



## Highlighting Socio-Political Issues Through Theatre in

### Pakistan

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#### Abstract

The present study explores the role of theater in Pakistan in socio-political issues. The qualitative methodology has been adopted for the research. Focus group study and in-depth interviews have been conducted. Findings show that though theatre has been stigmatized it has reflected the socio-political life of Pakistan especially, Commercial Comedy Theater.

**Keyword:** *Theatre, Commercial Theatre, Parallel Theatre, Medium, Communication, Socio-Political, Issues*

#### Introduction

Theatre is still exercised as a mode of communication across the globe. Social, political, religious, and war-related issues were being discussed in ancient drama. Theatre companies and organizations were supported by the court and the king. Theatre was used for conveying messages and announcements from courts. It was also used against opponents in ancient times. The theatre is the best medium of communication for the effective dissemination of any message to the public.

Theatre is being used for different purposes since the Greek period. It is known as a major element of culture (Asghar, 2018). Since ancient times, the Indo-Pak region has been a great treasure and practice of this culture (Bilal, 2018). In ancient times religious and cultural festivals are celebrated through performances i.e. summon gods and influence nature, as with rain

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dances and healing ceremonies. (Cohen, 2017). Initially, the art of theatre was used to demonstrate religious practices and teachings all over the world and in the sub-continent. Gradually, it became a medium of education, propagation, information, and entertainment (EBEWO, 2009). Now the theatre is an effective tool for change, a tool for communication and development all over the world.

Theatre reflects the culture and makes more persuasive efforts to influence the public. United Nations has been using theatre for several proliferation projects to bring awareness, education, and entertainment to the people. On the other hand, many countries around the world are utilizing theatre for development, democracy, education, public awareness, and many other projects.

Generally, TV drama, film, newspaper, and TV and radio talk shows are analyzed to check the role of media regarding the portrayal of socio-political issues, but theatre as a mode of communication and its role has been neglected ever. The purpose of this research paper check the role of theatre as a medium of communication, and how it is focusing on social issues in Pakistan. It aims to examine what kind of issues are being addressed through theatre in Pakistan.

#### Historical Background

Dr. Ahmad Bilal narrates the history of theatre in south Asia. Plato and Aristotle believed that drama is a reflection of reality. The word drama (dran) was originated in the 16th century; it has meaning to do, to act, or to perform. The earliest civilization of human beings used to perform some religious rituals wearing

masks, costumes, and makeup, it may be called the beginning of theatre. Theatre was started in the 5th century BC in South Asia. It was based on Hindu mythology as a divine art. Therefore it was performed at a religious festival. Kalidas was a court poet and writer who wrote the Sanskrit drama *Shakuntala* in the early 5th century AD. Hundreds of dramas were written from the 1st century to the 10th century AD. Sanskrit dramas are full of emotional sensations mostly they have happy ended even tragedy. Dance and Music are an essential part of south Asian dramas. Urdu theatre is a hundred years old in the region. It is not influenced by Sanskrit theatre. Urdu theatre got popular due to the degradation of Sanskrit theatre. Urdu theatre started in the Mughal period. Amanat lukhnawi wrote *Indarsabha* it is staged in Wajid Ali shah's court. Urdu drama as a form of art was ignored. The theatre has its local legacy like romantic lore. Many writers have translated English drama also. Parsi theatre companies have adapted Urdu theatre due to its commercial aspects. These companies played their dramas in Lahore and Mumbai most of the time. All the text of the theatre was much influenced by the European theatre (Bilal, 2018).

#### Theatre in Pakistan

After independence, culture, and art, especially theatre has been neglected because of the political ideology of the nation. Lahore was a hub of cultural activities before independence, so it continued after 1947. Folk theatre and storytelling were very popular entertainment. The tradition of the elite theatre was very confined to some elite. It was present in English drama and adaptation. Some glimpses of theatre can be seen in 1960-70 back

in Pakistan. Theatre could not progress due to cinema attraction in Pakistan. With hard restrictions and the dictatorship of the Zia regime introduced a new form of theatre called parallel-theatre, like *Teherek e Niswa* in Karachi and *Ajoka* in Lahore. Rafi peer theatre workshop started in 1970 to promoted local art. Rafi peer also has been organizing theatre festivals in the country. Media libration act 2002 has reinvigorated Pakistani theatre. (Ibid)

Naeem Tahir has described the situation of theatre in Pakistan after the partition. There was everything settled in India. The political institution, economic condition, and organizational structure were in the working position in India. Pakistan was a baby in 1947, everything was new. There were too many problems like the rehabilitation of migrated people from India to Pakistan. The economy was very poor, the constitution was not ready, the organizational structure was not proper and the Kashmir war. It was very hard to think about stage play and theatre in such a condition. Theatre was already ruined in War World II. Agha Hashir's theatre was destroyed. But despite all these matters, there were small scattered groups of theatres in Pakistan. They had continued their struggle and work. It was Government College which presented the first theatre play in (1950-51). It was based on a translation of Shakespeare's "Mid Summer Night Dream". Another play named "Government Inspector" was played in Government College by Naeem Tahir. It was also an adaptation. Khwaja Moin Ud din had started working in Karachi at the same time. "Zawal e Hyderabad" was played in Karachi under the supervision of Maulvi Abdul Haq (Baba e Urdu). It was individual-level efforts. The University of Peshawar played a very

important role to rehabilitate the theatre plays in the early years. Theatre had been grabbed greater attention in 1950. A German lady Sigirdkahle established the Clifton players club. It presented many dramas in Karachi during the struggling period. Khwaja Moin joined this club after some time. Art council Lahore formed in late 1948, was the first cultural organization in Pakistan. Fazal Kamal, Aslam Azhar, Mohsin Shirazi, Freed Ahmad, and Zia Mohiyy Ud Din were very prominent theatre players in 1955. "Bakheel" a theatre play was played by Naeem Thair in 1956, in Government College. "Mujrim Kon" a theatre play was also presented by Naeem Tahir in 1956. It was based on socio-political criticism. It is said, it was the first professional theatre play. It regained its production cost by 100 rupees ticket. The drama was translated by Izhar Kazmi and directed by Naeem Tahir for the art council. The duration of the drama was 90 minutes and it continued 14 nights consecutively. It was also played in Karachi under the supervision of Khwaja Moin Ud Din. Three more dramas were produced and directed by Naeem, which were "Aadaab Araz" (1958), "Soe Kahan" (1959), and "Aap Ki Tareef" (1960). The Bureau of National Reconstruction presented "Aur Shabnam Rotthi Rahi", Asia Khan and Punjabi Play "Pag" played in an open-air theatre in Lahore. "Babra Sahib" was performed by Agha Babur in Rawalpindi. "Hans Ki Chal" by Nazir Zaigham, Aap Ki Tareef, and "Kanjoos" by Naeem, converted in the repertoire. These plays had a very major role in the development of theatre in Pakistan during the second decade of Pakistan (1963-1970). Naseer Ud Din played many dramas in Cotton mills in Lyallpur (Faisalabad) during the same period. Bano Qudsia wrote

her first script for theatre "Ik Tery Aane Se Pehle" and got 2000 rupees for it. She wrote five more plays for theatre which were "Adhi Bat", "Manzil Manzil", "Khawaboon Kay Musafir" and "Sitamgar Tere Liae". Intazar Hussain wrote "Darad Ki Dawa Kia Hae". Theatre drama writing became a profession and many other names came into the field like Anwar Sajjad, Sufi Nisar, Rasheed Umer Thanvi, Attiqullah Sheikh, Begum Imtiaz Ali Taj, Salim Chishti, Asghar Butt, Sajjad Haidar. Theatre got some impetus when local administration in major cities started sponsoring plays. Most active among them were Sialkot, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Faisalabad, Multan, Sahiwal, Rahim Yar Khan, Hyderabad, and Jacobabad. Some prominent actors of the theatre of the time were Qavi Khan, Masood Akhtar, Ali Ejaz, Athar Shah Khan, Kamal Ahmad Rizvi, Nazir Begum, and Attya Sharaf (Bokhari, 1982).

The historical background is not only explaining the vital role of theatre in the world but also highlights the significance of theatre in Pakistan.

Largely theatre culture is very rich in Pakistan. For case in point, generally on marriages, it is usually observed a group of people (Bhand) come and performed music for chief guest and guest of honor, the improvisational drama is also performed for invited public on that happy occasion. Improvisational drama is based on very sophisticated satirical dialogue (Juggat) of that event. It is experienced these satirical dialogues are based on the current socio-political and socio-economic situation of the societies. These kinds of theatre groups are found normally in the rural areas of Pakistan. These may be called community theatre or

certainly have a basic concept of community theatre. One more example of community theatre or women's theatre is of rural women when they come together, they sing folk songs and performed the traditional entertainment of women and sometimes it is based on local issues. Theatre is here in our soul. There is no systematic and scientific in-depth research on this type of theatre. All types of emotions like sorrow, happiness, love, hate are remained inner side of women like women remain in close rooms (Safder, 2016).

In the 1980s, the Renaissance period of the theatre started as resistance against dictatorship and the laws regarding women in Pakistan in Zia's regime. It was the time when press and broadcast media were facing restrictions and parallel theatre (street theatre) took up the charge. "The Parallel Theatre Movement, or 'Street Theatre' as it is loosely called, in the province of the Punjab, Pakistan, emerged during the General Zia-ul-Haque's Martial Law regime 1979-1989" (Khan, 1997). At that time, it was titled "Resistance Theater" because it was getting popular among people and was proving to be a great threat to the government.

It is important to understand the difference between freestyle (commercial) Theatre and Parallel Theater or Alternative Theatre. Parallel theatre or Alternative theatre focuses on the socio-political issues related to human behavior, animals, the environment, and much more. The theatre presents these problems and issues in an experimental style. It is based on a literary foundation with a non-commercial approach but to fulfill the ideology of awareness, development, infotainment, and

edutainment. The other names used for the parallel theatre are experimental theatre, interactive theatre, forum theatre, environmental theatre, physical theatre, Third theatre, street theatre, resistant theatre, developmental theatre, community theatre, street theatre, political theatre, popular theatre, and people theatre.

Commercial Theatre is a purely business-based platform. Its main purpose is to earn money. In the race of earning money, the theatre adopts all tools and tactics to attract the audience and things end up with poor subjectivity, vulgarity, and illogical scripts. The use of abusive language, character assassination, gender demoralization, incorporation of dances, and songs are the common content of these theatre performances. Sometimes it highlights social issues like beggary, social injustice; issues of disabled persons. However, these problems are highlighted in a humorous way instead of keeping a serious mode.

This type of theatre which is working in Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, and other cities of Punjab and Urdu commercial theatre in Karachi and Hyderabad is an advanced form of "Bhand" mostly performing on marriages and other happy events in the rural areas of the country. Most of the time two or three people, stand on the stage and make laughter for the audience through Juggat (wordplay). They used improvisational techniques (Sehbai, 2014). "Bhânds' then launch into a series of comic dialogues, with allusions pouring at torrential speed, addressing socio-cultural and political subjects familiar to the audience. Performers use the full faculties of language to turn constructs on their head in juggat (wordplay), which includes



puns, incongruities, reversals, rhymes, metaphors, cultural idioms, and unadulterated nonsense” (Pamment, 2008).

It is very important to shed light on the folk theatre of Pakistan. This kind of theatre is moved across the country. This is called tent theatre, truck theatre, or mobile theatre in recent times. Folk theatres like to work on Mela Besakhi and Urs (Fare, religious Fare, or Shrine festivity) by and large.

Another very famous tradition of theatre is here in Pakistan is in colleges, universities’ clubs, and societies that present drama and music on the annual dinner occasion. Sometimes these clubs represent their Universities and Colleges in different competitions organized by government and non-governmental organizations. This kind of theatre is called amateur theatre, but the pace of this tradition is also going down. But celebrity theatre is very sound and popular in Pakistan and this kind of theatre has very strong traditions and deep roots in the country like “Ta’zya”, the procession of Eid Melad Un Nabi and Eid Ul Azha, etc.

“Muslims throughout the world acknowledge the festival of Ashura in various ways..... Christians of Orthodox and Catholic traditions have, since the middle ages, celebrated their belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus at the once pagan festival of new life, Easter” (Pickering & Woolgar, 2009).

Theatre for Development (TFD)

Rashid (2015) presents the comparative study of two big organizations of theatre in Punjab, Ajoka Theatre, and Punjab Lok RaHS. Both are nonprofit organizations and present issues-based drama through street theatre most of the time. They performed

drama and music in - house some time. All of the shows are free of cost. The only objective is awareness of the public regarding issues and to educate them. The researcher highlights the historical background of both organizations also. Most of the information is provided from the research of Fozia Afzal Khan and developed arguments by her book and research. Punjab Lok RaHS is a poor organization financially. Most people who are working for the organization belong to the lower class. This organization is more democratic as compare to Ajoka and its work is very effective. Ajoka theatre is very opportunist, it presents its work on a commercial basis and also gets sponsors from the government. Artists and workers of the organization are belonging to the middle and upper-middle class. This organization has a relationship with Donors and other NGOs. Ajoka theatre performs drama in Urdu and English along with the Punjabi language it uses costly costumes, getup, props, and makeup but Lok RaHS only performs in the Punjabi language and uses simple props and costumes, some are performed without them. Ajoka highlights religious, political, economic, women relating issues. Punjab Lok RaHS (P L R) only performs in the Punjabi language and highlights issues through Sufi intellectuals. Lok RaHS believes that performance, issues, and messages are important. These elements are not depending on costumes and props. This organization works for the proliferation of the Punjabi language and culture of Punjab and plays up the issues of lower-class Punjabi people. Lok RaHS has strong roots in public as compared to Ajoka.

The study elaborates on the Pakistani Parallel theatre very meaningfully. The research also has described the socio-political subjects which have been highlighted. This study has been carried out under the art and design perspective from Australia.

Afsar & Gill (2004) asserted that theatre for development is a very successful tool to change the attitude and behavior of the public in rural Sindh, Pakistan. It is proved across the globe. They observed people are very reluctant to discuss their sexual health. They feel ashamed which is why they face hard problems regarding health issues. The state of health education is also very poor in Pakistan. There are many barriers if hard issues are addressed through another way of communication except TFD. The hostile situation can be overcome in the community's problem addressing via theatre for development. Five days theatre workshop is designed for the people of Jindodhero village in Sindh. Results are found very hopeful during the theatre workshop. People like this activity. They discussed their health-relevant problems also gave their suggestions for a better way to communicate the issues. They participated in activities of performances enthusiastically and showed their positive behavior toward their women. Two plays were performed; one was based on the wet dream of a young boy and the other is a comedy play that addresses the issue of an unnecessary visit to a health care center. TFD tool remains very successful in five days workshop in Sindh. This activity was organized by Ahang (NGO) based in Karachi with the cooperation of the Villages Development and

Welfare Association (VDWA), Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO).

The study has been done from a medical perspective majorly but it has strengthened the thought about the efficacy of theatre drama. It has not been explained under the social responsibility theory. The study has not been done under the social sciences.

#### Political Theatre

Saleem (2014) establishes that the Ajoka Theatre is a pure political theatre. It practices Brechtian traditions in its performances in Pakistan. Ajoka theatre has been working since 1980. Shahid Nadeem is the writer of Ajoka. He likes Brecht's way of theatricalities, so he practices like him in Pakistan. This type of literary and political work of Brecht has recognition internationally. It is against the theory of the Aristotelian way of theatrical performances and thinking. Brecht's style and techniques of theatre charge the audience for political activism. The researcher presents a few plays of Ajoka in the research to prove Ajoka is a political theatre. These plays are *Dukhini* (women of sorrow), *Aik Thi Nani* (Granny for all the seasons), and *Kala Mendha Bhes* (Black is my robe). All plays have a metaphorical presentation. Ajoka started its work in Zia's regime against Zia's oppression laws as Hadood ordinance, suspension of democratic process, and institutions. All theatrical performances have a folk setting according to regional culture. Songs and dances are important elements of Ajoka's plays. Ajoka's performances compel the audience to think and realize the issues.

Research has emphasized political activism through theatre arts. It has not focused on the medium of communication and its responsibility. However, it explains the picture of Pakistani theatre in socio-political activism.

#### Folk Media

Sultana (2015) explores the origin, history, style of performance of theatre, and relation of that performance with social issues or human rights in India. Research explains the development of communication models and practicing those models in older periods, then creates a connection of those models with folk media. She discovers that the Indian government, NGOs, SAGs, and some international agencies use folk media for development communication successfully in India. Research puts a case study as an example to prove the effectiveness of theatre; like the polio eradication campaign by Kolkata creative Art in West Bengal. India has a very diverse culture and communities so, it is only folk theatre to bridge each other because theatre has local dialect and language. People feel intimacy and learn things swiftly. Folk theatre is very constructive in India because most of the population is illiterate.

The investigation supports the study at hand. This study has been done in India and focused on the development communication model through theatre but it has not fulfilled the purpose of the social responsibility model, although it has explained the model with great zeal.

#### Art and Aesthetic

Khan (2015) explains her work of theatre writing and performance “Jihad against violence” in the context of Afghanistan and

Pakistan. Historically explains how the Taliban and Pakistan were used against Soviet forces by the USA in past. America and Saudi Arabia sowed the seed of the Taliban in Pakistani soil through Madrassa (conventional Islamic institute). Pakistan was an ally of America at that time still, Pakistan is an ally of the US when American forces invaded Afghanistan to eradicate the Taliban and Al-Qaida organizations in Afghanistan. Play and performances expose the misuse of power by America and its wish to colonialize the other world. Dramaturgy also elucidates the war against terror and ISIS's situation. Drama is performed in Islamabad and Karachi for a particular audience in a very tight environment. This drama is translated by different people belonging to different countries and different cultures. It is translated into the Arabic language also. It is performed in Morocco. The transformation of play varies from women to women, culture to culture. Suffering and issues of women are almost remaining the same in the world. Dramaturgy, dramatization, techniques, and styles of Theatre performance in the script are also explained in the study. Critics of intellectuals regarding play are included in the research published in different papers. The article is not focused on what the researcher wants to say. The article started with Talibanization in the region then the study moved to the drama written by the researcher on the subject of Taliban and American wish of colonialization in the region. This drama is performed in different areas of Pakistan and across the world. After this, the drama is translated from a different perspective in the context of culture and the feminist approach. Again article is turned to dramaturgy and style of performance

and techniques of drama. The article moved around the self-appreciation of the researcher.

The study has been conducted under the subject of art and design and its purpose to aware of the public regarding issues but this research focuses primarily on symbolic art activism and its artistic creation.

#### Socio-Political context

Gahuar, M (1997) describes the whole story of Ajoka Theatre and its relation with other theatre groups in South Asia. There is a very rigged attitude toward art and culture in Pakistan. The founder of theatre visited India in 1982 to seek some sort of theatre work regarding theatre from some Indian artists like Badal Sarkar and practiced in Pakistan in 1983 because they were on the same page in situation and condition. Cultural programs were stopped in PTV because of policies of that time; many journalists were put behind the bar against the charge of violations of law. She had learned that theatre does not need any props, costumes, makeup, and getup, etc. Then drama "Jaloos" was staged in her mother's home in 1988. Any law could not stop performance. Ajoka works for human rights, democracy, and so-called religious laws. Ajoka has broken the geographical boundaries of neighboring countries through its theatrical performances and shares the same cultural issues with them and has nourished relations with them. South Asian theatre committee was established by Ajoka in Lahore in 1992. Ajoka has been participating in its regular meeting in different countries like India, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Nepal, and Bhutan. Ajoka has invited renowned writers and directors from other countries for its theatrical workshops and performances.

Ajoka has addressed socio-political issues through its drama like "Ett", "Aik Thi Nani", "Dukkhni", "Khasma Nu Khani", "Dekh Tamasha", "Barri", "Chullah", "Dhi Rani", "Jhalli Kithe Jawaee" and it will continue its endeavor.

The study highlighted the story of Ajoka Theatre and its working since its birth. It has not described the whole story of theatre in Pakistan as a medium of communication except the Ajoka. But the case study presents the sketch of parallel theatre in Pakistan as a mode of communications, and its journalistic use in the favor of the public interest.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Study in hand the researcher has intended to evaluate and analyze the condition of theatre as a medium and its function of drama relating to social issues. Social responsibility theory is useful in explaining the responsibility of media towards society because media plays a very vital function in social life. Keeping in view, "Social responsibility model" whether theatre is fulfilling its responsibilities according to objectives or not, like theatre for development (TFD), theatre for oppressed (TO), theatre in education (TE), political theatre, and commercial theatre in Pakistan. Commercial theatre performs dramas almost in all cities of Pakistan. Many other theatre companies present their performances in Pakistan and out of the country as a representative of Pakistan. It is of significance to check what kind of issues and problems are addressed in dramas.

### **Methodology**

Focus group study and in-depth interviews have been conducted for the research. People who are directly involved in the relevant



field of practice and were experts were interviewed and were part of the focus group. Interviews and focus group were conducted to address the following questions.

RQ1. Is theater being used in Pakistan to raise awareness regarding socio-political issues?

RQ2. Have social issues been truly presented by the theatre in Pakistan?

RQ3. How female related issues are being addressed through theatre?

RQ4. Which form of theatre is most suitable for depicting social issues prevailing in Pakistani society?

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Summary of Focus Group Study**

The focus group study was conducted on February 21, 2020, in Radio FM 96.6 LCWU, Lahore College for Women University Lahore. The participants of the focus group were Fazal Abass Faezi ( Seniors Theatre, Actors and Trainer), Sonya Allah Rakha ( Theatre researcher), Muhammad Waqas Laal( Theatre teacher, Director, and performer), and Muhammad Qurban Prince ( Senior cultural and Showbiz reporter ). This focus group discussion lasted for two hours. All the queries are addressed in this study.

The outcome of the focus group showed that parallel theatre is considered to be the most suitable media for social change. The theatre dramas are depicting issues very close to society. The parallel theatre is emphasizing women relating issues most of the time. Today both theatres are working on social issues, especially on women's problems (Violence, Harassment, and others) and socio-political issues. But commercial theatre has lost its

effectiveness due to its commercial interest and they have no basic objective to educate the people. Most of the time theatre has been faced with religious and political resistance due to its subjects. NGO Based theatre has no factual-based issues because they are paid and sponsored. They have no real spirit of theatre.

Theatre was used only for entertainment in the early years in Pakistan but after 80's it has become the mode of socio-political activism. Parallel theatre is being used for the exploited women and other related issues but in commercial theatre; women are only symbol of sexuality most of the time.

#### In-Depth Interviews

According to Naeem Tahir (Actor, Writer, Director, Researcher) theatre is a medium of expression. Every emotion, feeling, thought, and problem can be expressed through theatre. It might be political, social, religious, and environmental issues. All these things are an integral part of the drama. It was a great drama "Mujrim Kon" (Who is the culprit) by "Naeem Tahir" based on the socio-political issue a story of a poor girl. It was performed in the Ayyub regime. This drama was a game-changer in the theatre field in Pakistan. It had done large business. Ayyub's government was very supportive of cultural activities. Theatre is more effective to address the issues, other than the media. The analysis shows us how many political and social issues have been pointed out in the "Juggat" (satirical dialogue, improvisation) of Bhand. Even regional and international conflicts can be resolved through theatre, for instance, it was the cultural policy of the Ayyub's regime, and relations were built with china through theatre.

Respondent answers that the theatre has been addressing the socio-political issues. These issues are very relevant to Pakistani society. All genre of theatre is good for the public. There can be no drama without women's issues. Women's issues are highlighted.

Likewise Shahid Nadeem (Ajoka Theatre, writer, director. Pride of performance) said theatre is live, theatre is immediate, and theatre has a strong impact, it is for edutainment. It is entirely different from journalism. Theatre is culturally rooted. "Kali Ghata" and "Bala" were based on environmental issues. It is needed time to educate the people regarding the dangers of polluted environments. "Jum Jum Jewe Jmman Pura" was based on the issue of overpopulation before this. It became Junjal Pura on PTV. Barri and Nele Hath were based on women issues like women in Jail and domestic violence. Theatre is for awareness not for guidance. It is not the responsibility of theatre to address issues but it is drama to reflect the story of life and drama affects the people; it compels the people to think about the issue which is reflected in drama. Ajoka theatre has done great work on socio-political issues. There are many dramas on women's exploitation staged by Ajoka. Interactive theatre is very appropriate for society. All the issues are very relevant to a society that is presented by Ajoka.

Afzal Murrad (Writer, Director, Actor, and Researcher) also agreed that the theatre plays in Baluchistan is connected with the Socio-political system. Theatre has played a very important role to promote the education system in Baluchistan, it was started in 1960. "Waqt ki Talash" Produced by Jamal Shah it was

written and directed by Mr. Murrad. The drama depicted the oppression of the regime period of Zia; it was played in the Zia regime. It also depicted terrorism in Baluchistan. NGO's Theatre has played its role to commercialize theatre in Baluchistan but it was not long-lasting, in the account of funding. As soon as the money ran out, the theater ended. Though they have informed the people regarding environmental issues, mothers feed, family planning, health issues, and so many others. They work in a particular circle. Sadaf academy of Arts and Sunggat Arts Academy has a very vital role in socio-political theatre in Baluchistan. It has a strong effect. It is a tool of political and social activism. Theatre is a public court. Parallel theatre is very effective to bring social change in Pakistan. Parallel theatre educates the public. It cures society. Though commercial has much attraction, it deteriorates society. Without messages, issues, and subjects theatre drama is just like a body without a soul, Art for the sake of art is not art. He observed that the issues raised in the theater dramas were very compatible with Pakistani society. Socio-political issues have been presented through theatre drama in Pakistan. Women's issues are overemphasized most of the time. Street theatre is a good way to edutainment the public.

Whereas, Fiza Hassan (CEO Theatre wale, Teacher, writer, director, and performer) shared that theatre should be connected with its audience. It should be relevant to the hot issue of society. Theatre wale has performed a French adaptation "The school for wives" on women's marriages issue. The second one was "The Lesson" on the issue of the mechanical education system recently. Theatre wale presented theatre drama "Kartos"

when Salman Taseer had been assassinated in Islamabad. World literature provides security on any contention on an issue. Theatre is not merely a school, it is also entertainment at the end and it should be entertainment. Theatre is very costly for the common man, so it should be subsidized so that people can connect with it. The theatre is for all. Children are much neglected in Pakistan, Theatre wale is doing the job for them, purely in entertainment form along with their issues like child abuse, child labor, etc. People want to see theatre drama, the audience is a very acute observer and they are fully connected with drama during the performance. They have a very positive response. Theatre has very rapid feedback. It is a very effective medium as compared to other mediums. Theatre is public art. Theatre is doing its job regarding entertainment, awareness, and education. Only parallel theatre can perform this responsibility. All the sufferings are very natural that are presented.

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

The literature review suggested that theatre is the oldest medium of communication, entertainment, and art on this globe. It is also highlighted that the medium is the most effective till today compared with other mediums like Radio, TV, and Film. The historical background and literature provided enough insight into theatre in Pakistan. Findings suggested that the theatre in Pakistan did talk about issues for development and social change (TFD) and addressed issues like education, health, public health, and so many other public awareness programs. Parallel (Street Theatre, Forum Theatre, etc.) theatre is being used by the supports of government and corporate sector in Africa, Latin America, and

also in the region like India and Bangladesh but has very little frequency in Pakistan.

The non-commercial theatre groups (parallel theatre) working in Pakistan since 1980 and are truly presenting sociopolitical issues. They are providing information and educating people regarding their rights and are working for the public interest. They are fulfilling their social responsibility in this regard. The tradition of "Bhands" and its extension like commercial theatre is very sound in Pakistan. It has not been accepted as a theatre in most literary circles. This tradition of theatre is considered harmful for theatrical activity because this theatre has been stigmatized. Despite severe criticism, it is considered to be a theatre according to the definition. They have a very strong lampoon through "jugat" on social, political, and religious lacunas.

The experts viewed that the theatre drama is a very effective tool for the proliferation of awareness and social development. It has a direct relation with the audience. Theatre is two-way communication and gives very fast feedback. Theatre drama was very rich at the beginning of arts councils and in open-air theatre; it was a complete package of theatre drama full of socio-political issues, a combination of comedy and tragedy with classical dance. Commercial dramas reached their peak in the late '80s and mid-'90s. Theatre drama has discussed issues like political, religious, and social through the tradition of Bhands like "Shartia Mitthay" (Surely Fruitful), "Kotha" (Brothel), "Pesa Bolta Hae" (Glittering Money), "Janam Janam ki Meli Chadar" (Eternal Sinner), "Aik Tera Sanam Khana" (My Last Hope), "Bakra Qiston

Par”( Rent a Got), many other are the best examples. A story of Blind women by Rafi peer is a marvelous drama on the issue of women empowerment, it was first produced in 1933, and “Mujrim Kone” (Who is Culprit) by Naeem Tahir was the story of exploitation. Parallel theatre is pure political activism and edutainment in Pakistan.

Every kind of theatre is suitable for Pakistani society, but the condition is theatre should be a theatre. It should be rooted in its soil and should be representative of local culture and its values. Theatre should be high art. It automatically discusses issues and problems. Drama is all about the life of a human being.

Most of the respondents of this research agreed that parallel theater is fulfilling its social responsibility. They are providing healthy edutainment to the public, they are struggling for the rights of people, and are raising their voice against different types of exploitation in Pakistan. They present their shows free of cost. All the text of theatre is relevant to ground reality. Their scripts of drama are very sound. However commercial theatre has become very shallow and unethical after the late 90s. It is no more family show, reasons have been discussed above, so it is not caring for its social responsibility. Few respondents have disagreed with the point of view; they argue that commercial theatre is a true representative of Pakistani society and overall society is in decline in Pakistan.

In this regard, it follows the social responsibility model as a mirror of society. Social responsibility has been examined through the portrayal of socio-political issues in theatre drama. So, the responsibility is being fulfilled. If theatre provides healthy

entertainment for the public as an art, for the sake of arts, it means, the theory is being followed because people have a desire to be entertained and the desire for entertainment is very high due to social and political oppression in Pakistan.

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