

‘PPT E Module on ‘Introduction to Brecht’s Dramaturgy’

(A Research Paper)

NAME OF INVESTIGATOR:

Dr. Uttam Baburao Parekar

**(Associate Professor, Yeshwant Mahavidyalaya, Wardha
(M.S.)**

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Introduction of Investigator

Name: Dr. Uttam Baburao Parekar

Date of Birth: 05-07-1959

Qualification: M.A.(English), M.Phil., B.Ed.
Ph.D.

Designation: Associate Professor & HOD (Ph.D. Supervisor)
Principal Investigator of UGC's Major Research Project

Office Address: Yeshwant Mahavidyalaya, Wardha (M.S.)

Creative Pursuits: Writing Short Stories & Plays; Drama Acting, Director;
Playing Banjo, Flute & Harmonium

Home Address: Prof. Uttam B. Parekar, Sahakar-Nagar, Near Sai-
Nagar, Wardha, Ta & Dist. Wardha (M.S.)

Mobile No. 09921436640

Email: uparekar@rediffmail.com

Nature, Scope, Objective & Methodology of the Research Paper

1- Traditional Drama & Brecht's Dramaturgy

2- *Explanation*: Concept of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*

3- *Interpretation*: Brecht's Play 'Mother Courage & Her Children'

4- Methodology:

Inductive & Deductive methods, Observation, Interview, Discussion, Case - Study, Critical enquiry, Analysis, Comparison, Elucidation, Interpretation, Generalization & Specification,

Bertolt Brecht (1898 to 1956)



Rehearsal shot of Mother Courage with her Canteen Wagon



Berliner Ensemble Theatre

Established by Bertolt Brecht
Munich, Germany



Aristotelian Drama

Dramatic Theatre

The stage embodies an event

Involves the spectator in an action & exhausts his capacity for action

Engenders feelings in him

Allows him experiences

The spectator is transplanted into an action

It operates through suggestion

Sentiments are preserved

The human being is presumed known

He is unalterable

Tension focuses on the conclusion

Each scene generates the next; linear development

The world as it is

His instincts

Thought determines being

Brecht's Dramaturgy

Epic Theatre

Narrates the event

Turns the spectator into an observer but arouses his capacity for action

Forces him to make decisions

Grants him knowledge

Confronts the action

It operates through argument

Brought to the point of recognition

The human being is the object of investigation

He is alterable and able to change

The tension of process

Each scene exists for itself curves

The world as it becomes

His reasons for action

Social being determines thought

Bertolt Brecht's Dramaturgy & V-Effect Technique

1- Post-Revolution European Society and Need of New Dramaturgy:

French & Industrial Revolution, Social Change,

Aristotelian Dramaturgy: Art and Morality, The Plot, Linear Development of the Action, Tragic - Hero, Characterization, Tragic Flaw, Unified Spectacle, Catharsis, Dramatic Unities, Catastrophe

2- Brecht's Non-Aristotelian Theory of Drama:

Narrative Voice, Parallel Scenes, Songs, Sub-Plot, Episodic Plot, Complex Seeing, Anti-(illusory) Cathartic Effect, Intellectual Stimulation, Distancing, Alienation, Anti-Hero, Realistic Presentation,

3- Brecht's Major Themes

- I- Bohemian Style of Living
- II- Ruthlessness and Exploitation
- III- Traditional Virtue is a Sign of Stupidity
- IV- Sex and Sexuality
- V- Individual & Collective Responsibility
- VI- Statistical Causality
- VII- Existential Themes
- VIII- Alienation

Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (Alienation)

Term V-Effect < Entdremdung (Hegel, Marx) < Fremd (Ger. For Fren. Alien)

Function: For Anti-Illusory Effect, Intellectual Stimulation, Initiate Thought Process

1- Theme of Alienation: 1- Alienation from People 2- from dream 3- from life

2- Process of Alienation in Three Stages

1- Knowledge 2- Conflict 3- Angst of Alienation

3- Techniques of Alienation

1- Alienation of Audience: **Dialectical Situations, Socio-Economic Determinism
Folk Elements**

2- Alienation of the Actor: **Third Person Narrative, Past Tense, Stage Directions,
Comments, Use of Gestus**

3- Alienation of the Character: **Statistical Causality < Quantum's Theory of
Relativity, Traditional Virtue as a Sign of
Stupidity (Binary Scheme: Individual vs Society)**

V-Effect Technique In 'Mother Courage & Her Children'

Gist of the Play:

A play in twelve scenes in prose with nine songs written in 1938 – 39 and H.R.Hays translated it into English in 1941.

Presents historical scenes of 'Thirty Years' War' set in Sweden, Poland and Germany between 1624 and 1636.

Mother Courage owns a traveling canteen wagon and makes her living from the troops. Courage's main concern is to keep her business going: against the background of great historical events.

The Catholics overrun her. She changes sides, but they catch and kill one son. The other is shot by the Protestant for looting during a temporary armistice (Cease Fire). Her dumb daughter Katrin loses her life while giving warning of the Catholics' surprise attack.

The play presents matter-of-fact view of war. At the end she is left alone with her wagon, old and wretched but still determined to get her cut.

Themes of the Play:

- 1: Devastating effects of a European war
- 2: The blindness of anyone hoping to profit during war
- 3: War is a continuation of business by other means & those who make it so are being fatally shortsighted

Alienation of the Audience

1- : Activate Learning Process

General Oxenstjerna's recruitment camp & the Sergeant recruiter

2- : Third Person Narrative

Eilif's conflict with peasants for capture of 20 cattle

3- : Songs

Visual & Sensuous appeal urges the audience to build a sheltering roof

4- : Self-Contained Scenes

The General's funeral: Mutiny or Accident

5- : Notes & Stage Directions

Anna's financial position communicated through stage directions

Alienation of the Actor

1- : Gestus

Kattrin's symbolic consent to the Chaplain & her mother

2- : Comments, Clichés & Proverbs

Peace is a mess, it takes a war to put things in order

3- : Drawing of Lots

Anna wants her sons to draw lots

General Oxenstjerna's recruitment camp & the Sergeant recruiter

Alienation of the Character

1- :Repartee

Anna's rejoinder to Eilif's song

2- : Contradictions

Anna's business profit motive contradicts with her war anxiety

3- : Charged Scenes

Swiss Cheese killed in Catholic Army's surprise attack & Yvette's comment

4- : Anna as an alienated mother

**'I hope I can pull the wagon alone --- I have to get back in business'
Oxenstjerna's recruitment camp & the Sergeant recruiter**

Conclusion

Industrial & French Revolutions broke the prevalent organic unity (harmony) of traditional social life.

Socio-Economic change in human relationship engendered modern social set-up.

Traditional Hero of drama is decentred from modern social life, hence no longer a person to be imitated.

Classical Drama as Unsuitable Dramaturgy in Modern Context: Tragic Hero, Plot, Characterization, Catharsis, Unified Spectacle, Unities- proved unsuitable to express the social ethos.

Brecht's Epic Theatre as a suitable dramaturgy for Modernity: Verfremdungseffekt presents modernity through Anti-Hero, Complex-Seeing, Characterization, Alienation, Anti-Illusory Effect, Narrative Voice.

Classical Drama is based on 'Catharsis' & Brecht's, on 'Thought Process'. Today's man takes decisions not under the impact of emotions but after long pondering

'Mother Courage & Her Children' as a perfect modern drama.

Thank You!