

The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development (3)

SOMNATH GUPT

Translated from the Hindi, abridged, and edited by
KATHRYN HANSEN

PARSI ACTORS¹

1. Khatau, Kavasji Palanji

He was from a poor family, and lived in a side street in Dhobi Talao in a small house with his brothers. His life as an actor began in 1875, when he first performed in the Shah Alam Company of Dolu Dhabhar². Later, he joined Jahangir Khambata's Empress Victoria Theatrical Company. He was taught the art of acting by his guru Khambata. Khatau was fortunate to find such a teacher, and Khambata was lucky to get such a talented student. With his artistic gifts, Khatau became Khambata's right-hand man³.

Khatau achieved fame in *Gorakhdhandha*, *Mahabharat*, *Khun-e Nahaq*, and *Asir-e Hirs*⁴. Being an accomplished singer, his art reached a high level. He was also interested in writing dramas. Together with Khambata, he adapted the first performance of the *Indar Sabha* for the Victoria Theatrical Company. He is also credited with turning *Alibaba aur Chalis Chor* into an opera⁵.

Kavasji Khatau was very fond of tragic roles. He played the part of Hamlet with such panache that people began to call him 'Henry Irving'. Enchanted with Khatau's histrionics, Mary Fenton left her father and joined Khatau, and for some time she lived with him, becoming the queen of the stage. It is said that Jahangir Khatau was their son.

In 1916, when Khatau's Alfred Theatrical Company was in Lahore, he fell ill and died of diabetes. His popularity was so great that people would not let his body be placed in the cart for removal to the final resting place. The actors carried the body on their shoulders to the cremation ground, and thousands of spectators joined the funeral procession.

2. Balivala, Khurshedji Mehrvanji⁶

Balivala's father was not well off. After imparting some practical knowledge to his son, he sent him to apprentice as a compositor in a printing press. In those days, the Victoria Theatrical Company was performing *Robinson Crusoe* in the Royal Theatre on Grant Road. Once, when Khurshedji chanced to see this drama, he memorized a few of its better lines. Later, he displayed his knowledge to some actors, and they were very impressed. They wanted to attract him to the Victoria Company. They went to his father to seek permission, and thus Balivala joined the theatre world.

The Victoria was rehearsing its new play, *Bejan ane Manijeh*, and Balivala got the role of Kobad⁷. He performed it with such artistry that the public began to call him 'Khushru Kobad'. After that he played Gorda Farid in *Rustam Sohrab* in an appealing way⁸. Jahangir Khambata helped with his acting and also noticed that he had considerable directorial

ability. Their partnership continued for a long time and earned them much fame.

The Victoria Company presented the first Urdu drama, *Sone ke Mol ki Khurshed*⁹, and Balivala played the part of Firoz in it. His sweet voice and musical renditions were very appealing. Similarly, he earned fame for his part as Benazir in *Benazir-Badremunir*¹⁰. In *Bholi Jan*¹¹ he played Hijo Tarivala, and his singing caused throngs of people to gather in the Novelty Theatre.

By then, Balivala had left his job as compositor and become a regular employee of the Victoria Company. By the time the company was turned over to Dadi Patel, he was receiving a salary of forty rupees, the amount generally given to the better actors. But he was still so poor that when he left for Hyderabad with the company, he carried only a shawl and a blanket against the piercing cold.

After Hyderabad, Thunthi, Apu, Mangol, and Ghariyali became the company owners, but Kunvarji Nazir entrusted the responsibility of day-to-day management to Balivala. Under the new management, the company went first to Calcutta, and from there all over India. On this tour, Dadabhai Thunthi was contracted by the Maharaja of Jaipur and remained there with a group of actors. But Balivala prepared some new dramas—*Aladin*, *Humayun Nasir*, *Puran Bhagat*, *Hir Ranjha*, and *Sitam Haman*. He gained the reputation of being a capable director and became the sole proprietor of the company.

In 1878 the Victoria toured Rangoon and Singapore with Balivala. In 1881 he led the troupe to Mandalay at the invitation of King Theebaw. There they were received with great honour. The company performed thirty-five dramas in Mandalay, for which the king paid Rs 43,000 in cash. Balivala committed a daring feat by going to Mandalay, because it was outside of the protection of the British Raj.

In 1885 Balivala took his company to London for the Colonial Exhibition. Here they performed *Saif-us Suleman*, in which Balivala played the part of Pagal Khan. Pleased with his acting, the Gaiety and Drury Lane Theatre owners offered him a salary of forty pounds per month. In London, Balivala produced *Harishchandra*, *Mahmud Shah*, *Humayun Nasir*, *Ashiq ka Khun* and other dramas, but they were not very successful. The earnings from Burma were squandered in England. The major reason for the company's failure was not language, because a translator summarized each scene for the spectators. Rather, the company incurred a heavy fine when they failed to obtain a government license due to ignorance of local regulations. Balivala's biggest attainment from the London trip was the felicitation bestowed upon him when he performed *Harishchandra* and *Aladdin* before Queen Victoria and Edward VII.

Balivala was honoured for his acting with two gold medals from the king of Burma, two medals and a gold watch from the citizens of Lahore, and a silver watch from the Parsis of Colombo. In September 1913, Balivala suffered a stroke and expired.

3. Madan, Pestanji Framji (*Pesu Avan*)¹²

Pestanji Framji Madan was among those actors whom Dadi Patel loved and trusted. In addition to acting in Gujarati plays, he made a very important contribution to virtually every Urdu play that was produced during Dadi Patel's lifetime.

Pestanji Madan was very beautiful and his speech was sweet. Spectators were smitten

by his looks and voice. Shakespeare's *Pericles* had been translated into Gujarati as *Dad-e Dariyav*. The Victoria Company produced this play in Iranian costumes. Pestanji played the part of the young woman, Avan, with such talent that people started calling him 'Pesu Avan' as a pet name. He also performed in *Sunana Mulni Khurshed*¹³. After these two plays, Dadi Patel gave Pesu Avan a part in *Benazir-Badremunir*, an opera in verse, an original idea of Dadi Patel's. In this play Pestanji Madan's elder brother Nasarvanji Framji Madan, who was famous as 'Naslu Tahmina', played the part of the fairy Mahru. This was Naslu Tahmina's first occasion to appear onstage in a singing part.

At the time that Dadi Patel formed the Original Victoria Theatrical Company¹⁴, both brothers were performing in it. They were also partner-owners of the company. After Dadi Patel's death, both brothers left Bombay and went to settle in Calcutta.

One of their brothers was named Jamshedji Framji Madan. He performed together with Dr Nasarvanji Parakh in Parakh's play *Sulemani Shamshir*. The Madan Theatres belonged to the Madan brothers.

Early Actresses in the Parsi Theatre

At first, the Parsi public was strongly opposed to women acting on the stage. Even Kaikhushro Navroji Kabraji, an advocate of independence for women, was opposed to bringing actresses on the stage, and the pages of *Rast Gofar* and other journals were full of these debates. Dadi Patel is said to have been the first to take the bold step of bringing two Muslim women with him from Hyderabad. One of them, Latifa Begam, was expert in dance. In the *Indar Sabha*, she made the playhouse on Grant Road reverberate, and spectators came just to see her. She would dance for so long that her socks began to tear. One day she was abducted from the wings by a spectator who wrapped her in his overcoat, seated her in his carriage, and whisked her away.

Two other early actresses were Amir Jan and Moti Jan, Punjabi women who were good singers. Amir Jan was especially accomplished at Sufi ghazals, and many Muslim businessmen tried to court her. Finally one of them married her, and she left the stage. Her sister Moti Jan also abandoned the company, and thus amidst much controversy the Parsi Natak Mandali came to an end¹⁵.

Miss Gauhar first worked in Balivala's Victoria Company, but later she worked for several other companies. Miss Fatima was also in Balivala's company. It is said that once she entered his room while he was sleeping. Suddenly he woke up and, seeing her unexpectedly, suffered an attack of paralysis. Miss Malika too worked in the Victoria and other companies. Miss Khatun was said to be Miss Gauhar's sister. One of her lovers allegedly cut off her nose. Miss Gulnar ran a paan shop in Rangoon and later joined the theatre. Miss Jamila was a Jewish girl. Other early actresses were Miss Bijli, Miss Kamali, Miss Gulab, Miss Ganga, and Miss Umda Jan.

But among all of these, Miss Mary Fenton was the most famous. Her father was an Irish soldier who after retirement presented magic lantern shows around Delhi for a living. She met Kavasji Khatau while he was rehearsing for a performance with Jahangir Khambata's troupe. Mary came to the theatre every night, and they fell in love. She then went with him to Bombay and began to perform. As her competence in Gujarati, Urdu, and Hindi increased

and she took to wearing Parsi dress, she became a successful actress. She also adopted the name of Mehrbai.

Mary played the part of the Jogin in Talib's *Harishchandra*, a role which was as popular as her Bholi Gul in the Gujarati play of that title. Kavasji Khatau and Mary got married, but later they separated. She then worked for various companies until her death. She was undoubtedly one of the most successful, attractive, and popular actresses of her time.

Although most theatre companies began hiring actresses after this, the New Alfred held out and resisted admitting women as long as Sohrabji Ogra was in charge. In the beginning of the twentieth century, many women worked on the stage: Miss Kajjan, Miss Gauhar, Miss Munni Bai, and others.

THE AUDIENCE*

From the beginning of the Parsi theatre until about 1870, the audience consisted mainly of Parsis and Iranis. In those days the Parsis lived in Dhobi Talao in the Court area, in Bori Bandar (Churchgate), and near Grant Road and Charni Cross Road. That is why the first Parsi theatre houses were built in those areas. The Iranis also formed their own companies and performed in Persian, but because spectators were few and the revenue insufficient, they did not meet with much success.

In 1870, when Dadi Patel thought of performing dramas in Urdu instead of Gujarati, Hindu and Muslim spectators began to come to the theatre. The English also came to the Grant Road Theatre to watch 'Hindu drama', although they were more interested in English plays. Thus, while the majority of the Parsi theatre audience consisted of Parsis, the theatre was also frequented by Iranis, Muslims, Hindus, and high-ranking British officials and their families.

At the start, it was not considered proper for Parsi women to go to the theatre, but Kaikhushro Kabraji promoted women's independence, and finally Parsi women accompanied by their husbands or brothers began to attend plays. Sometimes the companies put on shows expressly for women. The Natak Uttejak Mandali's performance of *Harishchandra* attracted so many women that the company arranged crèches for their children outside the theatre.

There were several classes of spectators. The ticket prices for English dramas were as follows: stalls or box, Rs 6; upper box, Rs 4; pit, Rs 3. Gradually the prices came down to Rs 2-4. When Vishnudas Bhawe performed his play *Raja Gopichand* in 1853 in the Grant Road Theatre, the tickets ranged from three rupees for the dress circle to one rupee for the pit. When the Parsi companies toured outside Bombay, they charged between five rupees and eight annas, with free passes for specially invited officials. From these prices, it can readily be imagined what the composition of the audience was. Women in purdah were seated in a separate section, with a single ticket price. The prostitutes of the town also sat in that section.

The most convenient method of advertising a show was by proclamation. Handbills were distributed from horse-carts, announcing the subject of the play to be performed that



Miss Mary Fenton (1854–1896?), also known as Mehrbai, the most popular actress of the nineteenth-century Parsi theatre.
Source: Dhanjibhai N. Patel, Parsi Natak Takhtani Tavarikh (1931).



Miss Munni Bai, actress of the twentieth-century Parsi theatre.

*Source: Vidyavati L. Namra, Hindi Rangmanch aur
Pandit Narayanprasad Betab (1972).*

Courtesy Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, Varanasi.



Miss Gauhar/Goher, a famous stage actress of the early twentieth century.
*Printed postcard reproduced in Siddharth Kak, ed.,
'Pioneers of Indian Cinema: The Silent Era',
special issue of Cinema in India, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1980.
Courtesy National Film Development Corporation, New Delhi.*

night, its spectacular scenes, sets, and the names of the actors. When women began appearing on the stage, their names, and sometimes their photographs, were included. Before the conclusion of the play each night, an individual appeared in front of the drop scene and announced the next day's play.

The audience, when pleased with the actors' songs, would shout 'once more'; sometimes, 'once more' was demanded even after the drop scene had fallen. If 'once more' was declared two or three times, the manager would satisfy the audience's desire by having the scene repeated. Sometimes this created the ridiculous effect of slain characters, recently killed in combat, rising from the floor and beginning to fight all over again.

Audiences were especially thrilled by spectacular mechanical scenes. Deities descending from heaven, gods and demons emerging from a rift in the earth, a sleeping prince carried off through the air and delivered to a fairy, a railway train falling from a broken bridge into a river: these were the kinds of trick scenes that audiences loved.

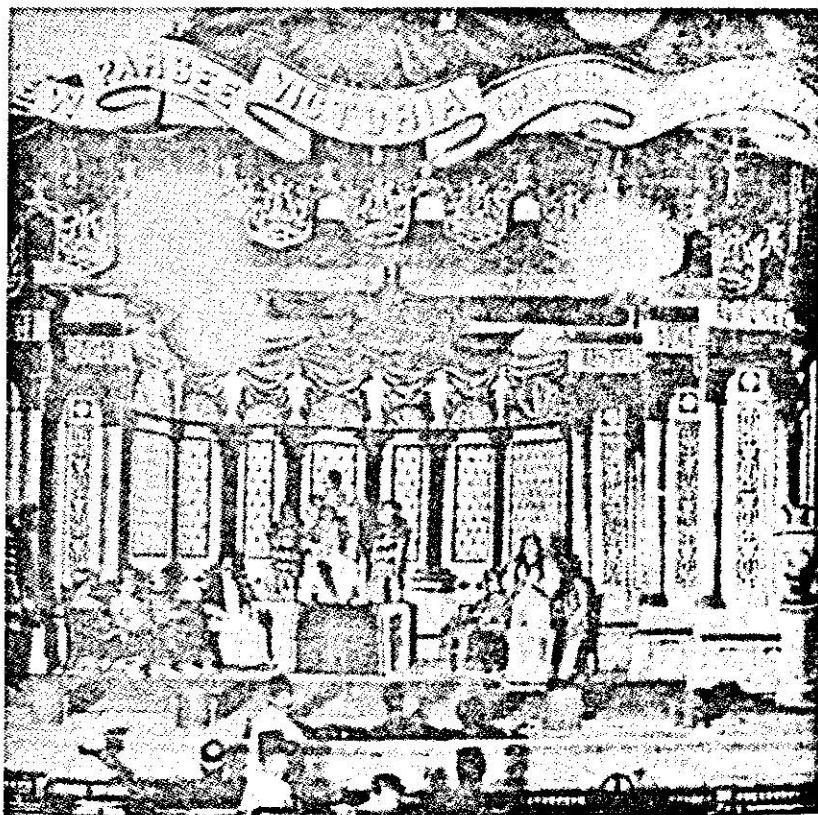
Although every company announced that entry to the theatre was only by ticket, sometimes louts and drunkards would create trouble. The play would be suspended until order was restored, inconveniencing the gentlemen among the viewers. Such undesirable incidents also happened during English dramas, which were attended by soldiers and sailors seeking entertainment.

In every drama there were one or two intervals, during which vendors sold peanuts, soda, and snacks. These were also times when commotion filled the lower-class sections. Basically, the Parsi theatre audience represented the middle and lower working classes. They responded to anything new or unusual with vocal demonstrations. The Parsi companies sometimes performed in prose, sometimes in poetry, sometimes in a mixture of both. The lyrics of the songs were metrical and rhythmic, but not truly poetic. Still, the audience enjoyed them, clapping and shouting their appreciation.

THE PLAYWRIGHT AND THE SPECTATORS

In the absence of spectators, the creation of drama is an impossibility. The playwright not only expresses himself, he also expresses the interests and desires of the society of which he himself is a part. In the early stages of the theatre, Parsis were drawn to their history and religion. Kaikhushro Kabraji recognized this craving and in consequence created the plays *Bejan ane Manijeh*, *Jamshed*, and *Faredun*. The Parsi public welcomed his brave move. His farces, which were performed on the same stage after the main drama, satirized elements of contemporary society.

Together with the revival of feelings toward their community, elite Parsi families were increasingly affected by contact with the English and their culture. The Parsis had come from outside India and settled here. They were better suited to adopting English ways of living than Indian ones. Many adaptations of English plays were performed on the Parsi stage. Some dramas took their plots from English novels. In order to please the spectators, several versions of *Hamlet* were enacted. Then Muslim-influenced fairies, princes, devils and wizards became more attractive than English spirits and ghosts, and the Parsi stage



A stage set of the Helen Theatrical Company of Hyderabad.
*Photo (1901) by Raja Lala Deen Dayal, reproduced in Rani Burra, ed.,
Film India: Looking Back 1896-1960 (1981).
Courtesy Directorate of Film Festivals, New Delhi.*

presented its patrons with such highly successful plays as *Indar Sabha*, *Khurshed Sabha*, *Farrukh Sabha*, *Havai Majlis*, and *Benazir-Badremunir*.

When the Parsi theatrical companies turned their attention toward the Hindu spectators, they had plays written on such stories as *Harishchandra*, *Gopichand*, *Mahabharat*, *Ramlila*, and *Bhakt Prahlad*, which they subsequently performed. Very fine plays were also written on patriotic and devotional themes, for example the Alexandria Company's powerful production of *Vatan* [Homeland]. *Zakhm-e Punjab* [The Wounds of the Punjab] was prevented from being performed by the government for a number of years. The democratic nature of theatre is evident from the heterogeneity of its spectators. If a play is written only for the aristocratic class, then its failure is certain. The playwright through his endeavours meets the ordinary people face to face. How then can he ally himself to only one class? As Samuel Johnson said, "The drama's laws the drama's patrons give. For we that live to please must please to live."¹⁷

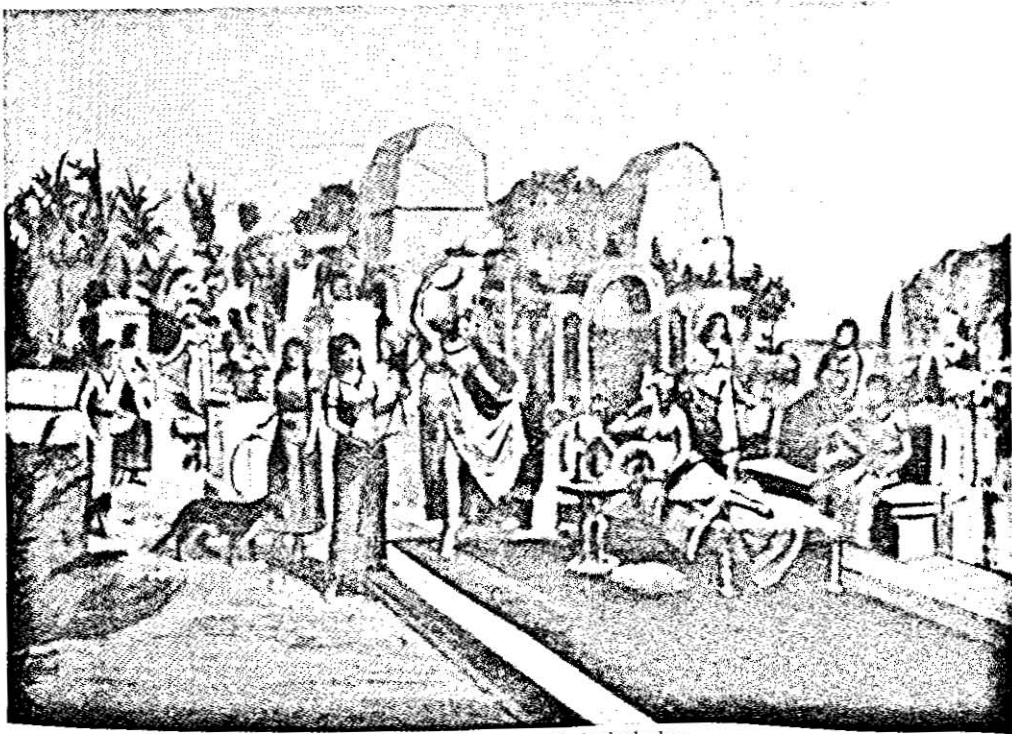
PERFORMANCE SPACE OR STAGE

It cannot be disputed that the stage is as important as the script to the creation of drama, for the stage is where the presentation occurs. No description is available of the shape of the earliest stage of the Parsi theatre. But Dhanjibhai Patel has written that when the Irani Natak Mandali performed *Rustam ane Barjo* in the Grant Road Theatre, both warriors made their entrances seated on the backs of actual horses, challenging each other to do battle¹⁸. This gives some sense of the likely width and depth of the stage. Regarding the theatre used by the New Alfred Company, its width including wings was seventy feet, with a depth of sixty feet, excluding the dressing room. The seating area was 115 by 60, or 6,900 square feet. The stage proper included the central space with curtains and wings, a subterranean layer with trapdoor, and a revolving platform that was used for box sets.

STAGE SCENERY

Painted curtains which dropped from pulleys according to the action were used in every play. The one closest to the front was called the drop scene, and behind it the curtains were changed in accordance with the drama. Usually the street scene was the most used after the drop scene. The actors assembled in front of it for the invocatory prayer as soon as the drop scene was raised. It was also used in farces. Unless some special scene was required, the dialogue scenes of the farces were enacted before it. Other curtains commonly used were the jungle scene, the 'cut' curtain, the palace, garden, and camp scenes.

At first these curtains were painted by foreigners, among whom the German Kraus and the Italians Ceroni and Rua were famous¹⁹. Among the Parsi painters, Pestanji Madan was well-known. The Maharashtrian Hindu, Anand Rao, was made a partner in the Zoroastrian Natak Mandali on the basis of his painting. Another known painter from Maharashtra was Divakar. The New Alfred Company's painter, Husain Khan, was also well known. He was illiterate but his monthly salary was Rs 1500, according to Manakshah Balsara. His co-



The drop scene from a mythological play.

Source: C. J. Sisson, *Shakespeare in India: Popular Adaptations on the Bombay Stage* (1926).

worker was Dinshah Irani, but he wasn't considered to be as good²⁰.

Some dramatists indicated the order of curtains together with the scenes of their plays, as seen in the text of Abdullah's play *Sakhavat Khudadost Badshah*. Abdullah was the owner of the Indian Imperial Theatrical Company, and this play was written and performed in April 1890. The first scene took place in the court of the king of Yemen, and the script indicated curtain no. 13. Altogether there were fourteen curtains plus the drop scene, totalling fifteen. Abdullah's disciple Nazir Beg also adopted this system. The first scene of *Sat Harishchandra* is set at the river bank, shown by curtain no. 9. This play too had fourteen curtains; it was written in 1888.

The chief Parsi companies had their own drop scenes made according to their special interests. The Zoroastrian Natak Mandali's drop scene had a religious orientation. It depicted the court of King Gustasp. The messenger of God, Zarathustra, is standing in court with a ball of fire in his hand. Near him the hakim Jamasp, Prince Asfandiyar, Pishotan, the warrior Zarir and others are standing respectfully.

On the Victoria Company's drop scene, the throne of King Jamshed was painted under the direction of S. S. Bangali. When Kaikhushro Kabraji's *Jamshed* was performed, the Parsi spectators were especially attracted to this drop scene.

The Paris Exhibition was featured on the Elphinstone Company's drop scene. This company mainly performed English plays, so the idea was not inappropriate.

The manager of the Original Victoria Theatrical Company, Dadi Patel, was at odds with Kunvarji Nazir, who had been his partner in the Victoria before they split up. Patel had a drop scene made that showed a powerful serpent, which was supposed to be Nazir. A beautiful prince, Patel himself, sat above on a balcony looking at the hissing snake as it tried unsuccessfully to bite him.

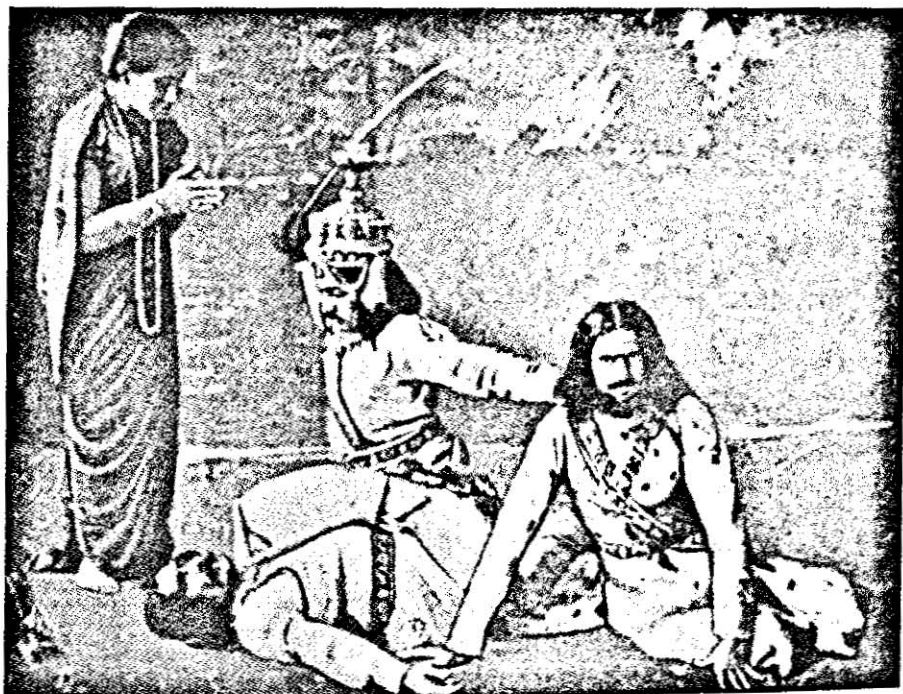
The Baronet Theatrical Company depicted the J. J. Hospital on a portion of its drop scene, and a picture of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy was painted above it. The hospital was the sign of his charity and munificence. Every night at the start of the performance the company manager, Nasarvanji Forbes²¹, used to sing a ghazal by Bandekhuda in praise of Jejeebhoy.

Dadi Thunthi founded the Hindi Natak Mandali and had a drop scene painted with a Hindu woman praying in a temple. The author saw a similar curtain painted by Divakar in the possession of Manik Lal, the manager of the Shah Jahan Theatrical Company. Maybe this was the drop scene of the Hindi Natak Mandali.

LIGHTING

In the early period, there was no electricity. The stage was lit by candles, clay lamps filled with oil, or torches. There were no footlights at that time. Gradually, gas lights were introduced. Gas or carbide was first used by Kunvarji Nazir in his production of the *Indar Sabha*, when he bathed the stage in different colours according to the dress of the fairies. When electricity was invented later, there was a great increase in the appeal of the scenes, and various fantastic effects could be shown.

The lights were raised and dimmed for the entrances and exits of the characters. The lights were put out completely for a moment when a deity descended from heaven or entered



Typical costumes used in Shakespeare adaptations.

Source: C. J. Sisson, Shakespeare in India: Popular Adaptations on the Bombay Stage (1926).

the earth. Sometimes the lights would be reduced suddenly to allow the entrance of dancers from behind columns. To create the illusion of a sunset, Dadi Patel first made use of magnesium in an Iranian play. The Parsi theatre companies were quite aware of the importance of the use of lighting. Many non-Parsi troupes were quite influenced by them.

COSTUMES

Ordinarily stage dress was sparkling and gaudy, although historical dramas were performed in appropriate costumes. The crowns of kings and queens were studded with glass bits that glittered brightly. The jewellery worn by female characters was artificial, but it was multifarious: necklaces, bracelets, and anklets were all fake. When a dancer wore a particular costume for a dance, she was not supposed to wear it again later in the play. This resulted in dancers appearing sometimes in English frocks, sometimes in Punjabi salwar-kameez, and sometimes in sari and blouse. Hindu characters wore dhoti and wooden sandals, with sages displaying white beards and matted hair. Muslims generally wore beards, of a shape and size consonant with the character's social role. Three colours were commonly used: white, black, and brown or reddish.

The make-up of today was not available, and although Parsis are usually fair-skinned, they would apply zinc oxide to lighten their complexions. Vermilion was used to redden the cheeks and collyrium for accenting the eyes. The actors as a rule applied their own make-up. Wigs were made of hair, and crafted to represent women, bald men, old men, and youngsters with curly locks. Fairies wore velvet pantaloons, and their wings were constructed of lace and silver work. Devils had black complexions and sprouted horns.

MUSIC

Aside from a few ghazals, the music of the Parsi theatre was classical: Thumri, Dadra, Jhinjhoti, Kalingara, and so on. Sometimes the influence of Western music was apparent. The only defect was that the song lyrics lacked deep feeling. In the beginning, dramas were written only in prose. Dadi Patel introduced the notion of opera with *Benazir-Badremunir*, and the addiction to songs grew to such an extent that occasions of joy, deaths, wars, and dialogues were all accompanied by singing. These songs did nothing to advance the plot or characterization. The demand for singers increased accordingly and their commercial value soared.

CONCLUSION²²

Research shows that the first theatre in Bombay was the Bombay Theatre, established in 1776 in front of the present Central Library. It was built by Englishmen, and English plays were performed there. It is natural, therefore, that it imitated the theatre of England. The stage, hall, costumes, and plots were all English, as were the actors and spectators. Gradually

this theatre went into debt, and finally it was sold off. In 1846, a new theatre was built on Grant Road to take its place. Here too English plays were performed at first. In 1853, this theatre began to be used for Marathi and then Hindi and Gujarati plays.

Thus all the virtues and vices of the English theatre were inherited by the Parsi theatre. The English mainly worked in service and as businessmen. Drama was a favoured form of entertainment for them. But because of the dearth of actors and lack of resources, theatrical activity was considerably constrained. Only those plays found a place on the stage which were not too serious and had few characters, especially few women characters. Little attention was paid to costuming because of lack of funds. Farces also became popular, usually occurring at the end of the main drama. The orchestra would perform in between. The sets would not necessarily be appropriate to each play; furniture such as chairs and tables were commonly used. Painting was featured on the curtains and foreign artists were employed. This was the kind of amateur stage that the Parsis adopted.

This does not mean, however, that only English influence was felt on the theatre of the new playhouses. The Indian folk traditions were also prevalent, and forms like Nautanki and Bhavai had many adherents. The Khetwadi Theatre was a popular venue for the performance of translations from Sanskrit drama. Vishnudas Bhavé of Sangli brought his troupe to Bombay in 1853 and created a rage for musical folk theatre. These musical plays were the basis for the later turn toward 'opera'.

The Parsi companies first presented theatrical renditions of historical legends from their homeland, Persia. The plays of Kaikhushro Kabraji were important in this connection. Parsi youths from Elphinstone College were active in establishing drama clubs, and they primarily performed Shakespeare's plays in English. Musical 'sketches' were also popular in the early stages. The practice of including a farce seems to have followed the English example. At first, these were different from the main drama, and usually satirized Parsi customs and society. Later, they were joined to the main drama and added a subplot to it, and gradually became more closely integrated.

The language of the dramas was Gujarati in the beginning. Then Urdu became popular, but this is not to say that the whole audience preferred Urdu. Urdu was well understood in the United Provinces and Punjab. The playwrights who found employment in the Parsi theatre were all conversant with Urdu, but the introduction of Urdu did not solve the whole problem from the standpoint of business. As Narayan Prasad Betab said in the introduction to his *Mahabharat*, "Neither pure Urdu, nor chaste Hindi, the language is mixed; the sugar does not stay separate from the milk, it all blends together."

The influence of the Parsi theatrical companies extended beyond the Parsi community. Non-Parsis also established their companies. In several princely states such as Jaipur and Patiala, theatre houses were built. The subject of the dramatic literature of the princely states requires a separate volume in itself.

Today, certainly, the Indian theatre is searching for its identity anew. But the Parsi theatre cannot be neglected in moulding either the present or future form of theatre. The Parsi theatre was experimental theatre of a sort. Its experiments are visible in the dramas of its time. Let us hope that our theatre directors and patrons do not forget the past in the search for the new theatre.

NOTES

1. [Gupt's Chapter 6, which includes over seventy actors. Only the profiles of the two most prominent actors, one female impersonator, and the scanty information on actresses have been included here. Many Parsi theatre actors were also company managers, and some were playwrights as well.]
2. [Dorabji Rustamji Dhabhar, aka Dolu, was a minor Parsi playwright. See 'The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development (1)', hereafter PT 1, by Somnath Gupt, translated and edited by Kathryn Hansen. *Sangeet Natak* (Delhi), XXXVI:1(2001), 28.]
3. [For further information on Jahangir Khambata, see PT 1, 29.]
4. [*Gorakhdhandha* (Labyrinth) and *Mahabharat* were written by Narayan Prasad Betab, and *Khun-e Nahaq* (Unjust Murder) and *Asir-e Hirs* (Captive of Desire) were compositions of Agha Hashr Kashmiri. See 'The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development (2)', hereafter PT 2, by Somnath Gupt, translated and edited by Kathryn Hansen, *Sangeet Natak* (Delhi), XXXVI: 2(2001), 8.]
5. [*Alibaba aur Chalis Chor* (Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves) was written by Vinayak Prasad Talib. See PT 2, 5.]
6. [For details on Balivala as a playwright, see PT 1, 27.]
7. [*Bejan ane Manijeh* was Kaikhushro Navroji Kabraji's first play, written in 1869. See PT 1, 15.]
8. [Possibly the version by Dhanjibhai Navroji Patel. See PT 1, 29.]
9. [A drama credited to Aram, based on the Gujarati by Edalji Khorji. See PT 1, 26-7.]
10. [Another drama of Aram's. A later version was written by Mahmud Miyan Raunaq. See PT 1, 26-7, and PT 2, 3.]
11. [By Kaikhushro Kabraji. See PT 1, 25.]
12. [For other details on this important female impersonator, see also PT 2, 15.]
13. [*Sunana Mulni Khurshed* (Khurshed for the Price of Gold) was a Gujarati play by Edalji Khorji. See PT 2, 14.]
14. The so-called Original Victoria Theatrical Company was an offshoot of the Victoria Company which Dadabhai Patel started when he left the Victoria in 1874. See Gupt, 109-110.
15. [Latifa Begam, Amir Jan, and Moti Jan were all employed by the Parsi Natak Mandali, founded in the mid-1870s. See Gupt, 139-141.]
16. [The following five sections occur under a heading or unnumbered chapter titled 'Other Accessories of the Parsi Theatre'. Gupt, 212-226.]
17. [These lines were printed in English and in Gujarati translation on a number of early published plays, e.g., Edalji Jamshedji Khorji, *Rustam ane Sohrab* (Mumbai: Akshara Press, 1870); and Khorji, *Khudabakhsh* (Mumbai: Jam-e Jamshed Press, 1871).]
18. Patel, *Parsi Natak Takhtani Tavarikh*, 117-18.
19. ["Ceroni" is the spelling given by Patel (*Parsi Natak Takhtani Tavarikh*, 412), in contrast to Gupt's "Sironi".]
20. [For another reference to Husain Khan, see PT 2, 28.]
21. [Gupt here misspells 'Forbes' as "Fakhru". For other references to Forbes and the Baronet Company, see Patel 415 and Gupt 151-2.]
22. [Gupt's final section, 244-46.]