

Theatre as a Catalyst for Social Change: Understanding Habib Tanvir as a Reformist Playwright in 'Charandas Chor' (1975)



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Post-independence canon of Indian theatre is marked by a paradigmatic shift in the reformist agendas of the playwrights. Some playwrights used the method of proscenium plays, while others relied on street or folk theatre to present the socio-cultural turbulences of the time. Habib Tanvir is one reformist playwright of the period whose works can be traced at the intersections of proscenium and rural/folk theatre. Tanvir's plays are considered milestones in the amalgamation of Indian folk theatre arts and the contemporary perspective of the world. Scholars such as Katheryn Hansen and Javed Mallick have credited Tanvir for bringing together the rural and urban paradigms of theatre arts and propagating a form that was of, for, and by the people. The present paper expands this proposition and studies Tanvir's *Charandas Chor* for its distinct representation of rural folk tales in an urban theatrical model. By studying the play closely, the paper argues that Tanvir creates a liminal space that challenges the established notions of reformist drama in India. It also examines the form, content, and meaning of the play through Richard Schechner's lenses of drama, theatre, and performance. It further explores reformist agendas that subvert the affiliation of social etiquettes through Henri Bergson's idea of inversion. The paper establishes that Tanvir's theatre's uniqueness lies in harnessing the intersectional dimensions of rural and urban theatrical models, which he uses to express plebian issues that are represented through the vibrant performative elements of folk theatre and the urban techniques of theatre.

Biography:

Manivendra Kumar is a Ph.D. student in the Discipline of English at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Indore. His research focuses on the post-independence Indian theatrical traditions and their agendas of social reform and explores the paradigms of reformist playwrighting during this period. His research has been accepted for publication in the journal *Modern Drama* (University of Toronto Press). He completed his MA and BA in English Literature from Ranchi University, Ranchi.

Ananya Ghoshal is an assistant professor of English in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology in Indore, India. For her PhD, she has worked on the influence of music in postcolonial literature. A former Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral fellow in the Department of English at UC Berkeley, Ananya works on the broader themes of Environmental Humanities, Literature and the Other Arts, Visual Culture, Disability, and Performance Studies. Her research examines the meaning, form, and style of literary works while exploring their imaginative and creative potential on the performance stage and screen. She is the co-author of *An Anthropocene Primer* - an Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) open-access, open peer-review publication that guides learners through the concepts and debates related to the Anthropocene.