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Women as Victims of Violence in Dina Mehta's *Brides Are Not for Burning*, Poile Sengupta's *Mangalam* and Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out*

Arup Ratan Chakraborty

Abstract ■ Indian women playwrights have been integral part of mainstream Indian theatre since late 1970s. Women playwrights have provided a different and more realistic viewpoint of women's concerns as compared to their male counterparts. Dina Mehta, Poile Sengupta and Manjula Padmanabhan are three of the contemporary women playwrights writing in English. In their plays they address such issues as oppression and exploitation of women, domestic violence, bride-burning, discrimination against women and the like. Women have been facing violence and are exploited everywhere in the society. They fall victims not only to strangers on street, but also to unfeeling members of their respective families. Dina Mehta in *Brides Are Not for Burning* (1979) explores the problem of domestic hostilities faced by a bride in a dowry-ridden system. Poile Sengupta's *Mangalam* (1993) deals with domestic violence and molestation of women by the members of her family. She has shown how women are vulnerable in all strata of society. Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* (1984) investigates the problem of sexual violence and people's indifference towards the victims. As the play progresses one feels how the majority of women in society learn to 'live' with abuses of all sorts. My attempt in this paper is to analyse how violence against women with its complex layers has been presented in the works of these playwrights. I shall also try to focus on how the women characters in these plays raise their voices against violence unleashed against them and how they have attempted to counter gender discrimination in the society they live in.

Keywords: women playwrights, bride-burning, molestation, domestic violence, exploitation

Till the late twentieth century, women writers in India were mainly writing fiction and poetry rather than drama. Indian feminist theatre gained attention in the wake of 1970s feminist movement of the West. The post-independence Indian theatre has dealt with concerns of the oppressed and the marginalized people and their attempt to fight hegemonic dominance of the ruling class. Playwrights and directors of this era such as Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad, Mahesh Elkunchwar, Habib



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