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Indian Theatre in the Past Tense: Contextualizing Language and Culture

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Indian theatre is now influenced by occidental sources and avantgarde experimentations. Linguistic expressions and cultural heterogeneity are injected into Indian plays considering them as something new, unique, and transcultural. However, it is necessary to understand that Indian theatre, since the classical times, has presented regional and indigenous cultures in regional languages or/and indigenous dialects. Moreover, its rich and diverse branches have not disintegrated Indian audience(s) but have connected them down the ages. This is because the chief sources of theatrical representations were chiefly borrowed from Indian mythologies, epics, and oral traditions. Historical erasures and cultural violence by colonial agents and monopoly of cinema couldn't impact the regional theatres in India. Rather Indian theatre influenced the European theatre system and in turn got further heterogenized and diversified culturally and linguistically. However, in the present moment of cultural studies, it is necessary to revisit the rich history of Indian theatre by tracing the diverse roots of Indian cultures and languages that have fed the Indian theatre since its inception. For this, the present study is divided into three sections. While the first section introduces the study and proposes a methodology, the second section traces the roots of Indian theatre up to the modern times. The third section thereby makes conclusion.

Keywords: Indian theatre, language, culture, classical, medieval

Introduction

Recent cultural studies have emphasised on the need of (productively) infecting language with regional cultural impurities to sufficiently represent regional cultural groups. However, Indian theatre 'always already' has a rich heritage of representing cultures couched in indigenous languages. Medieval theatres of India (for example, *Jatra*, *Ramleela*, *Sang*, *Dashavatar*, *Tamasha*, *Krishnattam*, *Kutiyattam* etc) have been influenced by diverse cultural groups and their languages. Not only the Medieval theatres of India, but also the classical theatres have used diverse regional languages (Pali and Prakrit) to wonder and sing aloud the indigenous cultures of India and thereby add a polyphonic value to plays written in Sanskrit. However, the glorious history of a heterogenous group of Indian theatres—rich in Indian regional languages and cultures—seem to be neglected by modern scholarly writings that tend to offer cultural heterogeneity as a modern concept. Therefore, the present study seeks to re-visit Indian theatre and try to explicate how cultural heterogeneity diversified Indian theatre by upholding diverse cultural groups and their regions. Moreover, the study argues that the cultural heterogeneity, instead of disintegrating, united and enriched Indian theatre. The study is necessary since classical and medieval theatres of India have been strategically reduced and whitewashed by the colonial agents as some form of mindless pastimes. Moreover, most of the regional languages in which the Indian plays were written, have been either silenced or have vanished with time. Therefore, these plays—mostly preserved in oral languages, traditions, or/and cultural memory—are in danger of becoming cultural blackholes.

The study involves methodology that includes a historical documentation of Indian theatre as referenced in various national and international resources which includes articles, monographs, edited books, book chapters, and other available resources. The entire body of Indian theatre thereby is going to be identified and historicised with special reference to its cultural and linguistic aspects.

Indian Theatre: Tracing Roots of Regional Languages and Cultures

The present section makes a modest attempt to show how Indian theatre since its inception has represented regional cultures,

encoded in regional languages, and yet has integrated Indian audience(s) over the years by entertaining them with the everyday raw materials of Indian knowledge system, i.e., histrionic representations of the Indian epics and mythology. In so doing, the study argues that Indian theatre, despite colonial erasures, has withstood the value of upholding regional cultural groups and their languages. The need of the hour is to identify, disseminate, and if necessary, to re-create the past glory of remembering and representing cultural diversity by nurturing regional languages to enliven the polyphonic theatre of India. Theatre is a live performance wherein performers and audience participate in a common linguistic space to show themselves to themselves, to analyse themselves by themselves in basic existential situations on the same time and same place. The language in drama attempts to (almost) communicate all lived and imagined cultural spaces that run parallel to or are integral to the inner voice(s) of a given historical moment. But what shapes the language(s) of a play? Can the language(s) think? If it can, what makes it think? Is it the culture(s) of the day? Moreover, can language in drama influence - at least strive to influence – culture and vice versa? What falls within the purview of language in the context of theatre? The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) defines language in general as 'the system of sounds and words used by humans to express their thoughts and feelings.' Balkaransingh includes 'stories, rituals and symbols which are heard, seen and performed' (2021, 22) within the broader dynamics of theatrical language. He ascribes certain roles to the theatrical language:

> It conveys the philosophy and religion(s) of a culture, the truths and wholeness of the culture. The phonetic sounds, inherent in its linguistic style, create the moods, unique flavours, and characteristics gestures of the culture it conveys or represents. It is always dynamic, always producing new expressions and explanations, given the soil or environment in which it is growing and functioning. Language thus represents the identity of a culture in any particular time. It easily merges into new environments but its success in this new terrain depends on its adherents and the importance that they place on their own sense of identity, selfhood, and value to their everyday existence. (22)

Not only regional languages or dialects in theatre, but in postcolonial writing English language is decolonised in order to sufficiently represent the cultural nuances of the hitherto colonized nations. Achebe (1996), in the context of African writers' use of English as a language, argues:

> The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English, which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. (383)

Soyinka ("Nigeria: The New Culture," 1987) goes a step further in indigenizing colonial English language in African literature:

> And when we borrow an alien language to sculpt or paint in, we must begin by co-opting the entire properties of that language as correspondences to properties in our matrix of thought and expression. (Qtd in Ilo, 2006, 5)

In this context, it is necessary to explore the relationship between language and culture in the context of Indian theatre and how one sufficiently transforms the other.

Classical Indian Theatre: Language and Culture

The ancient Indian written theatre (oral performing art existed since circa fifth century B.C.), essentially comprising of Bhasa's (200 AD-300AD) *The Vision of Vasavadatta*, and Kalidas's (4^{th}-5^{th} century CE) *Sakuntala* (while *uparupaka* comprised of essentially dance dramas), was scripted in blended language - Sanskrit (the priestly and courtly language) and Prakrits (almost six regional colloquial dialects). The plays intended to make interpretations of the *itivrtta* (translated by Byrski as "so it happened," where action (*karya*) in drama is intended to capture the full cycle – i.e. the unity or *samanayana* of attainment phase and contemplation phase of human existence. Music in these plays, not necessarily original, were used to fill in details and were mostly unwritten. Raghavan in "Sanskrit Drama in Performance" observes, 'The higher characters speak Sanskrit; the lesser ones, women, higher as well as lower, speak the Prakrits' (1993, 25). He cites *The Little Clay Cart (Mrcchakatika)* to show how various

Prakrit dialects are spoken by the 'lower' characters. In fact, Bharata's (circa 1500 BCE and 1400 CE) *Natya Shastra* is the earliest Indian treatise to explore the influence of the Prakrits (Chapter 17) in Sanskrit plays. Prakrit was also used as a medium of song narrative in the plays. In fact, the *Kutiyattam* performance in Kerala addressed the split audience in a blended language: The jester (*vidusaka*) explained and communicated with the audience in the regional language (Malayalam), which ran parallel to the Sanskrit language. However, Sanskrit theatre went through its decadence as foreign invasions, political turmoil and the loss of royal patronage impacted its proliferation.

Medieval Indian Theatre: Language and Culture

During the difficult times, it was the common people who preserved theatre (sometimes without knowing) in the form of rituals, prayers (bhakti tradition), ordinary entertainment, or all three of them – sometimes with social and political interest. For example, The *Yaksagana* of Karnataka, consisting of *Yaksagana Sabhalaksana muttu Prasangapithike* (the ritual songs, poems, and prose) and prasangas (stories by individual contributors), includes adaptations from Sanskrit and Kannada versions of *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Jaimini Bharata*, and the religious teachings of the *Bhagavata*, *Padma*, and *Skanda Puranas* (Ashton and Christie 1977, 20). The *Ramleela* (The Play of Ram) incorporates the birth, education, trials and tribulations, battles, and triumphs of mortal Ram (later elevated to Lord Ram) of Ayodhya in Northern India along with several sub-stories set in linear arrangement along with the main story. Tulisidas's (1532-1632) rendering of the Sanskrit Ram story in the Dev-Nagri script (the dialect of the common man of North India), though initially considered as blasphemy, survived in the long run in the form of devotional songs and enactments of Shri Ram's life. Jatra of Bengal and Orissa is a three-sided open-air musical theatre, founded by Chaitanya (1486-1534) of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition in Bengal (Guha-Thakurta 1930, 11; Vemsani 2016, 143), wherein Hindu bhakti stories - particularly Krishna story from the *Bhagavatapurana* and *Mathuramangala* epic tradition) - were performed in medieval Bangla and Oriya during popular festivals to entertain the common people

who participated in these socio-religious ceremonies. Inspired by Jaideva's (c. 1170 – c. 1245) Sanskrit text *Gita Govinda* (of 12th century Bengal), the trained group dancers of Kerala (Chakiars), experimented with the devotional content in *Kutiyattam* style, further inspiring the staging of *Krishnattam* in Sanskrit. To counteract the *Krishnattam* troupe of North Kerala, Kottarakara Tampuran of South Kerala invented a new dance form - *Ramanattam* (Menon 1987, 124) - but this time in Malayalam, ushering in an innovative school of drama form. *Tamasha* (a Persian word meaning 'show') in Maharashtra, according to K. Narayan Kale (Varadpande 1992, 167), was perhaps influenced by Muslim popular culture of entertainment introduced by Aurangzeb's Maharatta campaign (1680s) in the Deccan terrain as the campaigners demanded entertainment, which were to be performed by local troupes of artistes: 'Saki' (semi-classical dance in connection with wine-bearers) and 'Nachya' of *Tamasha* are similar in forms. The *Tamasha* artists (the 'untouchables') enriched the new school of histrionic literature by unconsciously borrowing from various devotional performances like *kirtan* (Abrams 2018, 60) and couched their indigenous devotional emotions in vernaculars (Marathi language), which was at times considered blasphemous and vulgar by the dominant culture. However, the rich polyphony of Indian theatre that represented cultural diversity of India encountered cultural violence by British colonial agents. But its roots were strong enough to survive not only the cultural invasions but to further metamorphose its linguistic and cultural being.

Modern Indian Theatre: Language and Culture

Calcutta, the first city of the British Empire, witnessed trans-nationalisation of the British techniques of staging entertainment[1] (Chatterjee Sudipto 2007; Singh et al 2016). As a result, 18th century Bengal Theatre was influenced by Babu culture, mammoth sets, gorgeous costumes, emergence of female characters in public theatre[2] and the subsequent coexistence of urban (Calcutta theatre) and outskirt (Chitpur Jatra troupe) theatre groups. The public theatre companies grew numerically and financially as they managed to retain a few elements of *jatra* into their productions. Dinabandhu Mitra, Michael Madhusudan Dutta and Ramnarayan were followed by Girish Ghosh,

whose Bengali plays were in constant search for metaphors 'that evaluated the socio-historical moment [influenced by the Victorian social dramas] he was living in' (Dahl 1995, 31). Ghosh's involvement with theatre was an attempt to blend instruction with amusement. Dahl explains, Ghosh's feet were on two rocking boats at the same time: Western dramaturgy in Indian aesthetics: 'His entire corpus, in that light, is a continual act of balancing cultures' (1995, 32). In fact, Ghosh's translation of Shakespeare in the Bengali language remains one of the best translations. From sheer world of the bilingual high-caste bourgeois babu leisure, Ghosh restored Bengali theatre to the larger mise-en-scene of Calcutta's Renaissance Theatre. The nationalistic zeal of the then Bengal theatre was repressed by Dramatic Performances Control Act and the 1876 Act according to which all plays needed police sanction prior to public performance. In fact, on March 4, 1876, the police raided in the Great National Theatre during the staging of Amrta Lal Basu's *The Police of Pig and Sheep* and arrested some of the performers in the middle of the show.

The Parsis (ethno-religious Indian minority of Iranian origin) developed Parsi theatre (Gupta and Hansen 2005; Nicholson 2021) into company-based commercial entertainment at Bombay in 1853. As Parsi theatre progressed, it amalgamated 'Indo-Persian and Hindu mythological stories, *Arabian Nights* lore, Shakespearean tragedy, English melodrama, and Western and Hindustani music' (Nicholson 2021, 1), attracting Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Parsi and Anglo-Indian theatre personnel, who employed the prevailing vernaculars Gujrati, Farsi, Urdu, Hindustani, and English. The theatre embraced the European-style proscenium with lavishly painted background curtains and trick stage effects. Encompassing the 1865 share crash, the 1874 Parsi-Muslim riots, and the 1893 cow-killing Hindu-Muslim riots, Parsi theatre marked the transition from stylized open-air presentations to a new urban drama, casting its long-term influence on Marathi theatre and popular cinema. The opera style proscenium theatre partly influenced the Marathi playwrights like, Anna Saheb Kirloskar (1843-1885), and Krushnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar (1872-1948) (Kosambi 2015). Kirloskar, through his Kirloskar Natak Mandali in 1880, developed *Sangit-Natak* to depict Puranic theme but with a contemporary social

content. He translated Sanskrit classical texts in Marathi with cultural fusion of Hindustani and Carnatic classical music. Khadilkar's Marathi plays productively cross-infected Indian classical legends with narratives of contemporary British (mis)rule by encoding mythological characters with colonial oppressors. Malayalam and Kannada theatre also couched revolutionary social content in mythological symbols. However, as the musical prodigy of the Marathi theatre started to fade, experimental attempts were undertaken by the intellectuals under the strong influence of European playwrights like Ibsen and Shaw.

Even before Indian independence, Indian theatre was fighting a losing battle against the Indian talkies albeit the Indian talkie absorbed the cultural heritage of Indian musical drama that 'had flown through the unbroken millennia of dramatic tradition, a powerful current of music and song that is traced back 2,000 years' (Chatterji, Shoma A. 2003, 178). Theatres turned into cinema halls and audience forgot their exclusive loyalty to drama. However, personnel like Prithiviraj Kapoor (1906-1972) poured his earnings into Prithvi Theatre troupe (founded in 1942) that he earned from his work in the Indian Film Industry. In the 1940s, some young playwrights of Bengal experimented with language and culture. Sambhu Mitra (1915-1997), as a playwright, strategically used the folklore and the Jatra 'Pala' (*Chand Baniker Pala*) form in modern Bangla drama with modern light and sound techniques. In the context of music and language, Mitra amalgamated tradition with innovation so much so that Kundu (2008) remarks:

> The language Mitra adopts is not the current standard Bengali but a dialect slightly archaized and essentially of rural Bengal, specifically of the district of Medinipore…which was known for its seafaring merchants. (280)

However, this is done with a modern twist, reflecting Mitra's society and collective unconsciousness. Bijon Bhattacharya's (1917-1978) texts create linguistic domains wherein the oppressed class Bangla dialect and the oppressors 'standard' tongue. *Nabanna* is an appalling reality of Bengal famine and Gupta mentions 'Whenever Bhattacharya read aloud from *Nabanna*, he would make Pradhan's articulations stand out from the naturalistic speech of others of his family' (2013, 3).

In the post-independent period, both mainstream and experimental theatre revived in Bombay: Adi Marzban (1914-1987), as a playwright, first experimented in Gujarati and English, and later wrote in Parsi (*Piroja Bhawan*). The comic genius of the Parsi-Gujrati theatre took Parsi slapstick comedy to new heights with picturesque and expressive language (Nicholson 2021). If mis-en-scene can speak, then director Ebrahim Alkazi's (1925-2020) experimentation with staging in the context of open vistas is recognised by Anuradha Kapur as the changed language of modern Indian theatre (qtd in Bhuyan 2020). Talking of Atmaram Bhende (1923-2015), another shade of linguistic space that comes to the forefront is the actor's unwritten language of movement (and most importantly, its restraint) on stage, depending on his/her body or/and style, that one self-discovers in rehearsals (and not in scripts). While discussing about an actor's choice of gait, speech, pattern, gestures in Farce, he observes:

> Many think that farce is in fact *tamasha* because there are no limits on movements and because there is no 'fixed' play script. (But there are limits.) … The limits are laid down in rehearsals. The playwright writes only the skeleton … Shankar Ghanekar, Baban Prabhu, Atmaram Bhende and Kesto Mukherji will pick up the bottle differently. (Interview with Asha Bhende and Shanna Navre 2015)

In this manner, theatre in and around Bombay led the development of the urban theatre in Marathi, Gujrati, Parsi, English, and Hindi. Meanwhile, a strong Leftist movement swept Bengal and Kerala and theatre was used as a significant tool to form mass opinion in the society. Utpal Datta (1929-1993), as an actor-director, discovered himself first through English productions and later through Bangla. As a performer, he couched strong communist ideology (Datta 1982) in his performances (for example, Datta's *Vietnam* portrayed the gallant revolutionary struggles of the oppressed in other parts of the world to the peasant-audience of Bengal) which were primarily staged in open-air stages of rural Bengal (Interview by A.J. Gunawardana 1971).

Since the establishment of colonial metropolis in India, the growing English-educated Indian middleclass trans-nationalised

European (especially British) conventions of drama to fit in their indigenous ideology and culture in numerous indigenous languages. According to Dharwadker (2005), this led to 'a body of new "literary" drama and dramatic theory in several Indian languages' (3) giving forth large-scale translations and adaptations of both European and Indian canonical plays of trans-cultural, inter-cultural and intra-cultural contents (cultural metaphors) in trans-linguistic (colloquialisms, rhetorical and lyrical language) texts (for example, several translations of Kalidas's *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* in English ran parallel to numerous translations, interpretations and performances of Shakespeare in Indian theatre). German playwright Brecht's connection with India was mutual: Prateek (2021) in his book cites Lutze to show the probable influence of the Indian classical drama on Brecht: He explicates how Indian classical drama's anti-illusionistic aspect and combination of realism and serenity inspired Brecht to evolve his alienation effect. And according to Prateek (2021), India marked Brecht's first appearance with the production of *Sufaid Kundali* (Hindi translation of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*) in the 1960s so much so that Alkazi invited German directors Carl Weber and Fritz Bennewitz for scholarly involvement in Brechtian techniques. In fact, playwrights used Brechtian aesthetics to indigenize Indian theatre. Curiously, the anti-illusionistic aspect of Indian classical theatre, newly labelled as Brechtian effect, reinvigorates modern Indian theatre.

To show how power play operates between urban centre and rural periphery, Habib Tanvir (1923-2009) explored a linguist space that included folk performances by indigenous artists of Chhattisgarh and a polyphony of standard Hindi and Hindi dialects. K.N. Panikkar (1928-2016) evoked the haunting rhythm of Malayalam folk tradition and occult in *Karimkutty* (Panikkar 1985).

Unparalleled self-conscious expressions of the renaissance (that swept Indian theatre in the 1970s) in trans-cultural and trans-linguistic experimentations with indigenous theatres in native languages started with young English educated playwrights of new multicultural metropolitan India — Mohan Rakesh (1925-1972) in Hindi (Interview by Mohan Maharishi 1971), Girish Karnad (1938-2019) in Kannada (Tutun Mukherjee 2006; Crow and Banfield 1996), Vijay Tendulkar

(1928-2008) in Marathi (Dharwadker 2013), and Badal Sircar (1925-2011) in Bangla (Sircar 2017; Partha Chatterjee 2016). However, while transcultural exchanges in Indian theatre were mutual and curiously transformative, modern Indian theatre seem to under-notice its classical and medieval roots.

Another noticeable development in the modern Indian theatre worth mentioning is how the directors while producing plays, now offered an indigenous context while interpreting indigenous cultural groups in indigenous dialects. For example, Satyadev Dubey (1936-2011) directed *Andha Yug* in 1962 for its "language-oriented [Hindi]" (qtd in Jyotsna G. Singh 1996, 179) representation of an ambiguous national growth that could make audible the post-Chinese-attack uncertainty of the Indians. Ratan Thiyam (1948-) fused elements of *Natya Shastra*, classical Greek Drama, Noh theatre of Japan, traditional Meitei performing arts and Thang-Ta in his productions: He employed Thang-Ta in *Urubhangam* and *Chakravyuh*, encoded political failure of Manipur in *Lengshonnei*, staged *Andha Yug* on open stage in Tonga a day before the forty-ninth anniversary of atomic holocaust in Hiroshima, and trans-created Macbeth in the Meitei context. However, female directors like Vijaya Mehta (1934-) or Amal Allana (1947-) strategically attempted to make audible the muffled voices of Indian female and androgynous identities, misrepresented or/and underrepresented by male playwrights. Vijaya Mehta, while directing Dalvi's *Savitri* was "very angry" (Subramanyam 2002, 28) to end the play with the female protagonist's death. Mehta had to do this to feed the expectation of her spectators, who mostly saw women through male gaze. Amal Allana experimented with the "paradox of dual gender" (Subramanyam 2002, 29) or the male/female androgen while staging predetermined fixed male/female characters. The 20th century Indian one-person theatre saw mono actors like P. L. Deshpande (1919-2000), Suhasini Mulgaonkar (1961-), and Tripti Mitra (1925-1989) who juggled with multiple identities, multiple perspectives, multiple narratives, multiple genres on stage. While playwrights or/and directors Arun Mukherjee (1937-) (Sahapedia TOI 2018) in Bengali, Prasanna (1951-) in Kannada [national.heraldindia.com], Amol Palekar (1944-) in Marathi and Hindi, Satish Alekar (1949-) in Marathi,

Shekhar Chatterjee (1924-1990) in Bengali, Bansi Kaul (1949-2021) in Nautanki style staged theatre, Heisnam Kanahailal (1941-2016) (Rojio 2018) in Manipuri experimented and translated (translating from one Indian regional language to another or from English and other foreign languages to regional languages) the hard-hitting small-town political aesthetic of the repressed Indians by infusing tools and individual instincts from their indigenous cultural roots. Directors of Indian English theatre like Pearl Padamsee (1931-2000), Vimal Bhagat (1935-) and Barry John (1946-) explored a wide range of themes in Indian culture from hippie to the Upanishads. The history of Indian theatre is therefore a history of cultural evolution and linguistic metamorphosis. To keep Indian theatre alive, it is necessary to revisit its history and to re-emphasise its variegated cultural evolutions and innumerable permutations and combinations of Indian languages and dialects.

Conclusion

As an interpreter of his/her culture, idea-maker of his/her race, conscience builder of his/her society, a playwright codifies the culture of the oppressed class(es) in language/languages which isn't/aren't decorative but interpretative. The linguistic space intends to make audible every imagined voice—normal, loud, muffled voice, shy, pause, silence, song, music—to its readers or spectators. In the repertoire of Indian theatre, what meaning has the playwrights' pen grafted on to the cultures of their times, and what cultural impacts have been grafted on to their pen (especially when Indian theatre, real theatre, doesn't have one heart, one conscience, but multiple hearts, multiple consciences)? The time has come to re-consider the why and how questions pertaining to the evolution of Indian theatre and its rainbow existence however cloudy be the historical contexts. Be it the onslaught of colonial hegemony, arrival of cinema and other media, or contemporary historical amnesia of Indian classical, medieval, or modern theatre, Indian theatre has remained a potent window on Indian meta narratives and regional cultures. Integrated by the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, epics, mythologies; enlivened by detailed classical sutras of histrionic performances; and problematized by European experimentations, Indian theatre could have been the most viable form

of cultural performance for entertaining Indian audience as well as for ushering social change. Research and scholarly works are going on with the purpose to narrativize indigenous plays in India along with the dialects in which they had been performed and the historical contexts in which they had evolved. However, this is not enough. Emphasis should be made to revive these plays and to strategically bring them out of scholarly journals and books to the stages wherein performers and audience are meant to communicate and transform each other. For this, scholars, research grants, publishers, theatre groups and most importantly, Indian audience(s) must actively participate to revisit, identify, revive, and situate past heritage and knowledge system of Indian theatre in the present context. The present study is a humble attempt to join the missing links between Indian theatre's past and present.

Notes

1. The establishment of Play House (1753-1756) in Lalbazar Street and the New Play House or the Calcutta theatre (1775-1808) by the Britishers, of the Britishers, for the Britishers, staging exclusively British plays.
2. In the 1880s, only the Tagore women performed for the private audience in *Balmikipratibha*, *Kalmrigaya* or *Raja-o-Rani.* However, professional theatre (Bengal Theatre) had to wait for naturally talented formal sex-worker Golapsundari of the 1870s, who was already proficient in kirtan. In 1883, she set up the Hindu Female Theatre and staged *Shunbha Samhar* (Murshid's *Bengali Culture Over a Thousand Years*). However, Binodini Dasi, who initially worked with Golapsundari for the Great National Theatre, with her acting, singing, and writing skill, was the first to make visible female space in colonial Bengal theatre (Dharwadker 2016, 263).

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