on social, political and cultural contemporaneous events. They show propensity to protect the hapless and oppressed lot. They scoff at the socio political system prevalent in the state where the hapless poor people are suppressed. They are of immense help in reforming the society and also in sending a message to the oppressors, who violate law indulge in corruption and eliminate common men without any reason.

Mediums that reflect all that is happening around us are varying. It may be literature, drama or anything. Images of the society are reflected everywhere. These images are purely our own creation. The good deeds and evil deeds done by us human beings are either merrily

accepted or discarded. Then there are also elements, who want things to conjure up on their own and appear before them. The desire is limitless. Thus different images get created or painted to fulfill human appetite. Love is the path and strength of Vizai Bhaskar's plays therefore they creatively express agony over social injustice. They constantly seek the beauty of human face amidst all odds and calamities. They make the audience great dreamers, consciously or unconsciously searching graceful rewards to all aspects of human labour. They help us dream a society where all the working classes are endowed with higher respect and prosperity.

Thus this Thesis attempts an analysis of Vizai Bhaskar's plays to show how drama is used as a tool for social change and is able to establish the fact that Ebo opines "Playwrights the world over use their works to show the ills inherent in their society"¹⁵ (109) And it is quoted by Odiri as saying that the artist is "one who is an embodiment of truth, sound morals, articulate and upright, a gadfly of society and one who strives at all times to warn society whenever is adrift."¹⁶ (251)

Vizai Bhaskar tries to live up to this. He attempts to meet the societal expectation of the playwright where he is expected to live up to his iconoclastic stance, resolve to confront adroitly the cruelty, the physical violence, the autocratic methods of administration, the subjugation of women and all sorts of uncivilized customs and manners which start creeping into society. Therefore, from this study, it is obvious that the playwright can employ drama as an effective tool for social commentary. It also seems that he may have used this medium to highlight the value system of a society, for the purpose of enlightening, educating and motivating the people. This can be aptly said to assert that a writer must be in tune with the politics of his nation; he must penetrate the deep social political terrain of his nation in order to lay the bare and inherent contradictions that encapsulate society as Vizai Bhaskar does through his plays.

Modern drama is mostly the study of individuals in conflict with society or their existence. Contrary to the theatrical practice which depicts material in today's pattern, Brechtian epic theatre delineates and dramatizes the 'pastness' of events by stirring up thought and inciting the spectator to implement social reform. In the 1970s with the emergence of the 'fringe' theatre, there was the rise of socialist theatre subscribing to socialist principles. Being the follower of Brecht, Vizai Bhaskar too consolidates his reputation as one of the current playwrights succeeds in forcing socialist issues into the main stream of theatrical agenda.

The self succession syndrome and various malpractices that exist in society are used to deceive and beguile it. It is laid bare by Vizai Bhaskar as one who has penetrated deep into the social and political terrain of his nation. It is left to the reader to take up the point which drama has held up to search and get a solution to the ever ending dearth of selflessness, values based ideology in Indian society.

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APPENDIX-1

VIZAI BHASKAR'S DRAMAS, AWARDS, DRAMA FESTIVALS

Vizai's Dramas-Awards

A Man of inner strength, exuding confidence, cheer and hope, ever busy and enjoying challenging tasks and attracting people of all walks of life, Vizai is an eminent Playwright who is in constant search of raw-material for writing good plays with better knowledge.



His dramas and other writings are...

Plays

1. Turupu Thellarindi (1982)
2. Gruha Pravesam (1984)
3. Hiranyagarbha (1985)
4. Ruthwik (1989)
5. Kala kutam (1992)
6. Puliswari (1997)
7. Kurchi (1998)
8. Kinchitbhogam (1999)
9. Mbullo Bomma (2000)
10. Gandhi Jayanthi (2001)
11. Jeevan natakam (2002)
12. Minister (2003)
13. Bapu Cheppina Maata (2004)
14. Brahmaraatha (2005)
15. Sramanakam (2006)
16. Satruvu (2006)
17. Kabirdas (2007)
18. Mere Devullu (2008)
19. Bommalu Cheppina
Bhajagovindam (2008)
20. Chitram (2009)
21. Ontari Rekkalu (2010)
22. Mahatma Jyothi Rao Pule (2011)
23. Rajigaadu Rajayyadu (2012)

24. Yogi Vemana (2013)
25. Gaali Bathkulu (2014)

Other Writings:

1. Mounamtho Matalu (1999) Poetry
2. Mahasoonyam (2013) Poetry
3. Nirupeda Kanchamlo Nindu
Bhojanam (2014) Life History of
Dr. William Dhar

Awards Received

- Nandi Award as Best Writer (*Kurchi*) in 1999 by Government of Andhra Pradesh
- Nandi Award as Best Writer (*Mabbullo Bomma*) in 2000 by Government of Andhra Pradesh
- Nandi Award as Best Writer (*Jeevannaatakam*) in 2003 by Government of Andhra Pradesh
- *Ugadi Sahitya Puraskar* 2003 by Andhra Saaraswatha Samithi, a literary organization of international repute
- Nandi Award as Best Writer (*Minister*) in 2004 by Government of Andhra Pradesh
- *Rashtriya Vikas Shiromani Award* (Ugadi Puraskar) by Delhi Telugu Academy for the year 2004
- Sri Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University *Sahitya Puraskaram* for the year 2004
- Nandi Award as Best Writer (*Bapu Cheppina Maata – Teleplay*) for 2005 by Government Andhra Pradesh
- Nandi Award as Best Writer (*Bommalu Cheppina Bhajagovindam*) in 2009 by Government of Andhra Pradesh
- **Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Award -2010 for Best Playwriting**
- Nandi Award (Jeevannatakam Teleplay in TV1 Channel) in 2011 by Government of Andhra Pradesh.
- “Delhi Telugu Academy Excellency Award” on the occasion of 24th Annual National Awards, 2011 for valuable contribution in the field of Literature.

- “Gurajada Sahiti Puraskaram” by Government of Andhra Pradesh on the eve of 150th Birthday Celebrations of Mahakavi Gurajada Apparao on 21-09-2012 for safeguarding the culture and tradition of Telugu Literature

Award Winning Dramas

1. “Swarna Nandi” in 1999 for **Kinchith Bhogam**
2. “Silver Nandi” in 2002 for **Gandhi Jayanthi**
3. “Silver Nandi” in 2003 for **Jeevannatakam**
4. “Sri Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University Sahitya Puraskaram” for **Ruthwik** for the year 2004.
5. “Swarna Nandi” in 2005 for **Baapu Cheppina Maata**
6. “Swarna Nandi” in 2009 for **Bommalu Cheppina Bhajagovindam**.
7. “Bronze Nandi” in 2011 for **Vontari Rekkalu**.

Translations

1. “*Gandhi Jayanthi*” is translated into Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Gujarati, Tamil and Hindi as “*Gandhi Jayanthi*”, into English as “*The Return of Gandhi*” and in Marathi as “*Punha Gandhi*”.
2. “*Ruthwik*” is translated into English as “*Ruthwik*”.
3. “*Kaalakootam*” is translated into English as “*Kaalakootam*” and into Marathi as “*Visha Vruksha*”.
4. “*Minister*” is translated into Kannada, Gujarati, Hindi, Bengali and Manipuri as “*Minister*” and in Tamil as “*Amaiccar*”.
5. “*Kabeerdas*” is translated into Kannada as “*Kabeerdas*”.

6. “*Kurchi*” is translated into Bengali as “*Chair*“, in English as “*The Chair*“, in Hindi as “*Kursi*“, in Gujarati as “*Khel Kurshi No*“and in Tamil as “*Narkali*“.
7. “*Puliswaari*“ is translated into English as “*Riding the Tiger*“.
8. “*Jeevannatakam*” is translated into as “*Jeevannataka*” in Kannada, as “*Zindagi Ka Khel*” in Hindi, as “*Jindagi*”

Drama Festivals conducted on Vizai Bhaskar’s name

- ✓ Samaikya Bharati (a famous cultural Organization in Hyderabad) has conducted “*Vizai Bhaskar Naatakotsavaalu*”in Ravindra Bharati, Hyderabad from 2nd to 4th November, 2004, wherein “*Ruthwik*”, “*Jeevannatakam*”, “*Brahmarata*” and “*Minister*” Plays were staged.
- ✓ In association with Department of Culture, Government Andhra Pradesh and Dravidian University, Kuppam, Abhinaya (a Theatre monthly Magazine) and Samaikya Bharati (a famous Cultural Organization in Hyderabad) have jointly conducted “*Vizai Bhaskar’s Gandhi Jayanthi Multi Lingual Theatre Festival*“ wherein Gandhi Jayanthi play was staged in five languages Kannada, English, Malayalam, Hindi and Telugu in Ravindra Bharati, Hyderabad from 29th to 31st October, 2007.
- ✓ In collaboration with Department of Culture, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Chaitanya Art Theatres and Samaikya Bharati, famous cultural organizations in Hyderabad, have jointly conducted “*Vizai Bhaskar’s bahu bhasha naatakostav*”, a festival of nine Telugu Plays of D. Vizai Bhaskar translated into different Indian Languages viz., Telugu, Bengali, Hindi, Tamil, Marathi, Malayalam, Gujarathi, Manipuri and Kannada in Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad from 16th to 19th March, 2009.

- ✓ Karnataka Nataka Akademy, National School of Drama, Karnataka Telugu Akademy and Department of Kannada & Culture have conducted “Kannada-Telugu Ranga Sammilana” – “Dr. D. Vizai Bhaskar”’s Kannada Drama Fest” from 10th to 12th June, 2010 in Ravindra Kalakshetra, Bangalore, wherein Dr. Vizai Bhaskar”’s Kannada Dramas viz., Gandhi Jayanti, Jeevannataka and Kabeerdas were staged.
- ✓ Chaitanya Art Theatres (a famous cultural organization in Hyderabad) has conducted “Vizai Bhaskar Bengal Natakotsav” in Ravindra Bharati on 31.8.2011, wherein Plays *Kursi* and *Minister* were staged in Bengali language by “Rangashram” team from West Bengal

Vizai Bhaskar’s Dramas published in Press

“Mahatma Jyotirao Phule” was published as a daily serial in popular Telugu Daily “Sakshi” in its Sunday Supplement every week from 9th May, 2010 to 8th August, 2010.

Vizai’s Dramas telecasted in Doordarshan

- Kurchee
- Puliswaari
- Chitram
- Bapu Cheppina Maata
- Mahatma Jyotirao Phule (Serial)
- Jeevannaatakam (Telugu & Kannada)

APPENDIX-2

**PICTURES OF VARIOUS SCENES OF VIZAI BHASKAR'S DRAMAS & PICTURES
OF AWARDS THAT HE HAS RECEIVED**