

**THIRD THEATRE: AN ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN POSTMODERN  
DRAMA**

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**Abstract**

The present research article seeks to represent the newness of the 'Third Theatre'. It is an alternative mode for the entertainment for the common masses during the contemporary period. Third theatre is one of the innovative and impressive literary techniques in the postmodern English drama in India. This form of theatre is established by Bengali playwright Badal Sircar. This article discusses philosophy, objectives and the origin of the "Third Theatre". The influence of western theatre is directly seen on the third theatre. His term 'Third Theatre' is associated with the folk community. This form blends human emotion. With this theatre he tried to bridge the gap between drama and audience. This is an innovative media form started to distribute his ideas with audience.

**Keywords:** *Third Theatre, Street Plays, Proscenium Theatre, Social Enlightenment, Technique*

**Introduction**

Badal Sircar thinks that folk theatre and rural theatre are the primary or first theatres. The urban theatre can be called as second theatre. So, he invented his own innovation as 'Third Theatre'. The third theatre is the place where plays are performed. The performance areas of these plays were parks, street corners and remote villages and the spectators used to sit all around the performance. These plays displayed the oppression that dominated the society, the worn-out and corrupt system; and they were full of social enlightenment. In the



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Badal Sircar's third theatre does not limit only about see and hear but it is about experiencing the things. He expresses that the communication process occurs in four ways. He explains the communication process as: performer to spectator, performer to performer, spectator to performer and spectator to spectator. He says that the first two ways are usual but other two ways of communication create panic. According to proscenium theatre, if the spectators start to communicate with the performers or to the other spectators, it produces disorder. But Sircar's following statement from the book *On Theatre* proves it wrong. "The attention of the spectator, concentration, the reaction of the performance reflected in his facial expression or the tension in his body- all these can be a form of feedback to the performer or to another spectator. And once the performers recognize the presence of the spectators by coming nearer, by putting them in the light, other opportunities of voluntary or spontaneous participation on the part of the spectators can be included in the theatre" (On Theatre P. 82).

The anti-proscenium nature is another important characteristic of Sircar's Third Theatre. The play *Procession* is the best example. With the use of this theatre the playwright removes all the confusions of audience regarding to the third theatre. For this performance the audience sits in the darkened place and create the illusion of absence for the performers. We find the Third Theatre performances are very different from the conventional theatre. There is no stage, no stage props, no curve, and no head or side lights. It completely follows the Western experimental theatre. The openness and natural approach of the theatre makes it more live and powerful. In the play *Procession*, the seating arrangements as well as the participation in processions of those members of the audience who arrive late also demonstrate its anti-proscenium nature.

The Third Theatre is moveable, low-cost and flexible. As he uses the open spaces for the performance of the play, automatically it reduces the cost of stage properties. Use of light effects, characters with no make-up and unchanged costumes make his theatre transferrable and flexible. So, it becomes easy to him to take his theatre directly to the people who cannot come to see plays in the theatre. Sircar firms on his opinion that the theatre should be free to enable and reach to the largest possible audience. He completed his dream by making his

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theatre transferrable, low-cost and flexible. Sircar's theatre can be called free theatre because, any audience can interrupt any action of the character by using imagination power. Other thing is that it adopts the realistic stuff from Western theatre which is literally free for its audiences. It is very affordable to watch any performances as it is performed in open spaces. Hence, we find the anti-commercial nature of the third theatre. As it provides the freedom of imagination and the freedom of payment. All these things make the Third Theatre more appealing and attractive for the deprived classes in the urban as well as in the rural strata of the society.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the third theatre played a vital role in the development in postmodern drama. With the help of Third Theatre the common masses could access the performances of the plays. Badal Sircar formed 'Third Theatre' on the basis of folk response and western proscenium theatre. The foreign theatrical performance cannot be neglected, though the third theatre is introduced. because the concept of third theatre is adopted from the western theatre by Sircar. As the audience can easily intrude in the actual performance, the third theatre bridged the gap between performers and spectators. The involvement of audience increased due the arrival of third theatre.

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