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The topic of my thesis is “*Representation of Gender Bias: A Study of Three Indian English Women Playwrights*”. The purpose of this study is to analyse how gender is portrayed and how gender roles are predetermined and defined in plays by Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta and Dina Mehta. Indian English drama has not received as much attention as Indian English fiction or poetry. Women playwrights, especially, have not received much attention. Many doctoral researches have been devoted to Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani, Vijay Tendulkar and Mohan Rakesh but hardly any to these three women playwrights. The purpose of this study is to examine the representation and role of women in Indian Drama.

My first chapter is introductory in nature, and surveys Indian English Drama from its beginnings to the present. Then I proceed towards studying the problematic category of Gender, which adopted different connotations over a period of time. Further, I discuss western feminist theorists and the aesthetics of Indian Feminist Theatre. I also look at indigenous feminist literary theorists and how they take a stance which is different from that of their western counterparts.

My second chapter, “Breaking Structures of Patriarchal Constraints: Dina Mehta’s Plays” examines her plays *The Myth Makers*, *Brides are not for Burning* and

*Getting Away with Murder* in detail. The interpretation of women-centered issues in Dina Mehta's plays is realistic and it provides enough space to study the life of Indian middle-class women on the basis of their psychological and social state

My third chapter entitled "Placing Women Center Stage: Poile Sengupta's Plays" takes up six plays by Poile Sengupta who occupies a distinguished position in Indian English drama particularly for her socio-political perspective on contemporary Indian life. In the chapter detailed discussions are provided of stagecraft and dramatic techniques like stage directions, sound effects, off-stage, language, soliloquy, symbolism etc.

My fourth chapter entitled "Violence and Gender Relations in the Plays of Manjula Padmanabhan" is based on Manjula Padmanabhan's plays and it analyses the perceptions, attitudes and inner conflicts of the women characters living in a male-dominated society and further examines the manner in which it gets reflected in their actions and influences their relationships with men/women round them.

.My fifth chapter, "Conclusion" provides a summing up of the thesis. It examines the commonalities and the contrasts in the way these three women playwrights represent gender bias in their work. These women playwrights do not aim at a cultural catharsis through the texts. Instead they "roil the equilibrium, disturb the mind, resist closure and deny a therapeutic purging of the mind" (as Tutun Mukherjee puts it). They aim at "consciousness raising" and envision a more just and equal society by bringing about attitudinal change. To present the work of women playwrights means re-reading the tradition and re-ordering the canon. All this time the dramatic canon has been monopolized by patriarchy; the acts of repossession must now begin. This thesis is a step in that direction.