



Research Paper

Expanding Horizons: Re-evaluating the Evolution of 'Drama' through the Post-Independence Playwrights of Tripura (1951-2000).

Tirthankar Laskar

Ex P.G Student (2018-2020) and Independent Scholar

Department of English, Tripura University

Email ID – laskar99tirthankar@gmail.com

Phone No. – 7005310828

ORCID ID - <http://orcid.org/0009-0006-3417-7076>

Abstract

This study aims to investigate and assess Tripura's rich theatrical history, going all the way back to the late seventeenth century, when folk-theatre first emerged. Drama and theatre in Tripura had finally evolved from an isolated form of recreational purposes to a collective social one in the post-independence era, which signified the beginning and creation of democratic creative legacy in the state. Dramatists who advanced the genre of drama with a progressive goal were prevalent throughout the post-Independence era. The names of the modern theatre practitioners are - Rakhil Roy Chowdhury, Agni Kumar Acharya, Sukhamoy Ghosh, Ajit Majumder, Kamal Roy Chowdhury, Ram Krishna Debnath, Manik Chakraborty, Chandan Sengupta, Pradip Acharjee, Rabindra Bhattacharya, Nanda Kumar Debbarma, Hirendra Sinha and Sanjay Kar. Furthermore, it was noted that in the subsequent decades after independence, dramatists experimented with the rapidly evolving theatrical styles. As a result, it provides an in-depth account of the post-independence era, which is referred to as the "Artistic-Myriad" because a variety of dramatic and play forms have developed with rich expression, raising the benchmark for what is possible. It also indicates the different approaches among Tripura's post-independence dramatists, whose exploration led to the development of the imaginative and magnificent piece of art.

Keywords

History, pre-independence phase, Royal legacy, post-independence phase, evolution, modern, expressive work of art, varied and rich theatrical culture.

Received 05 July, 2024; Revised 16 July, 2024; Accepted 18 July, 2024 © The author(s) 2024.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

Evolution of Modern Drama

At the onset of the pre-independence period, it was identified that the theatre practice, composition of drama and drama performance in the state of Tripura was at the initial stage at the end of the nineteenth century and during the couple of decades of the twentieth century. It was found that the 'Giti-Natya' (self-trans - *Ballads*) and Krishna-Jatrapala (self-trans – *Folk Theatre on Krishna*) was traced during the Pre-Independence Era. But after the independence, especially after the merging of Tripura to India, there has been a rapid change in the mindset here. After the establishment of Maharaja Bir Bikram College (1947), teachers from various communities and languages came from all over India to join the teaching work in the said college. Moreover, people of various professions also came from East and West Bengal at that time. As a result, a new wave of change and upliftment came in the field of literary creation. Especially the modernity was felt in the genre of Drama.

The playwrights namely – Ratan Kumar Ghosh, Brajen Dey and Shakti Pada Rajguru became popular and also the plays of Rabindranath Tagore. The Post Independence phase witnessed dramatists and theatre practitioners namely - Rakhil Roy Chowdhury, Agni Kumar Acharya, Sukhamoy Ghosh, Ajit Majumder, Kamal Roy Chowdhury, Ram Krishna Debnath, Manik Chakraborty, Chandan Sengupta, Pradip Acharjee, Rabindra Bhattacharya, Nanda Kumar Debbarma, Hirendra Sinha and Sanjay Kar. Additionally, it was observed that during

the post-independence era, subsequent dramatists experimented with the quickly changing theatrical trends. They merged traditional forms of practice with contemporary styles and conventions to meet the demands of the time, allowing enthusiasts, directors, actors, and aspiring and amateur writers to experiment with theatre and make it a popular cultural activity. The formation of democratic creative legacy in the state was highlighted by the theatre in Tripura, which at last progressed from a private form of amusement to a common social one. With numerous groups emerging to take part in festivals and events supported by state and federal government agencies, theatre in Tripura has developed into a fully-fledged cultural movement during the second half of the 20th century.

Objectives

- i) To evaluate and investigate what is considered "new" in Tripura's post-independence drama.
- ii) In order to draw attention to the important concerns of the post-independence age, such as the evolving- Opera-Based play, religious plays, one-act plays, children plays, street plays and other diverse forms of drama and theatrical productions.
- iii) To achieve and ensure that the constructed notion of 'Evolution of 'Drama' in the Post-Independence period is properly established.
- iv) To draw attention to the differences between different post-independence dramatists, who were subsequently followed by several practitioners of artistic theatre.

II. Methodology and Materials

In addition to historiographical and socio-cultural methodological approaches, the matter in question is investigated, utilizing participatory, exploratory, and observational research methods. Furthermore, it is evident from this study, that a post-positivism viewpoint is used. The research is improved by critical analytical study, which involved a thorough reading of the texts and a section-by-section analysis to uncover the noteworthy and unique study findings. A number of secondary materials, including papers and journals, have been examined in addition to the critical analytical study.

III. Review of Literature

From the review of Literature utilising various resources and articles, it can be understood that the ancient theatre which had a touch of Natyasastra, inspired the Royal theatre of Tripura and perhaps due to this reason, the continuous transitional and experimental phases were evident in the theatrical history of Tripura. Furthermore, a distinguished view from the lens of the scholars defines many digressive challenges and issues that are faced since the inception of the theatre and how later it expanded its horizons in various forms of art and theatre.

Moreover, various writers from various journals have given the historical emphasis on the evolution of Indian Theatre which have been studied from a critical note. The research gap that existed was on the intermingled study of the two phases i.e., Transitional and Experimental, that are found in the Theatrical History in Tripura. Moreover, scholars from various institutions highlighted that there is a significant development in the history of theatre, as the private theatrical entertainment of the Royal family emerged as a public entertainment which later belonged to the domain of common subjects. And then, from 1930 onwards the theatre was on a high demand as various artist started coming up with their unique talents. Hence, in the post-independence phase, dramatists and writers have continuously experimented with new styles and forms from classical to modern techniques, thus standardizing the genre of drama significantly.

In the introduction of the book, "Tripurar Natya Andoloner Dhara" (2002) by Shakti Haldar, gives a clear insight which extends the idea of progressive reader towards the blooming of the theatre as 'art' in Tripura and later on forming as artistic heritage. However, the critical reading takes the exploratory and observational methods along with historiographical and socio-cultural approaches that acts as an effective methodology in order to explain the rich inclinations of drama and theatre and also the increasing height in the work of drama with sublimity that enlightens with 'ekstasis' in the mind of the art practitioners with the course of the time, as the creative blending of music, props in all types of drama and plays gave a productive setup altogether.

In the book, "Tripurar Bangla Sahityer Sampoorna Itihaash" (2018) by Dr. Sisir Kumar Sinha,, enhance on the idea of formation of different theatrical troupes, student's engagement in the formation of various drama associations in order to promote drama as a productive work of art, thus various theatre practitioners and dramatists came up like – Tripuresh Majumder, Rakhal Roy Chowdhury, Agni Kumar Acharya, Sukhamoy Ghosh, Ajit Majumder, Kamal Roy Chowdhury, Ram Krishna Debnath, Manik Chakraborty, Chandan Sengupta, Pradip Acharjee, Rabindra Bhattacharya, Nanda Kumar Debbarma, Hirendra Sinha and many more. This can be taken as a spirit of enlightenment as there was a sudden rise in the common group of people and that increased the popularity of theatre.

The critical paper titled - "Shadhinottar Juge Tripurar Natya Andolan" (2008) by Ramprasad Datta, demarcates certain attributes of theatre and its practices that are carried forward by the theatre exponents of the contemporary era and also reminiscing its past essence.

In the chapter 'Introduction' from the book, "Analysis of the Rajmala or Chronicles of Tripura" (2008), the reading consists of royal histories of the state which provides valuable insights into the history and traditions of Kingdom of Tripura and the Post-Independence dramatist ensures that an extensive understanding of the Royal chronicle would help them in composing plays related to the Royal family at a significant note.

There are many diverse viewpoints offered by critics and academics through the summary of the literature study, facilitating an extensive and evolving discussion.

IV. Findings and Discussion

Drama and Playwrights in Tripura during the Post- Independence Phase

From the seventies of the 20th century, Utpal Dutta, Ritwik Ghatak, Bidhayak Bhattacharya, Mohit Chattopadhyay, Badal Sarkar, Manoj Mitra, Arun Mukhopadhyay etc. became increasingly popular by portraying various new contents through their plays. The plays staged by various theatre groups during this period received particular acclaim are namely -*Barricade*, *Captain Hurrah*, *Rajrakta*, *Chakbhanga Madhu* (self-trans – *Honey from the Honeycomb*), *Sajaanu Bagaan* (self-trans - *Decorated Garden*), *Marich Sanbad* (self-trans – *The Message of Marich*), *Indrajit*, *Ishwar Babu Aschen* (self-trans – *Ishwar Babu is Coming*), *Pushpak Rath* (self-trans – *The Flying Chariot*), *Chutir-Phaade* (self-trans – *The Holiday Trap*) and many more.

But all these plays were written by playwrights outside Tripura. And most of these plays were either translations of foreign plays or plays based on foreign plays. However, inspired by these plays, some theatre workers and theatre lovers of Tripura were inspired to write original plays. The notable dramatists are namely - Rakhal Roy Chowdhury, Agni Kumar Acharya, Sukhamoy Ghosh, Nidhu Hazra, Prafulla Debnath, Ajit Majumder, Manik Chakraborty, Ramakrishna Debnath, Kamal Roy Chowdhury, Sadhan Saha, Satyendra Bhadra, Chandan Sengupta, Rabindra Bhattacharya, Pradip Acharya, Ratish Majumder, Deepak Barua, Nanda Kumar Debbarma, Bibhu Bhushan Bhattacharya, Hirendra Sinha, Sanjay Kar, Tamal Chakraborty, Samar Biswas, Narendra Bhattacharya, Kalyan Roy, Sri Bikash, Malay Chakraborty, Chandana Debnath etc.

Various Plays and Forms of Plays that were composed during the Post Independence Phase in Tripura

The sphere of literary production saw a fresh wave of upheaval and development. Drama was one genre where modernism was most noticeable. It is possible to trace the ideology of broadening one's horizons in the field of drama, and as a reviewer, one's role as a reader, investigator, and researcher is to dissect the various well-known plays that were popular among the aristocracy while, on the other hand, continuing to exist as a veil identity among the general public.

Rakhal Roy Chowdhury was a veteran dramatist, theater director and actor of Tripura belonging to the post- independence period. R.R Chowdhury's play include - *Pada-Dhvani* (self-trans – *The Echoing Footsteps*, pub -1951), *Darshak-er-Gallery Theke* (self-trans – *From the Spectator Galley*, pub - 1967), *Bhorer Alo* (*Ekanka*) (self-trans – *The Light of Dawn: A One Act Play*, 1990), *Sha-hauzadi* (self-trans – *The Princess*, pub -1992) and *Aari* (self-trans – *The Foe*, pub - 1982). Therefore, he took inspiration from the western work of art. Also, Agni Kumar Acharya was an eminent lyricist, playwright, theater director and actor from Tripura. Agni Kumar Acharya gained popularity by writing several plays. Some of his dramas have been telecast by Agartala Doordarshan Kendra. Acharya's first play - *Jatra-Holo-Shuru* (self-trans – *The Journey Has Begun*, pub - 1960) was followed by *Shishu Rajar Desh* (self-trans – *The Land of the Child King*, pub -1982), *Sanghati Surya Jago* (self-trans – *Awaken, The United Sun*, pub - 1985) and *Mrita Sainik-er Dairi* (self-trans - *The Diary of a Dead Soldier*, pub - 1986). He also composed several ballads. Certain western elements were also found in him in terms of forms and presentations.

Sukhamoy Ghosh is an eminent dramatist, theater director and playwright. He composed many plays. Along with the child artists of Tripura Rabindra Parishad, Ghosh has performed many plays. He mainly dramatized several short stories of Rabindranath Tagore. The playwright's plays are precisely as amusing as the original plays, despite drawing influence from the compositions of other authors including Rabindranath Tagore.

The seven plays in the first volume of his *Natyasagraha*¹ are – *Raja-O-Ninduk* (self-trans – *The King and the Jester*), *Daulatram-er Kheti* (self-trans- *Daulatram's Fame*), *Bhoot Bidai* (self-trans – *Farewell to the Ghost*), *Turanga Sangbad* (self-trans – *Breaking News!*), *Gulok-Dhandha* (self-trans – *The Labyrinth*), *Majhi-Malla-er-Golpo* (self-trans -*The Story of Majhi Malla*) and *Narad Narad*. Thus, he focused on the famous Indian playwrights to establish drama as a new form of genre in Tripura.

Ajit Majumder composed forty plays in total. Some of the type of plays that he composed are - *Ekanka Natak* (self-trans – *One-Act Play*), *Purnanga Natak* (self-trans – *Full-Length Play*), *Betar Natak* (self-trans – *Radio Drama*), *Sruti Natak* (self-trans – *Auditory Play*), *Putul Natak* (self-trans – *Puppet Play*), *Tele Natak* (self-trans – *Tele Play*). He is also a noble theater director and actor. He was the one who was following the experimental form of tradition in the theatrical literature of Tripura.

Jasimuddin's poem *Naxikanthar Math* (self-trans – *Naxikanthar's Creed*) acquired credibility after Ajit Majumder masterfully shaped and dramatized it. This play indicated the start of a new trend in Tripura's theater

industry. The play was first published in January 1997. The second edition of the play was published in 2003. The play is written in accordance with the original narrative. The play has no division in scenes. There are many characters in the play, apart from the main characters. The drama begins with a *Bandana-Geet* (self-trans - *Hymn of Praise*) in the style of *Gayen Panchali* (self-trans - *The Song of the Minstrel*). Telling the narrative from start to finish, the Sutraddhar (self-trans - Narrator) plays a crucial function. Additionally, the chorus plays a significant role in the play. This Opera-based play was a very successful play. He was focusing on the upgradation of the performance culture of Tripura in the realm of drama.

In 1997, after the publication of *Naxikanthar Math*, there were three complete plays in the drama collection namely - *Jhongkaar* (self-trans - *The Clanking Sound*), *Sabhyataar Songlaabh* (self-trans - *Benefits of Civilization*) and *Brihannala Pala* (self-trans - *The Play of Brihannala*). In 2000, a collection of full-length plays called *Natya Sanklan* was published. This collection consists of four full length plays namely - *Dheu Bhangha Dheu* (self-trans - *Waves Breaking Waves*), *Bharatanatyam*, *Maina Todonto* (self-trans - *The Post-mortem*) and *Putul Khela* (self-trans - *The Puppet Play*).

The play *Jhongkaar* is probably the first modern play written by playwrights of Tripura, following the modern conventions and theatrical rules which was not found in the earlier traditional plays of Tripura. *Brihannala Pala* was written on the problems of Eunuch society, is a new addition to the theatrical literature of Tripura. In the early eighties of twentieth century, this play created an unrelaxed excitement in the theatrical world of Tripura. A reading of the play *Sabhyataar Songlaabh* shows how much the dramatist was disturbed by the horrors of war. This play evoked a special response, alike the earlier play. In the play, *Putul Khela*, the horrendous nature of dowry and money-lending has been revealed through the dialogues, that are suitable for the perfect children puppet play. This play can be taken as a 'novum artis' that prepares the audience for a change that must be looked forward in the society.

The play *Dheu Banga Dheu* has been performed many times as *Kabi Chandravati*. It is a romantic tragedy and is primarily a Sruti Natak i.e., an auditory play where the play is primarily experienced through listening along with emphasis on the dialogues and narration upon the visual elements. The playwright reveals that in *Dheu Banga Dheu*, a man's love interest is burnt to death by burning. And one's desire for love has been freed. Not only is union in love is benevolent and creative but it also makes love great. The main themes of the play *Bharat Natyam* which are encoded by the playwright are - India's history from Harappa and Mohenjo Daro to British rule over a long period of time to British imperialism and colonial aggression along with several national riots. The main three characters of that play are - the playwright, the editor and the director. Besides these characters, the chorus has also a special role in the play.

The Post-mortem is a classical religious drama. There is also a chorus in this play. Cruelty and narrowness of religion is the main theme of this play. Raghupati, Govinda Manikya, Nakshatra Roy, Jaisingh, Aparna, Rani Gunavati etc. characters of Rabindranath Tagore's *Bisarjan* are also present in this play. This also goes as an intertextual re-interpretation of his play as he draws references from Tagore's *Bisarjan*.

Putul Khela is a notable problem play by the playwright. The dramatist expresses the subject of this play is not romantic as after the marriage, the torture of the bride and the untimely death is caused by the violence of the greedy people in the in-law family. The main characters of the drama are Samu, Gachu, Debu, Soma, Todaroshi, Ramu, Rupa and Sarma. The heroine of the play is a bride who is treated like a doll and also mute as a doll, due to the severe circumstances. The play is divided into three parts— beginning, middle and end. The chorus sets the emotion of the central character who was under severe torture as expressed by the simple, rhymed and lyrical dialogues. He has experimented with dialogues and presentation in almost every play, as he was inspired from the western theatre.

Ajit Majumder uses the chorus as is found in Greek tragedies. Most of the plays do not have divided scene sections. Being an actor and director himself, the playwright had special experience in the successful staging of plays. And so, his plays won the best play award in various competitions. His play *Putul Khela*, won at the International Set Theatre Festival held in Delhi in 1986-87 and also was reviewed by the foreign group of people as one of the finest plays. It can be undoubtedly said that his prominence among the dramatists of Tripura is particularly noteworthy.

Nikhil Bhattacharya is another notable playwright from Tripura. Among the dramas written by him, a special mention should be made of those two dramas that were particularly appreciated by theatre enthusiasts namely - *Shei Briddho Luk-ti* (self-trans - *That Old Man*) and *Pahari Jijhoti* (self-trans - *The Mountain Whirlwind*).

Kamal Roy Chowdhury gained fame as a playwright by writing only a few plays in the late seventies and eighties of the twentieth century. His plays are - *Debo-na-Titun* (self-trans - *I won't Give, Titun*), *Dharmagola* (self-trans - *The Religious Granary*), *Tripur-Rajar-Upakhyan* (self-trans - *The Tale of the King of Tripur*) etc.

The play *Debo-na-Titun* is based on the tradition of *Begar-khata* which was prevalent in the state of Tripura. When the King's army, Royal Servants, the Village Chief visited the village, the subjects (mainly tribal subjects then) had to carry their goods and do all other work without pay. Otherwise, severe punishment was given. The State Educational Council started preparing the uneducated tribals aware of their rights through

education. And also raising awareness against social evil practices such as *Jamai-khata*, *Witch practice*, *Titun practice*. When the king came to know that the people were disobeying the *Titun Practice*, the three tribal youths namely - Rupasree, Kumari and Madhuti became immortal martyrs after being shot and killed in the struggle against the tyranny of the police and army of the king. The people of the village united and fought against the King's army with bows, spears, etc., the soldiers scattered and fled in fear. Common people won through the sacrifice of many martyrs. Apart from the three main characters mentioned, some of the roles that need to be mentioned are - Ramkumar, the Leader of the Public Education movement, Lakshmi Charan (Padma Mohan, the old tribal farmer), Chowdhury (the Village moral), Nagurabai, Mungkurui, Narendra, Mahendra, King of Tripura, Tehsildar, Hiramati and Hiramati's mother. The play is presented in twenty-seven scenes and the re-narration of the real events through the stage became an important device for the theatre art practitioners. The scenes consist of sub-scenes and the scenes are very small. The play was first performed on July 11, 1982 at Khoai Town Hall.

The play *Dharmagola* is based on the rebellion led by a saint named Ratan Mani Reang against the oppression, exploitation and oppression of the innocent men and women by the royal servants of Tripura. The King was the sorrow of the subjects. Completely indifferent to suffering, the people complaint that for the comfort and luxuries of the kings and royals, an amount of tax was collected from the subjects by force. Even though helpless the subjects died of famine and pestilence, the news never reached the king. It was Saint Ratan Mani alike the Joan of Arc who led and defended France nation from the external oppressors, gradually became a Swadeshi leader, who was moved by the sufferings of the common people. Therefore, to protect the common people from oppression and starvation, he united all the subjects, built a food store called Dharmagola for all. Then he led a fight against the king's army and died as a prisoner. The play is presented in twelve scenes. As per the tradition of classical plays, each act begins with a 'prologue'. The propositions are presented in the style of poetry. The dialogues are written in the way the natives speak Bengali. Moreover, it can be traced as a reader-investigator-reviewer that the British modernist style of 'poetic-drama or verse-play' has been taken up as a new form of experimentation in the realm of drama by the dramatist. The play could not rise to the level of excellence as seen in *Debo-na-Titun* in terms of form and presentation, but it was a progressive tendency portrayed by the dramatist through such initiative.

The play, *Tripur-Rajar-Upakhyan* was a historical play which consists of prologue similar in Sanskrit plays. The Vandana² part gives glimpses of the entire play about its story. The story of King Tripur is based on the historical book, *Rajmala*, which is the *Royal Chronicle of Tripura*, but the dramatist has presented King Tripur in a completely different manner. It is said about King Tripur in *Rajmala* that after the death of the giant, Tripur was crowned the King. The dramatist has presented the King of Tripura as a truly compassionate man towards the common Kirats³. He could not accept the worship of Chantai⁴ who performed yajna⁵, homa⁶, narabali⁷ and hence, the King stopped these practices. And so, the priests called the King as irreligious. Later on, the Chantai conspired with the ministers and generals and killed the generous and compassionate King, and sat on the throne. Similar to the play *Bisarjan*, the playwright shows the struggle of good with bad. The main characters of this play are - Daitya, King Tripur, Queen Hiravati, Chantai, Bidushak, Minister, Senapati and Herambaraj. The play is composed in four acts and seventeen scenes. The achievement of the dramatist stands tall in dialogue writing which is poetic in many cases. The artistic achievement found in Rabindranath Tagore's *Bisarjan* is far different in terms of story-telling and dialogue writing which is not visible in the play, *Tripur-Rajar-Upakhyan*. It can be referred as a historiographical study of King Tripur through stage reinterpretation.

Ramakrishna Debnath was also an exceptional playwright who wrote in Sylheti dialect. He wrote *Hukuner Chao* (self-trans – *Vulture's Chick*, pub 1980) Sara dropped it. This is probably the first drama written by the dramatists living in Agartala region, written completely in the regional language. Later, a drama was composed named *Path-Natika* (self-trans – *Street Drama*) in 1987. He described the Sylheti zeal as the language culture that is reflected in his plays, focusing mostly on linguistic invention and highlighted socio-cultural themes for the audience.

Manik Chakraborty was an actor, theatre director and activist. He composed many *Patha-Natak* (self-trans – *Street Plays*) in the seventies of twentieth century. Through his theatre company *Rupayaan*, he has translated several foreign plays. One of his notable plays is *Mast-a-Tan*. He has also composed several short plays. He once worked as an assistant to renowned director, Ritwik Ghatak. Therefore, he used his experience in playwriting and acting. And so, the *Navya-Natya* movement of Tripura got a new magnitude in terms of acting and theatre management. The uniqueness of his dramas consisted of the use of theatron⁸ and its methods. His experiments are found in the Mime⁹ plays, which particularly created flair enthusiasm in the theatrical productions.

Moreover, he has also contributed to the worthwhile dramatization of several stories namely *Ajnatvas* (self-trans – *The Incognito*) written by Sadhan Saha, *Yabanika Kampman* (self-trans – *The Curtain Trembling*) by Satyen Bhadra, *Chor* play based on *Biral* (self-trans – *The Cat*) and *Chor* (self-trans – *The Thief*) by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Manik Bandyopadhyay. Hence, these new shaping of intertextual dramatizations of the existing plays broadened the new form of art completely.

Chandan Sengupta is remembered as a great dramatist. He wrote eleven full-length plays, eleven one-act plays and several short plays. Not only in Tripura, West Bengal and Bangladesh, his dramas have won acclaim,

but also at the national level. His play, *Anya Prithivi* (self-trans – *The Another World*) won the best drama award in the All-India Drama Competition. Moreover, his play also won the best manuscript award in various drama competitions. He has conducted various experiments on drama staging. His new ideas about the structure of drama and its form are found in his plays. The complete plays by Chandan Sengupta are – *Jiboner Maane* (self-trans – *The Meaning of Life*), *Shaada Payraar Jonne* (self-trans – *For White Pigeon*), *Anya Prithivi* (self-trans – *The Another World*), *Sabyasachi*, *Sunar Horin* (self-trans – *The Golden Deer*), *Tamra-Patra* (self-trans – *The Copper Plate*), *Arohan* (self-trans – *To Climb*), *Dead Letter* and *Chawa* (self-trans – *In Desire*).

In his first play *Jiboner Maane*, the play is presented through the dialogue of the writer and his wife, against the backdrop of the suicide of a young woman named Beena. The drama is arranged in two parts. The eight scenes consist of antar-drishya¹⁰ and gorbo-drishya¹¹. The play presents a realistic portrayal of the issues and complications that exist in the social and economic spheres today. The play portrays how the economic problems of modern youth i.e. unemployment and the greed of political grandfathers are leading our society to extreme crisis. Santu and his two friends, Santu's sister Reba and Baba are the main characters of the drama who highlight the prevalent social issues. Therefore, the socio-cultural issues define the deviations faced by the various characters in the play which often according to Mathew Arnold goes as an anarchy that prevails and due to this the state of total perfection in culture gets shunned.

Shaada Payraar Jonne is a popular play by the playwright. The central content of the play is based on how the German nationalism upset the French soldiers during World War II and that is illustrated through the practice of playing cricket by a college professor, Ajay Roy and his students. The characters of the German and captured French soldiers are well-drawn. Love and humanity are eternal in the hearts of people regardless of race, religion, colour and so the drama presents the love relationship between a German woman, Cozethe and the prisoner Albert. The white bird is an allegorical character. The play consists of twelve scenes and six interludes. Partition and war make the people of a country isolated and hostile towards each other and make them go crazy with murder, but humanity does not die and this stands as the main theme of the play. This play also reveals incidents that are significantly connected to the history of World War II and the dramatist goes for a historiographical detailing as the selective sources are presented through the critical examination of various sources.

The story of the play, *Tamra Patra* revolves around the story of how a tinker named Ramcharan eventually becomes Shahid Mohanlal. Mohanlal is the name of various characters of various professions - some of them are evil political leaders, some are businessmen and some are thieves. The play is divided into thirteen scenes. Parashuram wrote wonderful stories about the business of cheating people in the name of religion.

The one-act plays by Chandan Sengupta in his *Natyasamagra*. *Jol Choubi* (self-trans – *The Water Image*) is only seven pages long. A monologue of a character named Bhavatosh in the play. Through the character, Bhavatosh, the playwright has presented the notions of selfishness, sinfulness and conscience of the people. His other One-Act Plays are – *Iskaban-er-Bibi* (self-trans - *Bibi of Iskaban*), *Surja Uthbe Bole* (self-trans – *The Sun is About to Rise*), *Vote*, *Kortaar Bhoot* (self-trans - *Ghost of the Master*), *Birthday*, *Ekti-Din Ekti-Sopno* (self-trans - *A Day A Dream*), *Rong Chor* (self-trans – *The Color Thief*), *Amrit* (self-trans – *The Nectar*) and *O! Ajker Neelam* (self-trans – *O! Today's Neelam*). Most of these plays are very short consisting of eleven to fifteen pages. Except for a couple of one-act plays (*Iskaban-er-Bibi* - 3 scenes, *Vote* - 4 scenes) no other plays have no divided scene sections.

In the play, *Iskaban-er-Bibi*, the theme deals with the mass uprising against the dictatorship (here, against the character of the queen). The drama has glimpses of Indira Gandhi's declaration of emergency and the riot of nineteen eighty. In the plays, *Surja Uthbe Bole*, the horrors of war are told through the dialogue between Sanjay and Dhritarashtra against the background of battle of Kurukshetra in the Mahabharata. In the play, *Vote* presents the farce towards notions of voting, along with themes of love, hope and desire along with the opportunist activities of political leaders etc. are portrayed. The drama aptly portrays how Paran's parents and their daughter Bashi and her boyfriend Rakhil's hopes are shattered and dashed due to the absence of names in the voter list.

In the play, *Ekti-Din Ekti-Sopno*, a day's dream of the housekeepers (Padma, Dashu, Habur) in the absence of the owner of the house (Mother Saswati and her husband) is revealed spontaneously. The intense desire to become 'Bhadralok Baralok'* to enjoy the life that is elusive to them is beautifully presented through this play. But this desire, that never comes true breaks down like a house of cards - which happened in Padma's life. And also, how the sense of humanity that exists in people is revealed in a favourable environment is shown in the play.

In the play, *Amrit*, it can be seen that the highly educated leftist social worker, Mahi Bhushan dedicated to unite the farmers to protect the rights of exploited farmers. Amiya is a head teacher and social worker. Mahitosh is his source of inspiration. Ramesh is rich and educated and Amiya's ex-lover. After learning the true identity of Mahitosh, he also wants to join Mahitosh's work and through him, he wants to get Amiya back. The passage does not mention any scenes but contains two insights. The sequence has some glimpses of Manik Bandyopadhyay's *Haran Naat Jamai* story.

In the play, *O! Ajker Neelam*, the dramatist brings out the social issue of how we are now selling everything mainly - knowledge, conscience, country's identity etc. to foreigners for our own sake and also in the lust of becoming richer which has been aptly presented for the audience in order for greater understanding.

The prominent novelist Pradeep Acharya has also written two plays - *Neermahal-er Raja* (self-trans – *The King of Neermahal*, pub 1995) and *Bhalobashar Mrityu Nei* (self-trans – *Love has no Death*, pub 1995). The subject of his novel deals with history.

Rabindra Bhattacharya was another notable playwright, actor and director of Tripura is Rabindra Bhattacharya. He composed several full-length and one-act plays. Moreover, he composed many *Betar Natak*, *Patha-Natak* and *Shishu-Natak* (self-trans- *Children drama*). He also wrote many plays on science awareness. His published drama book is *Tin-Ek-e-Tin* (self-trans – *Three-One-Three*). Besides, his notable full-length dramas are - *Shikar* (self-trans – *The Hunt*, pub 1965), *Tule Moole Binash* (*Destruction by raising the root*, pub 1978) (in regional language), *Anyachaalchitra* (self-trans - *The Other Films*, pub 1985), *Jalbandi* (2008, Sahitya Akademi (published in English translation as '*Maroon*'). Besides, he wrote twenty-two monologue plays, eight children's plays, ninety monologue plays and many street plays.

Some of his notable compositions are namely - *Surya Gelo Astachole* (self-trans - *The Sun has Set Down*, pub 1968), *Karl Marx* (1986), *Jiyan-Kathi* (self-trans - *The Heartfelt Words*, pub 1990), *Agnisnaan* (self-trans – *The Bath of Fire*, pub 1992), *Setu* (self-trans – *The Bridge*, pub 1992), *Bilambit Bodhoday* (self-trans- *The Delayed Awakening*, pub 1998), *Bedishar Disha* (self-trans - *The Direction of Bedisha*, pub 1999), *Dahan* (self-trans - *The Burning*, pub 2005), *Kabuliwala* (2011) etc. His one-act plays are - *Khacha* (self-trans - *The Cage*), *Bipanna Bihanga* (self-trans - *The Perilous Bird*), *Kalicharan-er-Karcha* (self-trans - *Kalicharan's Work*) etc. And the Street-plays are *Mrityu-dyut* (self-trans – *The Messenger of Death*), *Aajob Khelar Bisho Cup* (self-trans – *Strange Game! World Cup*), *Thekiya Hika* (self-trans – *Who is That?*), *Uttaran* (self-trans - *Upliftment*) etc. This expanded new horizons to highlight the perspectives in the genre of 'Drama' respectively.

Most of his plays remains in manuscript form. He wrote many plays for acting and have also been acted with success. He received the '*Playwright Chandan Sengupta Memorial Award*' for his outstanding performance.

Nanda Kumar Debbarma has contributed on a special note in these two languages, Bengali and Kokborok. He has also directed dramas on Doordarshan. He composed 13 plays in Bengali and Kokborok. A bilingual playwright from the state of Tripura inspired the coming generations significantly.

Hirendra Sinha stands as a distinctive playwright and theatre producer from Tripura. He wrote many plays for children and also wrote many full-length and solo plays for adults. Some of the notable plays written by him for children are: *Rajar Saaja* (self-trans -*The King's Punishment*), *Pakhir Chhouk* (self-trans – *The Bird's Eye*), *Ek-din Janmadin-e* (self-trans – *One Day, In Birthday*), *Arek Totar Kahini* (self-trans – *Another Story of the Parrot*), and *Sopno Bichaar* (self-trans – *The Dream Judge*), *Ringtone* etc.

A prominent play written by him is *Rajendra Daki-er-Golpo* (self-trans – *The Story of Rajendra Dhaki*). Apart from this, *Sampreeti-O-Tarpor-O-Jeeban* (self-trans – *Harmony and Life Thereafter*) published in 1998 is a prominent play.

Hirendra Sinha's play *Ringtone* is a satirical problem play intended particularly for a young audience, with the intention of expressing the detrimental effects that can have significant impact on a child's life. Important characters like- Nirmal, Raka, Chanchal, and Jojo are part of this play. The characters primarily demonstrate the themes of irresponsibilities and anxiousness in an environment where the lives of children have been ruined by modern amnesties. Therefore, children's and teenagers' minds can be practically connected through these plays. He was the one who experimented with satires in his plays.

Sanjay Kar is a successful actor, theatre director and playwright. He has been involved in drama since his school days. He acquired acting skills, while studying in college, and hence after college life, he went to Kolkata for acting. He got a chance to act with famous dramatist, Jochon Dastidar¹² and gained extensive experience. He gained fame as a prominent actor and theatre director in Khowai's cultural campaign. *Debo-na-Titun* (written by Kamal Roy Chowdhury), *Shaada Payraar Jonne* (written by Chandan Sengupta), *Raktakarabi* (written by Rabindranath Tagore) showed his skills in directing and acting.

After gaining experience in acting and theater direction, he started writing plays from 1996. Little by little, he composed dozens of stage plays, radio plays, and tele plays. However, it was only in 1986 that he wrote a play called *Abalamban* (self-trans – *The Support*). He won the National Award in 2008 as the best science play writer.

In 2009, a collection of three plays named, *Pretachchaya Ebong Onnanyo Natak* (self-trans - *The Shadow of Ghost and other Plays*) was published at the Agartala Book Fair. This collection consists of three plays named *Chena-Achena* (self-trans – *The Known and Unknown*), *Kalbela* (self-trans -*The Time to Come*) and *Pretachchaya* (self-trans – *The Shadow of Ghost*).

The play, *Chena Achena* has shades of true events. An incident involving a police sergeant in Calcutta was widely reported in the media. Although the author has based the play on real events, he has created a wonderful drama. In the play, *Kalbela*, the insurgency and extremism problem in Tripura has been successfully portrayed. The characters like Nishith, Nishith's father, Dhaniram, Bipul, Mangal, Kalpana etc. are the tribal

characters and the rest of the characters like the - Bengali businessman Sachindra, Doctor etc. can be taken as a very natural form of characters.

The play *Pretachchaya* is based on the famous dramatist Henrik Ibsen's play *The Ghost*. But the dramatist has so brilliantly presented the drama against the background of Bengali society, through the characters of Ashapura Devi, Saureen Bhattacharya, Gajendra, Rosy, Aniruddha and Malathi that the play becomes as enjoyable as the original play. The ugly form of luxury in modern life is highlighted through this play. Captain Arindam Sen's excessive self-indulgence, his son Anirudh now suffering from AIDS, who made a name for himself in Europe, especially in Paris, by learning to paint. But his terminal illness was slowly killing his artistry. And his father's shadow was gradually falling on him and he too was stepping on the path of lasciviousness. Rosie is her father's illegitimate child. The intense lust for the illegitimate daughter is shown through the behaviour of the Captain. The evil acts of the society have been portrayed through theatre and performance which was taken from the renowned Western Classical theatre for bringing a state of catharsis in the mind of the audience. Perhaps, Kar tried to reincarnate such method for the upliftment of the society. This was giving a signal to the theatre practitioners that the artistic development was incorporated at a serious manner. Therefore, any work of art in theatre now, was worthy of attention.

Sanjay's two plays are divided into scenes. *Chena Achena* has four scenes. *Kalbela* has Fourteen scenes. The scenario of *Kalbela* is not consistent. But the story of *Pretachchaya* is arranged in three figures, but no division in scenes. Usually, the plays are divided, but *Pretachchaya* is an exceptional play in that genre.

Some other playwrights of Tripura are - Sudhangshu Bikash Saha, written under the pseudonym, *Sri Bikash* a play called – *Bidrohi Sannyasi* (self-trans – *The Rebel Monk*, pub 1987), Ratish Majumdar's *Din Din, Pratinidin* (self-trans - *Day by Day, Every Day*, pub 1987), Tamal Chakraborty's *Amra Manush* (self-trans - *We are Human so*), *Mukosh-er-Antarale: One-Act Play* (self-trans – *Behind the Mask: A One Act Play*), *Shaheed Bir* (self-trans – *The Martyr Brave*), Manju Rani Biswas's, *Diner Bani* (self-trans – *The Voice of the Day*, pub 1995), Prantosh Dutta's drama collection named - *Daini Ke* (self-trans – *The Female Witch*) and Subhashish Chowdhury's *Chotodher Tinti Mojhaer Natak* (self-trans – *The Three Fun Plays by Small Kids*, pub 2007) consists of namely - *Naithokbi*, *Ichche Buror Bagan* (self-trans – *The Garden of the Wilful Fool*) and *Rajar Pala* (self-trans – *The Kings' Care*).

The plays of Prantosh Dutta are objective towards how the superstitions accumulated in our minds which create confusion and misery in social life as portrayed through the play, *Daini Ke*. The main purpose of the play is to create awareness about health. In the second play, *Bachao* (self-trans – *To Save*), it is said to keep the society and environment healthy and beautiful through the symbolic characters of some creepers, trees, birds, insects and people and also the reference of fire, air, water, light, soil etc. are given as idealistic characters. The Chorus is used in this drama like the Greek drama. The play is divided into five episodes without being divided into figures and scenes. The play *Jeen* (self-trans – *The Spirit*) is also a symbolic play who symbolize the anthropomorphic ghosts. Here the various problems of the society are highlighted through ghosts. This drama also does not have numbers and scenes, there are three episodes.

Subhashish Chowdhury being a Playwright and dramatist, wrote three plays for children namely – *Naithokbi* (self-trans – *Naithokbi: The Girl*), *Ichche Buror Bagan* (self-trans – *The Garden of the Wilful Fool*) and *Rajar Pala* (self-trans – *The Kings' Care*). They are based on Tripuri folklore.

The story of the play, *Naithokbi* has some similarities with the story of 'Cinderella. Again, there are certain similarities of 'Arjuna-Chitrangada' story of Mahabharata is noticeable. The name Naithokbi is associated with being Manipuri. Characters like Naithokbi (the heroine of the play, the little girl), Sadrai, Raja, Rani, Rajputra, Satyaram, Malabya Singh etc. have been appropriate for the drama. The play is presented in six scenes. All the three songs of the play are perfectly matched.

In *Ichche Buror Bagan*, the systematic errors in the education of the children have been highlighted. The story is allegorical and based on fairy tales. The play is divided into three scenes. The play features Grandfather, ten grandchildren and the King of the Golden Hills, ministers and people, and several other child characters. This play also starts with song. Apart from this, the play is suitable for children and the songs are perfect for children's attraction. The dramatist's achievement in dialogue writing is also commendable.

Subhashish Chowdhury's *Rajar Pala* is an allegorical play. One is a flower-Parijat i.e. The King, Champak, Rose, Kanchan, Padma, Palash etc. are Princes. Besides, there are Kathak Thakur, Purut Thakur, dancer, poet and child characters like - Neelu, Sabu, Padu, Putli, Gansha etc. The main theme of the play is taken from Rabindranath Tagore's song 'We are all Kings, during the reign of King' and this play has no division in scenes. The children get attracted towards the play as there are beautiful songs and occasional lyrical dialogues. These are employed by Subhashish Chowdhury for the composition of Children's play.

V. Conclusion

Drama and Theatre in Tripura had finally emerged as a collective social entertainment from a mode of private entertainment which marked the establishment and initiation of democratic artistic heritage in the state. Since 1960, theatre in Tripura has evolved into a fully-fledged cultural movement, with multiple organisations rising ahead to participate into account festivals and events sponsored by government agencies of states and organisations. Lastly, it also gives a distilled summation and idea about the post-independence era to be claimed as the 'Artistic-Myriad' as multiple styles of drama and plays have evolved with rich expression that expands the horizon to the next level. This has also taken forward the name and glory of the Royal legacy, since the inception of folk-theatre in the late seventeenth century.

Through a variety of artistic composing approaches, the era celebrates diversity by providing complex investigations of social issues, philosophical questions, and the human experience that merges the genre of drama with rich tapestry.

NOTES:

1. Collection or compendium of theatrical texts.
2. A devotional hymn or chant in a way to show respect to deities and spiritual figures.
3. A Hunter or a person from Kirat Tribe.
4. A Kokborok term which means Priest.
5. A Vedic ritual of offerings accompanied by the chanting of Vedic Mantras made to please deities invoked via. Fire.
6. A ritual in Hinduism offering done to a consecrated fire to purify surrounding and invoke deities.
7. Human sacrifice for a religious purpose to a deity.
8. The viewing-place where the spectators sat and watch the performance.
9. A theatrical technique of acting only through gesture, expression and movement without words.
10. a type of a sub-chapter/sub-plot in the scene of a play. This term is used in Bengali Theatre studies.
11. One form of sub-plot in the scene of a play. This term is used in Bengali Theatre studies.
12. A renowned Bengali actor, especially in Bengali group theatre.

Bibliography/ References (In English and Bengali)

- [1]. Haldar, Shakti, Introduction. *Tripurar Natya Andoloner Dhara*, ed. Shakti Haldar. Kolkata: Debkumar Basu, 2002, pp. 20-21.
- [2]. Singha, Dr. Sisir Kumar, *Tripurar Bangla Sahityer Sampoorna Itihaash*, Akshar Publications, 2018, Print.
- [3]. Datta, Ramaprasad, *Nabamatya Andolone Tripurar Lokashilpi Sansad*. Tripurar Natya Andoloner Dhara, ed. Shakti Haldar. Kolkata: Debkumar Basu, 2002, pp. 48-53.
- [4]. Datta, Ramaprasad, *Shadhinottar Juge Tripurar Natya Andolan*. Tripura Theatre. Vol-2, No.1, 2008, pp. 33-41.
- [5]. Laskar, Tirthankar. "The Voyage of Theatre to Drama and the Intermingling of Transitional and Experimental Phases in Tripura's Pre-Independence Drama Literature from 1900-1950." *Literary Druid*, vol. 6, no. 1, Jan. 2024, www.literarydruid.com. E-ISSN: 2582-4155, <http://literarydruid.com/volume-6-issue-1-january-2024.html>
- [6]. Laskar, Tirthankar. "'Review' as a New and Active Horizon in the Discipline of Literature: Deciphering the Reader-Investigator-Researcher Tactics." *Langlit*, vol. 10, no. 3, p. 206, ISSN 2349-5189, <https://langlit.org/volume-10-issue-3/>
- [7]. Reang, Manik Lal. "Introduction." *Analysis of the Rajmala or Chronicles of Tripura*, by James Long, Tripura State Tribal Cultural Research Institute and Museum, 2008, pp. v-vii. Print.
- [8]. Pillai, G. Shankara, "Traditional Idiom and Modern Theatre", *Sangeet Natak Quarterly Journal*, July-December, 1985, pp.43.