

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

: I N T R O D U C T I O N :THE SURVEY OF THE PLAYS OF NOEL COWARD AND P.K. ATRE

I. I Though Noel Coward (1899-1973) is not listed amongst the greatest dramatists like G.B. Shaw, Somerset Maugham, John Galsworthy and T.S. Eliot of the 20th Century, he certainly acquires a unique place as a playwright of comedies. When Noel was eleven years old, he started singing a good deal and entertained young and old ladies in trains and homes. It was 1910 when Noel was engaged as an actor in Miss Lila Field's all children production of the 'Gold Fish'. This gave Noel a chance to establish as a child actor and he played many memorable parts in various plays during this period. At the very end of 1918, Noel was out of work and there was no immediate sign of anything on offer. At this time he wrote his first play 'The Last Trick', a melodrama about revenge in four acts which he had written within a week. He took this play to one impresario Mr. Gilbert Miller who had cast him in 'The Saving Grace' a year earlier. Miller liked the play very much, recognised in the nineteen-year-old Coward a 'man of many talents', over-sure of himself but a very hard worker. He became successful as a playwright when he produced "The Young Idea", a sub-Shavian play, a comedy in three acts about a couple of precocious children who

reunite their estranged parents. This comedy was primarily inspired by Shaw's 'You Can Never Tell'. Noel Coward himself writes:

"Dolly and Phillip being my original prototypes for Sholto and Gerda. I felt rather guilty of plagiarism, and when the play was finished, J.E. Verdenne kindly sent it to Shaw, to find out whether or not he had any objection....., the letter of Shaw to me showed every indication of becoming a good playwright, providing that I never again in my life read another word that he, Shaw, had ever written. 1."

This play established Coward as a best comedy writer because this comedy hit the London public since the 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. Then Coward wrote a series of plays, most of them comedies, musical comedies and occasionally a serious play. He ended his dramatic career with a successful musical comedy "Quadrille". To continue an account of his life beyond this point seems unnecessary.

Noel Coward wrote his plays during the early decades of 20th Century. He was mostly responsible for the revival of the comedy of Manners, a kind of comedy practised by the Restoration dramatists like Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve. Coward is a master of dialogue, clever, ingenious, brilliant and lastly revealing the finer shades of character. There are only two or three episodes present in his plays. The dialogue is the connecting link in the whole play. The comic

and spirit, the whole drift of the play are conveyed to us by means of dialogue. All the distinction between one character and another is hit off in their dialogue. He makes dialogue the main factor in his comedy, and by it, and not by action, is sustained the interest of the play. W.B. Hudson writes :

"He went on to brittle comedies about trivial leisured people, but they are written with such verve and create so cleverly the illusion of people talking in the clipped style then fashionable and behaving in the conventionally unconventional manner then in vogue that he became immensely popular". 2.

Coward portrays the fashionable middle-class society of his day in his plays. He tries to attempt a picture of the world around him especially in its comic aspects. He describes the life in London, Paris and even New York in his plays. He portrays London with its popular landmarks and distinct character springs to life before us. There is a chance to know how people dressed, where they gathered, what games they played and how, generally, they enjoyed themselves. He portrays man woman relations with all its intricacies and complexes in his play.

Coward is known for his wit and, impertinence, and audacity. His plays are notable for the brilliance of their biting satire and sophisticated wit. At the same time he is capable to move and rouse tender sentiments. Allardyce

Nicoll writes :

" The young generation found its light hearted exponent in Noel Coward, with his wit, and audacity. Starting, like Maugham, with realistic dramas such as 'the Vortex' and 'The Rat Trap', and occasionally turning to serious themes, his true metier obviously lies in the writing of easy, dallying, often inconsequential dialogue" 3.

He achieved fame with his witty and satiric grasp of the period between the two World Wars. His first success was his play 'The Young Idea' in 1922. It is a 'Comedy of Youth'. Here the tone is deliberately, self-consciously modern, and the theme one which was to become obsessive in the 1920s, the intricate and delicate relations between generations. The play is about a couple George and Cicely. But Cicely is having an affair with a friend of George. George does not mind this affair as she is discreet. George has two teenage children by previous marriage with advanced ideas of their own. The children plan to dispose of Cicely and bring their parents together again. The Children help Cicely to run with Roddy. Finally the children succeed in bringing their parents together though there is an American suitor for their mother. The play is remarkably witty and humorous. Though there ^{is} ~~are~~ certain strain of riddling and paradoxical humour, the play succeeds in entertaining the audience through its comic scenes.

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Marjorie Boutton says :

" In comedy we see them (the people) make fools of themselves because of their reactions to the comic situations, destiny in comedy brings out the humorous side of character. We see the kindly and affectionate treatment of human fallibility in Noel Coward's 'The Young Idea'. 4.

'The Vortex' was written in 19 23 and it established Noel Coward as a playwright and as an actor. The plot of the play is more or less traditional. The first act starts with exposition of heroines' love-affair with a young man. Two friends of heroine Helen and Pawnie discuss in her absence how the heroine Florence, a married woman loves a young man called Tom Verayan. This ^{young} man is enough to be her son and in fact exactly the same age as her son. But suddenly there is the arrival of Florence's son Nicky from Paris. He has come with the shocking news that he is engaged and that the girl Bunty will be arriving soon. When Florence's lover Tom and Nicky's lover Bunty arrive, they found that they were childhood friends and Nicky falls prey to the jealousy. The second act consists of a series of rows arising from the seeds of discord planted in the first act. Nicky has a brief quarrel with Helen which reveals that he takes drugs. Then Florence quarrels with Tom. Nicky quarrels with Florence about Bunty, having already quarreled with Bunty at the end of the previous act. As a result of all this Bunty breaks off her engagement

with Nicky. Then there is sudden shock when Nicky and Florence find Buntie and Tom in each others arms. In the third act all the loose ends are tied dramatically. Tom and Buntie leave the stage and there is the conflict between the mother Florence and the son Nicky. Nicky tries to bring Florence into her senses. He shows her her shallowness of character and emptiness of her thought. Florence also understands that she should help Nicky in time or he may fall the victim to the drugs. Thus they both know that they must help each other before it is too late. Therefore they promise each other that she should give up her lovers and he his drugs. On this satisfying moral note the curtain falls. John Russell Taylor writes about this play:

" ... its craftsmanship is beyond reproach, and the dialogue is taut and space and of an admirable quality. It is a-shimmer with wit of the best theatrical kind - the non-literary sort that has to be spoken in the situation, but otherwise is in no doubt a thoroughly respectable, workmanlike piece of well-made theatre." 5.

Coward tried to design this play as a moral tract of highest order and with his witty dialogues and clever situations he succeeds in making this serious play comic one.

'Hay Fever' was written in 1925. It is a hilarious comedy of manners and characters. It is a domestic comedy. The characters in it decide for a family entertain for the week-end. In this comedy every character brings a lover with

him to the week-end. The father David Bliss brings Myra Arundel, a young lady; the mother Judith Bliss, an actress who still believes she is very young, brings Sandy Tyrell, a promising young man; the son Simon brings Jacky Coryton and the daughter Sorel brings Richard Greatham. Then several scenes take place where the lovers find that their lovers do not love them faithfully. The lovers get involved with some other members of the family. But again in the end all the interlopers are put to flight while the family closes in on itself, shut in its private world. The mother Judith understands her duty to her husband, her role as a wife to him. Thus it is a sex-comedy and in this world socially anything goes. This is Coward's drawing room comedy and the drawing room acts as a kind of nursery where overgrown children can take refuge, safe from the world. This play is one of the great light comedies of this century. There is remarkably little action and it is quite extraordinarily well constructed. Sheridan Morley writes :

'Hay Fever' is a comedy of bad manners which starts with the arrival of four guests, invited independently by different members of the Bliss family for a week-end at a country house near Maidenhead. Then the visitors are alternately ignored, embraced, embarrassed, humiliated and ultimately abandoned to slink away by themselves during a blazing family row" 6.

'Easy Virtue' is really Coward's attempt to write a well-made play. It is a serious social drama. It is about

the plight of a mysterious woman Larita Whittaker. This woman has the past in the stuffy upper middle class country home of her second husband's family. Noel Coward, in his introduction to this play writes :

"Women with pasts today receive far more enthusiastic social recognition than women without pasts. The narrow-mindedness, the moral righteousness, and the over-rigid social codes have disappeared, but with them has gone much that was graceful, well behaved, and endearing. It was in a mood of nostalgic regret at the decline of such conventions that I wrote 'Easy Virtue'[#] 7.

"Bitter Sweet", written in 1929, is a musical light comedy. The heroine Sarah starts the operetta as a dowager Marchioness in London and then in a flashback to the Vienna of 1880, drops fifty years to become the tragic romantic heroine who loves her lover in a duel. Noel Coward in his introduction to this play writes :

' a musical that gave me more complete satisfaction than anything else I had yet written. Not especially on account of its dialogue, or its lyrics or its music, but as a whole." 8.

'Private Lives' written in 1930, is a humorous comedy. It is about a couple Elyet and Amanda who have divorced because they cannot live with each other, get together again (though both remarried) because they cannot live without each other, then nearly split up again only to decide in the end that their

world of private fantasy, whatever its drawbacks, is still infinitely more satisfactory than any substitute. The play is reasonably well-constructed dialogue for Elyot and Amanda. There is a well-written love scene in Act one, and a certain amount of sex psychology underlying the quarrel scenes in Act Two between Elyot and Amanda and another couple Sibyl and Victor. There is no further plot and no further action after Act one with the exception of the rough and tumble fight between Amanda and Elyot and then they resolve not to marry themselves again. In the third act the chief protagonists finally resolve to separate as they think their world of union would split their individual ideas.

'Cavaleade' written in 1931, is Coward's patriotic play. The play is based on two wars: The Boer War and the First World War. It is the story of how a family sacrifices their son to the nation. It is the story of Jane Marryot and her husband Robert and their parlourmaid Ellen and her husband Bridges. Both Robert and Bridges go to the War to save their nation leaving behind their sad wives. There is Joe, the son of Robert and Fanny, the daughter of Bridges. After the War, Bridges does not return, i.e. dies while Robert safely returns. Fanny becomes a dancer while Joe becomes a soldier. Again the War breaks out and Joe goes to the war. When Ellen comes to Jane Marryot with a proposal of marriage of her daughter Fanny to Joe, Jane tries to refuse the proposal as she knows that Joe will never return. The same happens as a telegram informs them about Joe's death. In this musical

patriotic play, Coward paints the emotional minds of women during the war time. Sheridan Morley writes about this play:

" The play was dedicated not to pure patriotism but to the wider concept of Duty that runs through most of Noel's work: duty not only to the country but to family, friends, talent, circumstances, ideals - a duty, in fact to behave correctly in all situations, a duty that Coward has always seen as a condition of life itself" 9.

Design for Living, written in 1932, is a serious play. It is also a drawing room comedy though the scenes shift from one city to another. It is about friends Leo, Otto and Gilda, living a very comfortable life together. The two men and this woman manage to live together very well but at last suspicion enters into the mind of Otto and he breaks from them. Then the scene shifts from London to Paris in Leo's flat. Here Leo and Gilda after nearly two years of life find that they miss Otto's company but unexpectedly Gilda breaks from Leo and vanishes from Leo. Then Leo and Otto unexpectedly meet and they start search for Gilda and for this they go to New York. In New York Gilda is married to their old friend Earnest. But when Leo and Otto join her, she breaks away from Earnest. The friends join hands and the curtain falls. Thus Coward by an elaborate process of trial and error, breakings-up and regroupings, joins the friends and that really their lives are satisfactory only when the three of them are together in their own cosy little world. Noel Coward writes:

in his introduction to this play :

" This glib, over-articulated and amoral creatures force their lives into fantastic shapes and problems because they cannot help themselves. Impelled chiefly by the impact of their personalities each upon the other, they are like moths in a pool of light, unable to tolerate the lonely outer darkness and equally unable to share the light without colliding constantly and bruising one another's wings. The end of the play is equivocal. The three of them after various partings and reunions and partings again, after torturing and loving and hating one another are left together as the curtain falls, laughing ".10.

'Present Laughter' Written in 1939, is a light comedy based on an actor's life. This actor is Garry Essendine who is forty but a very popular one, especially among ladies. Garry belongs to a small circle of people like Morris, Henry, Monica and his own wife Liz. These five people closely woven together by affection and work and intimate knowledge of each other. All these four people look after him. But after some years his wife gets separated from him as he is fully engaged in theatrical activities. During these theatrical activities, two women ^o came into his life who ^(tried) ~~try~~ to give comfort as well as trouble to him. The first woman who comes in his life is Daphne, an actress who is attracted towards Garry. She pretends that she has forgotten her key and takes shelter in

one of Garry's spare-rooms. Garry tries to go away from her but she falls in love with him. At this time another man troubles Garry. He is a playwright Ronald. He loves Garry, i.e., a kind of hero-worshipping. This man troubles Garry with his bad play, but Garry's wife Liz returns and gives him some comfort. Again another woman comes into Garry's life. She is his friend Henry's wife Joanna. She also pretends that she has forgotten her keys. She tells him that she has fallen in love with him. That she has overwhelmed seeing his great performances on the stage. Garry is so disturbed that he accepts her love.

But when Garry's day of travel to Africa comes, he finds that both Daphne and Joanna want to follow him to Africa. Now he finds himself in dilemma. But he finally joins hands with his wife Liz in order to save himself from those women. But all this i.e. a number of girls who just wander in and out and trouble Garry; The whole thing being stage-managed by his separated wife Liz. Thus Garry goes back to his wife Liz. Thus the play is a comic masterpiece of the lighter sort with wit and cleverness at its height. J.R. Taylor writes:

"Coward's spectrum of humanity may be limited, it may confine itself to a very small section of society in a very small range of emotional engagements, but within that range he is a complete master." 11.

"Blithe Spirit" written in 1941, is a light comedy. This play is yet another triangle: This time a man with two wives

one alive and one dead but persistently present as a ghost to complicate things. The man is Charles whose first wife Elvira is dead. It seems that Elvira was domineering type of woman and always tried to keep Charles under her thumb. Now Charles is living with his second wife Ruth happily, though Ruth is somewhat domineering type of woman. Then one day they do an experiment with the help of one Madame Arcati, a hypnotizer. This old woman succeeds in bringing back Elvira in their house in the form of ghost and Charles gets very much¹ enchanted at her ghostly figure. Elvira, the ghost, tries to dominate both Charles and Ruth. Ruth is very much troubled seeing the mad man Charles. Elvira is so attached to Charles, she decides to murder Charles so that they could meet in heaven. But she really murders Ruth and in this way there are now two ghosts in the house, those of Elvira and Ruth. Later, Madam Arcati succeeds in freeing Charles⁵ from the clutches of those ghosts of his wives. In this play Coward shows that women are always domineering and they like to dominate the man even after their death. All this Coward shows in a comic way and with his witty and brilliant dialogues. However extravagant the behaviour of his characters, they do live as people and their lives go on behind and under and around what they are saying.

" We Were Dancing", written in 1942, is a comedy in two scenes. This is a light episode. Coward playfully describes the love scenes and quarrels between the characters. At the beginning of the first scene Eva, a young woman and George,

a young man stealthily come out of their dance party, and decide to enjoy love and sex on a beach. Though Eva is married to Major Blake, she keeps illicit relations with George. All this Coward shows in a free way and it seems that it is a routine practice among English women to have another partner than their own husbands. This is confirmed when the heroine of the play Louise becomes ready to give company to one unknown Karl Sandys. She and Karl fall in love and while her husband Hubert and his sister Clara persuade her not to go with Karl, she determines to go with Karl to Australia. Hubert and Clara try to show her that such relationship with Karl is sinful. But inspite of their advice, she becomes ready to go to Australia with Karl. Coward's play, though musical in appearance, he satires English women for their changeability and frailty.

Coward's The Happy Breed, Pacific 1860, Relative Values, Quadrille, Nude with Violin and Waiting in the Wings are all light musical comedies and are known for their brilliant wit and brilliant dialogues.

I.II

THE DECLINE OF THE MARATHI THEATRE

The period from 1920 to 1945 was devoid of any noteworthy changes in life and literature in Maharashtra. At best, there were some expansions. Educational programmes included the lower classes and women, on a larger scale. Cities began to be industrialized. Social reforms were identified with the clashes between castes. The joint family system received a blow. Journalism became popular. Art was viewed as a means of entertainment and instruction which could be just propaganda. Poetry was popularized by its public recitals. The college girl became the focus of poetry and fiction. A young man's love for a girl was often mixed with his love for the cause of country, and both being superficial, a happy solution was easy to manipulate. Most of the literary works in this period can be explained in terms of its milieu and age as there were hardly any great talent - and in the field of Drama there was none.

All the drama companies were in financial difficulties. They could not attract new talented actors nor could they get dramatists of worth to give them their new plays. The only actors of some distinction who made their career during this period were Chintamanrao Kolhatkar and Nana Pathak. Attempts were made by non-professionals to form theatrical troupes. They were supported by educated middle class men and women. In 1932, e.g., there was an amateur group called the Radio Stars which lasted for a year. In 1933, another troupe called the 'Natyamanvantar' tried to present modern European realistic plays

of ideas. It opened with S.V. Vartak's " The School for Blinds" in 1933. This play presents a middle-class ethical problem unfolding the past of its characters but ultimately provides a sentimental compromise.

Since drama had become only a form of entertainment, it did not exploit the special advantages of the theatrical art. The audience sought another entertainment at this time, which was not worse than drama but cheaper. It was the film. The Marathi films gave everything that the Marathi drama gave : spectacular settings, rich costumes and songs. But this worsened the already deteriorating condition of the Marathi Theatre. During the period of 1933-40, the theatre activities were deteriorating while on other side the films were attracting audience with their artificial love-affairs. Thus along with films, the factors like the change in taste, the change in social customs and traditions, invaded the Marathi Theatre. It was during such deteriorating condition of the Marathi Theatre, ^{that} P.K. Atre wrote his plays and gave a new birth to the Marathi Theatre.

P.K. Atre was born in 1898. He took his early education in Saswad, his birth place in Maharashtra. Then he took his education in English in Bhawe School in Pune. During these school days, he wrote two plays " Guru Dakshina" and 'VirVachan' for annual social gathering. He also acted in the play 'Othello'. He started his dramatic career with 'Sastaang Namaskar' (The Prostrate Obeissance) and it was staged in 1933 by the Balmohan Natak Mandali. He also wrote a large number of plays and

excellent verse parodies of the pseudo-romantic poetry of the 20's. He was also a successful journalist, public orator and politician. He wrote a few serious plays such as Gharabahr (Out of the Home) in 1934 and Udyacha Sansar (The Family Life of Tomorrow) in 1935. But it was not in his nature to be serious. Soon he gave up writing serious plays. He realized that humour was his forte and wrote many farcical comedies. Atre styled himself a disciple of Ram Ganesh Gadkari a great Marathi dramatist. Puns, exaggeration and biting sarcasm are the three main sources of his humour. Sometimes he sacrificed characterization, the theme and even logical consistency for the sake of humour. Atre taught the middle class to laugh, to enjoy and to forget their petty concerns. He helped the Marathi drama profession to survive.

"Sastaang Namaskar" written in 1933, is the first play of P.K. Atre. This is a farcical comedy and Atre parodies the capriciousness and whimsicality in the characters. Atre's intention behind writing this play seems merely the entertainment for three hours. He exposes some social evils through his biting sarcasm and witty dialogues. In this play he has broken the tradition of telling a story through the characters. Instead he uses a slight plot and round which he sows his brilliant witty dialogues. Rao Bahadur is mad about prostrate obeissance (Sastaang Namaskar). He supposes that he can achieve everything by merely doing the exercise of prostrate obeissance. While his son Sidheshwar is made after fortune-telling. His daughter Shobhana is mad after poetry and



desperately tries to write poetry at every moment. Atre parodies the capriciousness and whimsicality of these characters. This is really a playful comedy and it keeps the audience laughing throughout the play.

After the successful comedy 'Sastaang Namaskar' Atre wrote a serious play 'Gharabaher' (Out of Home) in 1934. It is a strange thing that after a comic play, he wrote a serious play. But Atre had the habit of trying new areas and so he wrote a serious play. It is the story of a father who is too much disciplined and because of his over-discipline, his children become over dependent, feeble and weak. Also this father is lechrously lusty and tries to rape his daughter-in-law Nirmala. The son is helpless and can't protect his wife. So Nirmala gives up her home. The feebleness of her husband forces her to leave her home. Then in the outside world she is more exposed to social evils, she struggles hard to survive but in vain. At last her husband saves her from disgrace. Dr. S.S.Bhosale writes:

" In 'Gharabaher', through the character of Nirmala, Atre presented the social problem pertaining to a Hindu Woman in the Hindu social-system." [Transl.] 12

('घराबाहेर' मध्ये निर्मलेच्या रूपाने, अत्र्यांनी हिंदू समाजव्यवस्थेतील हिंदू स्त्रीच्या जीवनाशी निगडित एक सामाजिक समस्या मांडली आहे.)

In this light, this play is a serious and throws light on this problem. This is not the story of one Indian Woman. It is the plight of all Indian Women who suffer from this social evil. The world around Nirmala is that of lusty and corrupt men, but Nirmala faces all of them, and as she is on the verge of destruction, her husband saves her. The Indian woman is safe in her husband's home, if he is a strong and devoted husband.

In 1935, Atre wrote a comedy called "Bhramaacha Bhopala". It is a play about secret love-affairs, secrets, disguises and mysteries. It is a beautiful farce in four acts. It is the story of a landlord Kacheshwar. He always fancies that he suffers from various diseases. So he always takes different kinds of medicines like tablets, pie, ashes, aurvedic medicines etc.. Vidya, one of his two daughters is over studious and always loves to study hard. Kacheshwar is over-suspicious and keeps his daughters locked inside his house in order to save them from the young men. He does not permit young men to enter into his house. But the doctor, who is not really a doctor, and whom he consults actually loves Vidya. Another man who is disguised as a warder of that house loves the younger daughter. Later one landlord called 'The Jahagirdar of Japhrabad' visits their house. He comes with the proposal of marriage. He wants to marry Vidya. But the lovers create so many problems for the landlord that he runs away from them. And the lovers get United happily. Thus the play, though having a complicated plot, entertains the audience and at the same time exposes the failings and faults of the society.

After 'Bhramancha Bhopala', Atre wrote 'Udyacha Sansar' in 1936. It is a serious play, a real life story. The hero is Vishram who is a barrister. He has two children Shekhar and Shaila. His wife's name is Karuna. Then Vishram becomes addicted, Shekhar loves one girl called ^{Nayana} ~~Nayana~~ while Shaila loves a young man called Ulhas. But the tragedy strikes the family when Shekhar and Nayana find that they are brother and sister. Nayana is really Vishram's daughter. The lovers do not bear this and Shekhar, like his father, becomes addicted. Then it is found that Shaila is pregnant from Ulhas and Ulhas refuses to marry her. In all these tragic incidents Karuna tries to comfort all of them but she also commits suicide when the police come to seize her house. Thus it is a simple tale of a literate and cultured family and ^a tragedy of a woman who is helpless beyond anything. It is a tragedy of fate.

✓ "Lagnachi Bedi" written in 1936, is a fine comedy. It is a humorous comedy and it exposes, at the same time, the evils of marriage system in India. It is the story of a doctor Kanchan and his wife Yamini. But the doctor is after another woman Rashmi. Rashmi is a very beautiful woman and the doctor is after her in order to quench his sex, his lusty feelings. The other men are Timir and Parag who are also lecherously lusty and are after sex. The another man in this play Gokarn has married five times. He likes reading sex magazines. Thus the world of men in this play is dirty and lusty. These men do not believe in family relations, etiquettes and manners. But the beautiful girl Rashmi, who is playful and loving, bring all these men in to their senses and ^{teaches} ~~teaches~~ them a lesson.

D.R. Gomkale writes:

"Rashmi taught a lesson to the so called reputed in the Society and instructed them. When she enters on the stage, we see her as a woman who embraces any man and then suddenly lets him down such is Rashmi, a very playful, fickle and roving. She teaches the morality concerning marital happiness to the respected and reputed of the society" [Transl] 13.

(तिने समाजातील प्रतिष्ठावर्तनाच्या डोब्यात अंजन घातले व तत्वबोध केला. नाटकात प्रवेश केल्यापासून वाटेल त्या पुरुषाच्या गळ्यात पडणारी दूस-याच क्षणी त्याला तोंडघशी पाडणारी अशी ती अवस्थ, उनाड आहे. तिने वैवाहिक सुखप्राप्तीच्या तत्वबोध या नाटकात प्रतिष्ठावर्तना दिला आहे.)

Thus this play deals with the problems concerning the marriage system.

"Vandemataram" written in 1930, is Atre's serious play and it throws light on the political and social conditions prevailing during 1930-35 in Maharashtra. It is the story of many characters who form the ministry only for the sake of their self-development and not for the prosperity of nation. Though the play's theme is philosophical, and political, Atre had tried to make it attractive and dramatic.

'Paracha Kavala' written in 1938, is a comedy based on extreme jealousy of man. It also describes the persons who

take delight in scandals and try to tarnish the reputation of others. It is the story of ^a man called Kalyan who is a simple and faithful man. He passes the solicitor's examination and in his happiness he invites his friends for a party in his house. But the very friends are jealous about his reputation and they spread a false rumour about the illicit relations between Kalyan and Kanta. But the truth comes on the surface at last and the people come to know about the pure character of Kalyan. In this play Atre has tried to expose the persons who take delight in tarnishing other people's reputation. Atre has shown that this habit of spreading false rumours is an abnormal one and it does great damage to the society. The world described in this play is the real world of Bombay, full of scandals, rumours and evils and jealousy. The innocent people become the victims of such scandals and rumours and they suffer a lot.

'Mee Ubha Ahe' written in 1939, is a comedy. This comedy exposes the municipal administration which is corrupt and inactive in every city in India. It is a political satire on MLAs and councillors and members of Jilha Parishad. There is one selfish Govardhan who only looks after himself. He decides to fight an election to the Municipality. His aim is not to work for the society but to get huge money. He tries to get the ticket from the Congress party but he fails to get it. Then he declares his name by establishing another party. His ^{rival} opposite candidate is his own wife's brother Pramod. Pramod defeats him in this election. Though Govardhan distributes a lot of money in his constituency, he is defeated. The characters in this play are mass characters. There are rumours, accusations,

counter-accusations, corruption which is exposed by Atre through his biting sarcasm, paradox, exaggeration, and parody. This is a great ^a force and throughout play Atre is succeeded in keeping the audience laughing.

✓ 'Jag Kai Mhanel' written in 1946, is a serious play about the world of women. The central character in this play is ^a woman called Ulka. She is a revolutionary and patriotic one. She also believes in self-freedom. She loves another revolutionary Diwakar. But Diwakar is not a true revolutionary. He tries to force Ulka to remain in the house, while Ulka wants to work in a play. At last Ulka decided ^s to leave the house. The play is an effort to portray a picture of a woman who loves freedom and hates slavery. Ulka is shown as a revolutionary minded woman who gives up her home and even makes company with another man. She is a daring woman who kicks the slavery of her husband and is ready to remarry again. It is also the portrait of a beastly man who makes a woman helpless. The world described in this play is modern and not orthodox and this world challenges the injustices of the orthodox world.

✗ 'Paanigrahan' written in 1946, is a play about lovers, love and money. It is the story of a young girl Prabhat who loves a poet Chandol. But the Aunty is after the money of ^{one} ~~one~~ Shri Ghodake and she opposes the love of Prabhat to ^a Chandol. She plans to marry Prabhat to Ghodake and for this she tries

to spread the rumour that Chandol has relations with a widow. Ghodke is married but he likes to marry Prabhat as she is very young and beautiful. But at last the Uncle saves Prabhat. He exposes Aunty and all her plans. Though the theme of the play is "money or love", Atre has tried to expose the social hypocrisy, falsehood, and corruption in the family affairs. It is a serious comedy and Atre depicts faithful and loyal characters as well as unfaithful and lusty and greedy characters. His characters are all real life characters and they are lively and the audience can not forget the characters of Mavashi, Kaka and Ghodake in this play.

'Kavadi Chumbak' written in 1955, is an adopted version of Mollier's play 'The Miser'. The subject of this play is miserliness or greed of money. This is a farce and though it is adopted one, Atre is successful in making this play an excellent farcical comedy. It is a free adoption of the original play. The character Pampushet is a miser. Though he is very rich, he is greedy and he is always after money. He has saved a lot of money and never spends a ⁹single coin. He has two children Gulab and Chandan. Gulab loves the servant Keshar. Chandan loves a poor girl Kasturi. Kasturi's mother is bed-ridden and Chandan wants to help her but wherefrom he can bring money. Chandan and Gulab go to Pampushet to declare their marriage but they are surprised when they find that Pampushet himself plans to marry Kasturi because he gets a lot of money as dowry. Pampushet also plans to marry his daughter Gulab to one old man Jagushet because Jagushet does not demand dowry.

from him. At last the lovers steal the hidden bag of money of Pampushet and make him give consent for their own marriages. Atre describes the character of Pampushet very excellently and truly.

"To Mee Navech" a theatrical masterpiece, written in 1962, is a serious play about a man who marries many times and deceives the women as well as the whole society. It is the tragedy of many women who become the victims of this shrewd man called Lakhoba Lokhande. He is a very intelligent and clever man. He is the arch-villain and even deceives the public prosecutor and makes judges think about him. The play deals with the social evils like lust, greed and dowry. Atre's other plays, worth to mention are 'Buva Tethe Baaya', a comedy exposes the false swamis and their false world, 'Dr. Lagu', a serious play of a corrupt politician; and his last plays are 'Mee Mantri Zhalo' and 'Pritisangam', former a comedy about politicians and their corrupt world and later a mythological play based on the famous legend about Sakhu and her devotion to Lord Krishna.

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