

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In the introductory chapter, the attempt is made to review all the plays of P.K. Atre and Noel Coward. In the beginning the brief summaries of nearly all plays of Noel Coward are produced with critical comments on them. This survey of plays of Noel Coward is taken against the background of dramatic art in the 20th century. Then follows the history of Marathi Theatre and its decline in the early two decades of the 20th century. Then how Atre began his dramatic career is traced and examined and then the attempt is made to produce the brief summaries of all the plays of P.K. Atre. This comparison of the historical background of these two dramatists helps us in analysing their comic vision.

In the second chapter two plays of P.K. Atre and Noel Coward i.e., Sastaang Namaskar and The Vortex are analysed comparatively in order to find out similarities and dissimilarities in their comic vision. In this type of comparison and contrast, attempt has been made to find the elements which are common in them regarding humour and comic vision. It is found that both Atre and Coward share many elements of comedy particularly when they adopt the technique of dialogue writing and characterization.

In the third chapter another two plays of P.K. Atre and Noel Coward i.e. Lagnachi Bedi and Hay Fever are analysed comparatively, in order to find out similar and dissimilar dimensions of the comic vision of these two dramatists.

In the light of this comparison it is found that the two dramatists P.K. Atre and Noel Coward are popular playwrights. The English tradition of Theatre is basically domestic and drawing room tradition. Drawing room has been the dominant mode

of English Theatre. Even Ibsen and Shaw used these conventions. But they pointed the environment beyond the drawing room or beyond the domestic and brought in social realism. Domestic comedy in that action is presented and assumed, so here the sense of time is continued. Historical continuity is there.

There is also a tradition of plays of wider social concerns. The relevant social problems became necessary for treatment in these plays. This extension of scope of dramatists vision makes him deal with other aspects of life - political, moral and philosophical. This concept of socially relevant play later on developed into a concept of committed play.

But the audience basically remained middle class audience. Ibsen and Shaw were aware of this audience but they never lost touch with their own ideology. One can, of course, question the genuineness of this commitment or its degree in these authors. In this sense Shaw might appear to be more conventional than Ibsen. The new writing has always to draw on the style, methods and attitudes of these authors. However, English middle class has always retained its conservative nature. It is happy with naturalistic, domestic Theatre. That is why avant-garde did not find fertile soil in English audience to take roots. It only remained continental phenomenon. In the period of social turbulence during twenties and forties, there is no significant dramatic work that came out of the English Theatre. This was essentially because of the conservative middle class dominance in the British Theatre. Avant-garde was confined to the fiction.

That is why Noel Coward remained thoroughly middle class in nature. He was entrenched in the ideology of his middle class. He gave what people wanted. Therefore we do not find national problems or significant social movements in his plays. He did not choose the themes concerning national importance or significant problems of his times. He always elliptically referred to the important events in his plays.

Both Noel Coward and P.K. Atre tried to make efforts to conceal social reality in their plays and they always exposed the audience to the verbal wit. They tried to exploit some smart ideas rather than significant social problems. That is why we find conventional subjects in their plays. They had trodden the paved path. There were no new experiments. They used blunt and much used comic conventions. We find conventional themes like matrimony, love-intrigues and bold characterization. There is no psychological depth, there is no moral or ethical concerns to be heightened. While dramatists like Ibsen and Shaw remained, profound and complex, Coward and Atre tended to be only voluminous and entertaining. They did not want to hurt the sensibility of audience. They did not produce plays where audience could self-question themselves. Their principle was only demand and supply which was evident in popular writing. They showed scepticism about seriousness. That was why Atre commonly made fun of serious character like Rao Bahadur and Noel Coward made fun of serious character like David. The serious characters became the butt of satire in their plays.

In this sense it is also seen that to produce such comic

plays was the need of Marathi Theatre. It is found that right from the beginning there was lack of good script in Marathi Theatre. So Atre found Coward's technique very useful. Like Coward, he had very little to do with the mechanical construction of a plot. The comic tone and spirit, the whole drift of the play were conveyed to us by means of dialogue. Atre attracted a large number of audience but the entertainment motive was always supreme. Because of this condition of Marathi Theatre, there was no proper model before him. Atre wrote plays to fulfill the tastes of audience and in this way he pampered their taste. In reality, it is seen that there have been great upheavals and crisis during the life span of these two writers, but they escaped from these significant issues. They escaped from modern horror which Ibsen and Shaw could show ironically in their plays. They lacked this depth of irony. Like Ibsen and Shaw, they could have drawn the humour from the ironical representation of horrors and the dark side of man's life. Instead, they escaped from it. They did not present the social reality of the 20th century. Their humour was only wordy and verbal. They only opted for brilliance and that is the only dimension of their plays. Though Atre's bent of mind was that of social reformer, he did not exploit the social changes in his plays. On the other hand, his plays ^{were} overtly conventional. Like Coward, he also did not touch the deeper issues of the society. In fact, there were big upheavals, there were big clashes between two cultures, the Indian and the Western. Indeed, there was very challenging situation to write

socially committed plays, but dropping all this, he only presented verbal humour.

Noel Coward was never a critic of society, on the other hand, Atre was a severe critic of it. Noel Coward's vision was narrow and confined to the domestic situation. Because of Noel Coward's influence Atre's dramatic vision seems to have been narrowed, though he had great social interest. Atre became more and more conventional, entertainment-bound. This problem is still there in contemporary Marathi Theatre: for example, we can see the same weakness in the plays of P.L. Deshpande, the Marathi dramatist when we compare him with Brecht. Brecht was a great socially-committed dramatist. His 'The Beggar's Opera' had far-reaching influence on Europe. It was a great play reflecting the deep social, moral, and ethical problems of the time. But Deshpande's version of it 'Teen Paishacha Tamasha', is only a farcical, entertaining play. Deshpande seems to have diluted Brecht's deeper and wider social concerns.

Thus we find that both Noel Coward and P.K. Atre cleverly ~~appealed~~ + appealed the popular taste and conveniently avoided the representation of the complex social situation of their times. Consequently, their comic vision shows brilliance but lacks depth.