

**DRAMATIC PERFORMANCES (AM-
ENDMENT) BILL**

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: We will now take up the next item. Shri V. P. Nayar.

There ought to be no hon. Member standing in the passages; either they should sit down or walk out.

Shri V. P. Nayar: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, after the glimpses of a little drama which we saw, I think it is fit and proper that we discuss something about the drama itself.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: A bigger one.

Shri V. P. Nayar: Yes; a bigger one. I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Dramatic Performance Act, 1876, be taken into consideration."

I do not for a moment believe that by amendments alone we can rid in this country, of the evil which has resulted from the Dramatic Performances Act in its existence for the last 80 years.

You know that in the year 1953, when Shri C. C. Biswas, the then Law Minister, brought forward a measure for the repealing and amending of certain acts. I wanted to introduce an amendment by which I also wanted the Dramatic Performances Act to be deleted from the statute-book. Then, the Speaker ruled that the private Member had no right to introduce amendments for the deletion of a particular enactment which was not included in the list which was proposed by Government. Therefore, Sir, I had no other go. Thereupon I sent in, a number of times, Resolutions to this House recommending to the Government that the Act should be repealed. I had not the good fortune to have the resolution balloted in my favour. Thereafter, I thought it was possible only by bringing in a Bill of the kind which I did now.

It is not necessary for me at all to emphasise how important the drama is not merely in the advancement of culture but also for other matters. Everyone knows how important a drama is and everyone also knows how restrictive the particular enactment which I refer to, the Dramatic Performances Act of 1876, has been during its history of the last 80 years.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member who is speaking must be assured of a calm and peaceful environment.

Shri V. P. Nayar: When I speak of of the drama and the Dramatic Performances Act, I want the Members opposite to realise that this should not be treated as a matter of political prestige.

The other day, when I sought by an amendment to introduce this as a measure for repeal, I remember very distinctly that Shri Charu Chandra Biswas said that it was necessary that the Act should be continued with as much vehemence as my friend Shri Datar said today that section 144 is necessary. I shall try to show to the House why it is not at all necessary in the present context; not merely that, it is absolutely unnecessary and the black Act, the Dramatic Performances Act should be repealed forthwith.

Recently, we have had other inventions. There is the cinema; there is also the television. But, these have not been successful in ousting the drama and we have no reason to believe that in the near future or in the future at all, the drama can be done away with. It is very important for us to note that even the President of India, the other day, when he sent a message to the Eighth Annual Conference of the Indian Peoples Theatre Association, held in Delhi during last

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winter, observed that the theatre occupies an important place in the social and cultural awakening of a people.

Sir, in India, we have great traditions of the drama. We have produced some of the world's best dramatists. And, in this book on *Indian Drama*, published by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, to which I shall have to refer later also, this is what is said about the Indian drama.

"A series of works of outstanding merit and beauty produced by her most talented dramatists, in ancient India, and also during modern times, under European influence, furnishes a unique record for at least 2,000 years from the predecessors of Bhasa and Sudraka down to Girishchandra Ghosh and Rabindranath Tagore."

We live in the traditions of these great dramatists and we are not giving an opportunity to those who live in those traditions to develop in the manner in which they would like, because you know that under the obnoxious provisions of the Dramatic Performances Act nobody can stage a drama unless he satisfies the police as regards the import of the drama. Here is an enactment by which the Government allows the police to masquerade as professors of culture in country, which as is said, has such great traditions of Kalidasa. How then can we expect that the dramatist or the dramatic troupe to produce a drama which, according to their mind, has to be produced in order to correct a social evil? It is under such circumstances that we have to take our memory back to 1876 when this Act was promulgated.

As we all know, the drama certainly provides a medium of expression and for that a very powerful expression of the human thought. I do not want to go into those details, but, I would say

that in the recent history of India, after the war of independence, the movement of the drama had a greater impetus. And, the moment the British rulers realised that here was something which was able to fire the imagination of the people who were already trying to rise in revolt, it had to be curbed if the British wanted to remain in power. I went through the speech of Mr. Hobhouse who was then the Law Member, when he introduced the Bill after it was reported by the Select Committee. I am sure if the hon. Minister has not read his speech, he may repeat most of the words which Mr. Hobhouse had used in those days in 1876. As we know, the British Government tried to control the drama because certain plays which were produced by the Great National Theatre of Calcutta were not liked by the then rulers. I do not want to refer to all the details. But there were plays which were very popular. When the Great National Theatre produced them, it really gave the people of Calcutta an occasion to think about the way in which they were being ruled.

I remember having read somewhere how this particular enactment, Dramatic Performances Act, had to be brought because Lord Northbrooke passed an Ordinance by which the magistracy was given power to prevent the drama from being staged. It also happened that by the same time some of the great Bengali dramatists produced popular plays, one of them being *Nai Darpan* which was an indictment of the British. It provided the picture of the exploitation by the British especially of the indigo cultivators of our country. That success was not confined to Calcutta. The same troupe took the play and had several performances in most of the North Indian cities. After that came another play and the Government had to think how best this could be prevented in order that they may maintain themselves in power.

I find that one of the plays, *Sati ki kalsangini* was the play which was responsible for the promulgation of this Act. I did not after all depict anything which was objectionable. After the promulgation of the Act, the actors were arrested when they were giving the performance. When the case was in trial, one of the British witnesses gave evidence in the court which is very well worth reading. This is what he is reported to have said: This was Owen who then functioned as an interpreter to the Calcutta Presidency Magistrate's Court. In his evidence he said:

"I have seen more obscene plays than this. The aim of the play is to inflame natural hatred against a tyrannical Magistrate. Mr. Allen who defended the accused said that the play was not obscene when compared with those being staged in English theatres in Calcutta or in Covent Garden and Drury Lane. He felt that if *Don Juan* could be staged in an English theatre in Calcutta, there was no point in examining these other plays too meticulously."

At a time when English people could be allowed to stage anything that was vulgar or profane or obscene with immunity in Calcutta, the Indians were not permitted to stage plays which depicted the semi-social evils which were rampant during the rule of the British. Therefore, the Act came into force and even the *Nil Darpan* about which I made a reference was also banned in Lucknow. We know that several plays written by some of our immortal dramatists had been banned. It was not confined to Bengal. There were plays and songs banned in Madras. The songs of Poet Bharathiyar were banned. In Punjab I understand that even today, the Dramatic Performances Act is in force to such an extent

that in most of the districts people are not permitted to put any such show. It has happened in Kerala. It has happened in U. P. and all the other States during all these years. Especially when there was a wave of political agitation, Government then, as the Government now, used the restrictive provision of the Act. You had to submit the script. If you go through so many details which have been given in the Press from time to time, you will be surprised to find that not merely modern dramatists have been made to come and offer their scripts but even the plays of authors who have created everlasting place in the world of drama had to be submitted, even their books have been subjected to scrutiny by the police bosses. In this context, Sir, I want the Government to consider whether it is not time that we replaced the hated enactment.

I find that the Sangeet Natak Akademi, which is specially created for the purpose of advancing the cause of drama, has also made a recommendation. Recently it has recommended to the Government that the Act should be completely repealed. I find that this recommendation was considered in detail by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in its Executive Board first and later on endorsed by its general body.

So, Sir, it is not merely my desire in bringing forward this amending legislation to take away one or two provisions, but it is equally my desire that Government should immediately think of repealing this Act.

Sir, I was submitting to you that there were plays which were banned, without any rhyme or reason, using the provisions of this Act, and that is an argument which I want to use in favour of my amendments. I remember that just before the Act came into force, just before Mr. Hobhouse introduced his Bill in the House, the Bengali play had created such a popular interest that when the Government came out with this Act the

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Amrita Bazar Patrika had to write in the following terms:

"If the Government imposed one rule after another on our daily activities, then perhaps we will not have long to obey the English King and live under the rigidities of the law."

When in 1950 by the Adaptation of Laws Order the Government of India extended the operation of this particular enactment to States in which the Act did not apply till then, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* seems to have lost its courage to come out with an open criticism like that.

Even as early as 1876 when the Government brought forward this legislation, the play for which the Government had to come out with this legislation was commented upon by the then mouthpiece of the British Government—the paper called *Englishmen and Military Chronicle*. Instead of telling the people that here was something which people should go and see in order to correct themselves, the mouthpiece of the British Government then said that it is not a play worth seeing and that all well-wishers of society should oppose it. I am only trying to show that from the moment the British people in India found it difficult to restrain the dramatists from expressing what they felt about the tyranny of the British rule, the British people found out a remedy through the Dramatic Performances Act.

Now, let us see what is happening today. Today if you want to have any piece put on board it may not be quite necessary that you should first go and take the permission, but technically it is necessary and on very many occasions when such permission was not taken those who have acted in the play and those who had produced the play have been hauled up on charges of having violated the provisions of the Dramatic Performances Act. I can understand that if

the Government are bent upon preventing what is obscene from being displayed before the public, then it can very well resort to a separate provision and it need not at all be the Dramatic Performances Act.

What do we find with regard to the cinema? It is something which gives the same influence, although it is different from drama because in drama it is only the form in which the actors or the characters come before the audience in all their flesh and blood. But what do we find in the cinema? There are gangster stories; there are cinema thrillers.

An Hon. Member: Bathing beauties.

Shri V. P. Nayar: Yes; he says there are bathing beauties. All that is obscene, vulgar and profane are allowed. You have a Board of Censors here. It was only the other day that my hon. friend Shri Tangamani put a question to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting about a picture which had provoked great public resentment—*Bhawani Junction*. When such pictures are allowed to be shown to millions of our people, the Government says that any drama which can at best be shown only to a thousand people at the most must necessarily get an all-clear from a policeman who is adjudged by the Government as the most competent authority to judge the cultural merit of a particular performance. I shall come to that later, because I have a concrete instance of how these men whom I refer to as those who masquerade as professors of culture have applied their common sense in the matter of finding out how a drama will be like.

I am submitting this because I have been pained at the way in which this Act has been relentlessly used in order to prevent progressive writers from giving expression to what they feel. I remember also the case of one of the dramas with the title *You made me a Communist* which was a most

popular drama for any drama in our language so far. I can submit to the House that over 300 times every year this drama was shown to the people, and not a single vacant seat was there in any of the theatres. Yet, when my hon. friends over there, when they were in power—I mean the Congress Government in the Kerala State—even when they knew that the Government was tottering, gave an order prohibiting this show. This has happened in Andhra also where I am told that the immortal play *Maha Bhoomi* was first shown. Some of the Congress Ministers of Madras, at the time when it was not divided, were present there. That picture depicted the struggle of the peasants at Telangana, and I was told by comrade Shri Nagi Reddy that Shri Gopala Reddy was himself one of those who saw the play. When it was being staged before millions of people, the Government struck, and prevented it from being shown under an order.

There are many other plays. If I go to Calcutta my hon. friends from Calcutta will know and tell me on how many occasions this Act has been used. So, when all of us agree that drama can have no substitute for the advancement of our culture, when our Government says that it is wedded to a policy by which they want to promote the drama to the maximum, when they have set up a Sangita Natak Academy for the advancement of drama in this country, when that Academy recommends to Government that this is an obnoxious piece of legislation and that it should be repealed, there can be no argument for my hon. friend that the Government cannot do it now.

I want also to submit that when we go through the history of this enactment, it is necessary for us to find out what the types of plays are which they have so far banned, resorting to the provisions of this Act.

I find that apart from *Nil Darpan*, many other famous plays were banned. Here are instances: Ramnarayan's *Navanatak*, Umesh Chandra Mitter's *Vidhava Bibaha*—that was

only a drama on widow remarriage—Madhusudan Dutt's *Buro Saliker Gharey Rhow*, and Dinbandhu Mitra's *Biay Pagla Buro*. These are all dramas which have been sometime ago staged.

Quite recently, I find that the immortal dramatist Girish Chandra's *Siraj-ud-Daula*, *Mir Kassim* and *Chhatrapati Shivaji* and Kshirod Prasad's *Nandakumar* were banned. All these are depicting characters whom we know and they have been banned in Bengal. It does not stop there. They also banned the play *August* 1942. Even the national struggles are found too dangerous to be depicted on the Bengali stage, and the police officers have prevented Hemdendra Gupta's *August '42* dealing with the national upsurge, and Digin Banerji's *Taranga* was banned by the Congress Government. Apart from these, innumerable folk songs all over the country have been banned. Innumerable dramas which the Indian People's Theatre Association, wanted to stage, have been in recent years, all after my hon. friends have come to power in our country, using not any new Act, but an Act which ought to have been as dead as mutton by this time.

I would very earnestly request the hon. Minister to consider how the power under this particular enactment has been so far exercised and how it will be necessary to accept my amendments, in order to prevent the mischief that has already been done. By continuing this legislation, the Government have continued to impose the shackles on the Indian drama. They have really fettered the hands of the dramatists. We want that the dramatists should have the full freedom to write and produce what they think is the best.

I shall show you one example of one of the police officers asking for certain scripts. I am again quoting from a magazine, *Unity for People's*

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Culture. I may be permitted to read a quotation:

"That the professors of culture of Lal Bazaar are entirely ignorant of anything remotely connected with drama was demonstrated last month when by a police order asking the I.P.T.A. to submit scripts of the following dramas by February 18, failing which legal action would be taken. These are some of the names in the police list:

Silk Saree, Kanchrapara, the Goat and Tulsi Lahiri."

It was difficult for the I.P.T.A. to submit scripts since *Kanchrapara* is only a play—the police took it to be a drama. *Tulsi Lahiri* is the name of a well-known author and actor. *Goat* is the animal which gives us milk or which we eat as flesh. The police of Lal Bazaar want the script of the goat to be submitted to them, knowing very well what a goat really is.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Can these be names of dramas?

Shri V. P. Nayar: No.

17-00 hrs.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: There was no drama by the name of goat, but if somebody gives that name?

Shri V. P. Nayar: I do not think any dramatist of this country will give the name of the goat for a drama, unless he wants to produce that drama for the advantage of the quadrupeds.

Tulsi Lahiri is the name of a very well-known actor. But worse was the insult which they gave to the great Rabindranath Tagore. There was a novel by him called *Gora* and the Lal Bazaar police want the I.P.T.A. to submit the script of *Gora* which is Tagore's play. Every school boy in Calcutta and West Bengal knew that *Gora* is a novel and it was available not through the I.P.T.A. but through the Shanti Niketan. It is there in every bookshop. This is the type of power which they have invested the police with. Therefore, this must stop.

If we want our country to produce great dramatists to keep up the traditions of the great Kalidasa, Bhasa or Tagore, I think Government should waste no time in breaking these shackles which they have imposed and which they have continued for the last 80 years.

I do not want to take more time, because I want other hon. Members also to speak on this. I shall conclude my speech with one reference about a case which has been reported from Allahabad on which the Allahabad High Court has made certain observations. All of us have heard about such cases, but this particular case is peculiar, although there have been cases like that in the State from which I come. There has been at least one instance in which the then Travancore-Cochin High Court ruled that certain provisions of the Dramatic Performances Act were *ultra vires* of the Constitution.

Here, in this UP case four or five workers of the IPTA were challaned for producing a drama without permission, as was contemplated under section 10. They were: Mrs. Razia Syed Zaheer, Bhapulal Varma, Gokulchand Rastomji and Amritlal Nagar. These were the four persons challaned under section 10(4) and the Magistrate before whom they had to appear was himself not satisfied and he made a reference to the High Court. In making that reference to the High Court, the magistrate wrote—

"It is debatable whether the Dramatic Performances Act of 1878 is inconsistent with Part III of the Constitution and can be considered that the Act is invalid. The question of validity of the Act is necessary to be determined for the disposal of the case, as no authoritative pronouncement has been made, either by the High Court of Judicature or by the Supreme Court."

It will be interesting to read out what the High Court, in their considered

opinion, has given before us and you will be surprised to know what was the play over which this prohibitory order was given. When Lucknow wanted to celebrate Id festival, the IPTA wanted to put on boards the play about Id. And that was written by no less a person than the great Munshi Premchand. Who is the police officer in this country who can question the right to encourage Munshi Premchand's play and get it acted before the people? I want to know it. Is the Home Minister competent? Is there anybody who is competent to question or say that Munshi Premchand's dramas should not be acted in public? There is a limit for all this nonsense which the police have been doing and, very rightly, as the High Court of Allahabad has observed, this was something unimaginable. The High Court, while delivering the Judgment—I am reading from AIR 1956...

An Hon. Member: Allahabad.

Shri V. P. Nayar: Allahabad, and the case is 571....

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Collective effort even in making a speech?

Shri V. P. Nayar: This is Criminal Reference No. 10 of 1954 made by the Additional City Magistrate, Lucknow. It is stated here:

"Merely because a person preaches or advocates by staging a play a political ideology..."

My hon. Minister, when he was referring to the discussion about section 144...

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Why should he appropriate to himself "my hon. Minister"?

Shri V. P. Nayar: That is only because he was generous enough to say that I was his very good friend.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: He could very well say "my good friend".

Shri V. P. Nayar: Yes, my good friend, the hon. Minister.

Shri Datar: Then it will be reciprocal.

Shri V. P. Nayar: I do it with grace. I am submitting this because I heard the hon. Member saying that section 144 was not intended or was not likely to be misused in cases where political disputes were concerned. I am reading from the judgment of the Allahabad High Court:—

"Merely because a person preaches or advocates by staging a play a political ideology different from the ideology of the party in power, the prohibitory order under section 3 is unjustified. The play cannot be characterized as the advocacy of the ideas which are likely to deprave and corrupt the people and so offend as clause (b) of section 3 has become a nullity as soon as the Constitution of India came into force. The prosecution of the accused for disobedience of the order under section 4 was absolutely misconceived."

He does not say that the order was merely wrong.

Judge of the High Court when he uses such a word uses it with most abundant caution and he says that this was misconceived. We know how these plays are being banned. It is a very interesting and a very learned judgment in which the judge himself says—I cannot say whether all the High Court judges of our country will appreciate the worth of Munshi Premchand or even Kalidas, but this particular judge at least says when he discusses the facts of the case:

"The late Munshi Prem Chand was one of the most outstanding writers of novels, short stories and plays."

One of the shortest plays is *Idgah*. That was the play which was banned and the accused were the organisers of the Lucknow Branch of the I.P.T.A. who arranged to stage *Idgah* on the

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Id day, i.e., on the 16th June, 1958. The Secretary of the Association, by a letter, had already requested the Police for permission which was not given and they were hauled up of having violated Section 10 and Section 3.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member has taken more than half an hour.

Shri V. P. Nayar: I shall finish in two minutes. I also assure you that at the time of replying I will not take these two minutes. If you give me fifteen minutes, I will finish in twelve minutes.

I only want to say that the amendments which I propose are on the face of it understandable even to the hon. Minister.

Shri Datar: Yes.

Shri V. P. Nayar: As the provision stands today, the Police can prevent a play which is scandalous or of a defamatory nature—why should we take any step to prevent dramatic performances, I do not know—or which is likely to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government established by law in this country. Everyone knows that this is completely redundant in the present context. The hon. Minister knows that the Act will violate the provisions of the Constitution where we have guaranteed certain rights of expression. That is the major point and therefore I want to provide for an appeal when cases of the kind which I have referred have been brought and in which the party has been aggrieved.

Before closing and before resuming my seat, I wish to tell the House that if I move for an amendment, as I do now, it is because I think that something is better than nothing. My desire is not to have this amendment passed, but to see that the hon. Minister comes forward with a proposal—I hope he will take immediate steps—to repeal this Act.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Motion moved:

“That the Bill further to amend the Dramatic Performance Act, 1876, be taken into consideration.”

I now call Shri D. C. Sharma. I must, with the permission of the House, ask hon. Members to be brief in their observations that they have to make because there must be, as I see, about half a dozen hon. Members who would like to participate. Certainly hon. Members should have their say and make the observations that they want to. Therefore I request them to be brief and concise.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I must admit at the very outset that the observations of Shri V. P. Nayar regarding drama have been very near my heart. All my life I have been a student of drama. I have been fond of witnessing dramatic performances. I have been in the habit of going to those theatres where plays have been performed. I share with him his desire for seeing to it that drama has a proper place in the national life of our country and in free India. But, I fail to understand how this Dramatic Performance Act, which has been on the statute-book all these years, has been responsible for stifling—I am using the word which Shri V. P. Nayar has used—stifling the dramatic movement in this country. I would say that even though the British might have used and abused, I would say this Act to the detriment of dramatists and dramatic performances during the days of the British rule, there were so many theatrical companies, there were so many dramatic performances going on in our country. But, it is not this Dramatic Performance Act which has killed the drama.

Drama has been killed by the mechanised amusements that we have these days, by the radio, by television—of course, we do not have television in this country—by the cinema. The cinema has rung the death-knell of

drama much more than any other instrument of popular amusement.

What is happening in other countries? In other countries, the State is subsidising drama. Also, in other countries, people love the theatre. They are getting together, and forming voluntary associations for keeping the flame of dramatic performances and dramatic entertainment alive. I can tell him, no Act of the Government, whether the British Government or the Congress Government or the Communist Government or any other kind of Government, no Act of any Government whatever its description, can kill the drama or kill the creative genius of any country. Dramatists there have been and dramatists there shall ever be in India. Of course, he was quoting some book on Indian Theatre. It is a good book. But, it is not any Act which can kill the flowering of the dramatic genius of this country. It cannot kill it.

What is happening is this. People have got used to methods of mass entertainment and they have lost, so far as taste is concerned, those values which they should have. It is that which is responsible: not this Act. Therefore, I should think that the hon. Member who moved this Bill should have come forward with some constructive suggestions to see to it that dramatic performances are performed in our country on a bigger scale than before or on as good a scale as they were performed at one time that I know. Instead of that, he has brought forward this Bill.

He has made a very wonderful plea for culture. I endorse his views about culture. But, I would ask him one thing. Can culture be equated with defamation; because he wants that word defamation should be taken out? I want to ask him one thing. Can culture be equated with treason to the Government, whatever the Government may be? I am not talking about the complexion of the Government. Today it is the Congress Government, tomorrow it may be the

Communist Government, day after tomorrow Praja-Socialist Government.

An Hon. Member: No, it cannot be.

Shri D. C. Sharma: After three or four days it may be some other Government. I am not talking about the complexion of the Government.

Shri Sadhan Gupta: Just as in Pakistan and France?

Shri D. C. Sharma: I am talking about the Bill. I want to ask one thing. Is culture to be a synonym for defamation? Is culture to be another word for treason to the Government, whatever that Government may be? Is culture to be taken out of the hands of magistrates and put into the hands of Sub-Inspectors of Police?

He says any person not below the rank of a Sub-Inspector can go to a house. Of course, I do not hold any brief for any policeman. I do not hold any brief for any magistrate. I do not hold any brief for any Judge. I say they are all apt to err. They might have erred. He has quoted some instances. I think if I were to go to the library, or some other friend were to go to the library, he will be able to quote more instances. All of us are apt to go astray, but I say the magistrate or the High Court Judge or some other person is more knowledgeable, apart from other things, than a Sub-Inspector of Police.

In clause 4 of the Bill which he wants as a substitute for section 8, he says that any person not below the rank of a Sub-Inspector can go to a house and in such a house, room or place take into custody all persons directly connected with such performance. Of course, he has provided for an appeal. Well, it is very good. First of all you steal the horse and then you say....

Shri V. P. Nayar: He does not steal. The Chair never does it.

Shri D. C. Sharma: By "you" I do not mean anybody here. Somebody

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steals the horse, and then we say: "You can steal the horse because we have provided for an appeal. Afterwards if the judgement goes wrong, there will be an appeal." I say the intentions of my hon. friend Shri V. P. Nayar are very admirable, are such as would appeal to any student of drama or literature or culture, but the remedy which he is proposing for this is something which I as a humble student of literature and a humble play-goer cannot understand.

Shri Tangamani: May I know what remedy he has envisaged?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: That can only be known after we have heard him.

Shri D. C. Sharma: He says in the Statement of Objects and Reasons that *jatras* and performances of a like nature at religious festivals have also been brought within the ambit of the enactment.

My hon. friend has been talking about Bengal. Bengal is very dear to my heart. I spent two precious years of my life in Bengal, and I can assure you that Bengal has left a stamp on my mind, but not a stamp of the kind he described, but it has left a stamp on my mind which I can never forget. I sometimes feel that I have something of the Bengalee about me. When I was a student in Bengal, I tell you, I witnessed so many of these *jatra* performances, and I must say they were good entertainment, they were good lessons, they were good performances from any point of view for the masses. He wants that these *jatras* and religious performances at religious festivals also should be brought within the scope of this Bill. So, I thought he had come forward to ring the death-knell of that Act. I had thought he was trying to modify that Act so that it loses its teeth, but my hon. friend Shri Nayar has been saying all kinds of self-contradictory things. Instead of restricting the scope of that Act, he is widening the scope of that Act. He says, bring the *jatras* and performances and religious festivals also within the scope of the Bill.

Shri V. P. Nayar: I am prepared to accept an amendment.

Shri D. C. Sharma: Of course, he may now say he is prepared to accept amendments. He is like me, wise after the event. But I cannot help it. I would say that he has brought these things also into it.

Nobody will deny the preamble of his speech on this Bill, and nobody can take exception to it, that drama must have a place in our life. And we are going to have a national theatre. Some persons belonging to different parts of the country may say, 'Why do you want to have a national theatre? What is the good of that? Why are you spending your money on that?'. But I would say that we should have that.

My hon. friend was talking about the Punjab, and the days when there was the Governor's rule in PEPSU. There was a consultative committee appointed at that time. I was a member of that consultative committee, and if I remember aright, my very good friend, Shri Punnoose, was also a member of that consultative Committee. That consultative committee was presided over by Dr. Katju. There, they brought forward the Bill about dramatic performances. But that was not accepted, because I saw with my own eyes that when the 1952 elections were going on, some of the persons, and some of these parties were having dramatic performances of a kind, which, I would say, instead of being a means of spreading culture, were the means of spreading hatred and were the means of spreading some kind of poison. And if the Punjab Government made use of some Act to put that down, I would not blame them.

What free India wants is drama, clean drama, noble drama, drama of a high kind. But free India does not want drama which has poison of any kind, whether it is communal poison or political poison or ideological poison

or poison of any kind. Therefore, the problem before us is twofold. In the first place, the problem is that we should try to place drama on a very stable footing. In the second place, the drama that we have should be of a kind which would give people wholesome entertainment.

Of course, I know there are persons who do not want censorship of any kind. And I tell you, a day will come when we would not have censorship of any kind. If you want to know my personal opinion about it, I would say that I would not like to have censorship of any kind, so far as books are concerned, so far as dramas are concerned, and so far as anything is concerned. I would like that there should be unfettered expression of thought. I would not like to put any kind of chain or fetter on any creative expression in this world. But so long as we have censorship in other countries—and every country in the world has it, in some countries it is more and in some others it is less—I do not see that this medium of mass communication—I call drama a medium of mass communication—should not have some kind of censorship, if I can use that word. If we have censorship for the cinema, if we have censorship so far as books are concerned, if we have censorship so far as despatches are concerned, I do not find any reason why we should not have censorship here also.

I am sure at least of one thing about this Bill of my hon. friend Shri V. P. Nayar. I was saying that I could understand the good intentions of the framer of this Bill. But I would say that this Bill, whether it is in its present form or in an amended form, is going to produce results which would be directly opposite to those which he wants to achieve. I know our Government are amending so many old Bills, and I know that they are trying to give a new shape to some of the old ideas and all that kind of thing.

I would, therefore, agree with him in this respect, that this question may

be gone into and something may be done to take away any obnoxious provision that is there in the Dramatic Performances Act. But the way, the approach of Shri V. P. Nayar is, I would say,....

Shri V. P. Nayar: Beyond reproach.

Shri D. C. Sharma: ...much more dangerous to the development of drama, much more harmful than perhaps the approach of those persons. After all, in free India, we cannot ban *jatras* and performances of a like nature at religious festivals. I do not know what kind of approach this is, that those things which have been giving clean entertainment for generations to our people should be banned.

I would, therefore, make an appeal to my hon. friend, Shri V. P. Nayar, who is a very studious student of our life, who applies his mind a great deal to the problems that come up before us; if Shri Datar is his good friend, I am also his good friend; so I would appeal to him as a good friend that he should withdraw this Bill, and that he should try to think of some other way of achieving those desired objectives to which he gave expression in the preamble of his speech.

Shri Easwara Iyer (Trivandrum): In rising in support of the Bill, I also share the view of my hon. friend, Shri V. P. Nayar, that the Dramatic Performances Act must be taken out of our statute-book. But I may not be able to tear off the pages of the statute-book, and no useful purpose will be served thereby. Therefore, I can only implore the hon. Minister and Government, as at present constituted, to see the reason behind the arguments advanced by my hon. friend and bring forward immediately proper amending legislation for taking away this hated enactment.

I cannot profess myself to be a student of art or culture, being a sort of a prosaic lawyer and a little bit of a politician. It has been said by a cynic

[Shri Easwara Iyer]

that politics and art may not go together, but the cynic repeated himself by saying that politics without art is like man and wife apart. So every politician must have some sort of art.

Shri Hem Barua: And wife also!

Shri Easwara Iyer: I leave it to my hon. friend.

My hon. friend, Shri V. P. Nayar, has considerable experience in the stage also, though I too could claim a part in the stage once, though it was not the part of a beautiful damsel.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: That was left to Shri V. P. Nayar alone!

Shri Easwara Iyer: Speaking about Indian drama, it has got an independent origin. So far as that is concerned, I can say without fear of contradiction from my hon. friend, Shri D. C. Sharma, who seems to be an expert on the subject, that it has got an independent origin. If Kalidasa's dramas are recognised to be a masterpiece of his literary excellence and poetic beauty, we have come to the 20th century when we have dramas of the western kind, dramas which are

comedies abounding in cynical chapters and realistic cocktails and cigarettes. If that is so, the Indian drama, as early as the 19th century, as has been vehemently argued by my friend, Shri Nayar, has been used as a powerful medium for expression of socialistic needs and purposes of society, and not merely, as my hon. friend, Shri D. C. Sharma would say, as an idle medium of entertainment. It has got its value. The Indian drama had its value. I do not say that the western drama had not also its value. Probably in the 19th century, when Ibsen's rebellious wife, Nora banged the door and walked out, the echo of that banging was heard by all the countries in the western world. That was a case where the powerful influence of Ibsen and the realistic drama was felt in the western countries.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Would the hon. Member like to continue?

Shri Easwara Iyer: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Then the House stands adjourned to meet again at 11 o'clock on Monday.

17:31 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, the 7th April, 1958.