

The Stage and the State: Theatre Censorship in Colonial India

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Abstract: *This paper explores the history of theatre censorship in colonial India; focusing on how socially provocative dramas that carried anti-colonial sentiment provoked the anxieties of the colonial state. Centered on the Dramatic Performances Act of 1876, it argues that colonial law functioned performatively, asserting authority in response to theatre's emotional and political power. Comparing British and colonial censorship, the paper shows that while colonial enforcement was harsher, both systems grappled with the same core tension between law and the disruptive force of theatre. Ultimately, censorship reveals how colonial governance sought to control not just dissent but public emotion, exposing deeper anxieties about imperial authority.*

Keywords: *Colonial India, Censorship, Drama, Imperial Authority, Protest, Theatre etc.*

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Introduction

The introduction of the Western-style proscenium stage into Bengali culture was initially a mimicry of colonial English theatre in Calcutta. Early efforts, such as those by Russian visitor Gerasim Stepanovich Lebedeff in 1795, attempted to introduce Bengali-language plays in this format but did not immediately lead to a sustained tradition. It was not until the mid-

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nineteenth century that a more organized form of Bengali theatre emerged, largely through the patronage of the *babu* class—wealthy, educated members of the Bengali intelligentsia. This emerging theatre, under *babu* patronage, initially served as highbrow entertainment. It celebrated Indian cultural heritage by staging Sanskrit classics and English plays, translated or adapted into Bengali. Crucially, this form of theatre adopted the Western proscenium stage, challenging the traditional mode of Bengali spectatorship, which had been more immersive and spatially flexible.¹ By the 1850s, however, Bengali theatre began adapting itself to a growing middle-class audience, culminating in the establishment of two ticketed theatres in 1872. One of these, the Great National Theatre, was architecturally modelled on the British-built Lyceum Theatre in the colonial quarters of Calcutta, which itself took inspiration from the London Lyceum and, further back, from the Hellenic Lyceum of Aristotle's time.

Origins of Bengali Protest Theatre

Between the mid-1850s and 1872, a minor yet significant literary tradition of original Bengali drama began to emerge. One of its earliest examples was *Kulinkulasarvasva* (1857) by Ramnarayan Tarkaratna, a play that criticized the polygamy of the *kulin* Brahmins. Rooted in Sanskrit dramaturgy, the play initiated a wave of socially conscious dramas.²

This trend gradually evolved into political commentary, most notably with Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nil Darpan* (1860), a play about the exploitation of indigo plantation workers by British planters. When staged in 1872 as one of the first productions of Bengal's ticketed theatre, *Nil Darpan* gained reputation as a “protest play.” However, its portrayal of rebellion was filtered through middle-class anxieties rather than a sincere reflection of the actual indigo peasant uprising of 1860. Despite attacking planters, *Nil Darpan* was not anti-British. As historian Ranajit Guha pointed out, the play retained a liberal-humanitarian tone and showed strong faith in British justice, rational law, and benevolent officials.³

The story contrasts the inhumane violence of British indigo planters and their Bengali collaborators with the uprightness of peasants and a benevolent zamindar family. The villagers, unified under a patriarchal zamindar and his two reformist sons, try to protect their community

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from the brutalities of the planters, who commit rape, arson, and murder with impunity. The play features the heroic peasant Torap, who rescues a woman from a violent planter and exacts limited revenge, choosing not to kill because he believes in the British legal system. The zamindar's sons follow suit, appealing to a higher British court instead of the corrupt local magistrate. Yet the narrative is tragic—death and devastation follow, and the final line blames “Indigo” itself, symbolized as a destructive force, for the ruin of the Basu family and the community.

Despite its depiction of colonial violence, *Nil Darpan* ultimately does not advocate for rebellion or a radical overhaul of the colonial system. Instead, it expresses a deep faith in the fairness of British rule. It distinguishes between the “bad” planters and the morally upright British officials and institutions, such as the Indigo Commission, the Civil Service, and Queen Victoria herself. Dinabandhu Mitra, in his preface, explicitly expresses confidence in the benevolence of figures like Lord Canning and Lieutenant Governor J.P. Grant. Similarly, Reverend James Long, who published the English edition of the play, presented it as a social commentary meant to educate Europeans about peasant suffering through a familiar popular genre. For Long, the play was an example of vernacular literature that had social value and literary merit, even if it did not qualify as great literature.

Nevertheless, the English translation of the play by James Long drew the ire of the planters. Consequently, Long was brought to trial by Walter Brett, the proprietor of the *Englishman* newspaper, in collaboration with the Landholders' Association of British India and the wider body of indigo planters. They launched a libel suit against Reverend Long, interpreting the play not as satire or social critique, but as an attack on the entire European planter class and, more dangerously, as an incitement of racial hostility—something they feared in the wake of the 1857 rebellion. The courtroom drama unfolded over several days in Calcutta in July 1861 and drew widespread attention. The prosecution, while acknowledging the importance of satire in exposing social abuses, insisted that *Nil Darpan* overstepped by generalizing its criticism to all Europeans. The defence countered by arguing that libel law applied only to individuals, not to a vague collective like “the planters,” and invoked literary examples like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Dickens to argue for the legitimacy of critical fiction.⁴

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The judge, in a strikingly liberal speech to the jury, emphasized the fundamental British right to freedom of expression and the importance of the liberty of the press, which he framed as a cornerstone of constitutional governance. Nonetheless, the jury found Long guilty of libel. The judge fined him 1,000 rupees and sentenced him to a month in jail.⁵

The apparent political subversiveness of the play was significantly diluted by the time it entered the professional theatrical circuit in 1872.⁶ When *Nil Darpan* was finally produced professionally by the National Theatre in 1872—twelve years after its writing – it a major financial and critical success. The first two performances sold out, generating substantial revenue, and even English-language newspapers such as *The Englishman* acknowledged its popularity and praised the acting talent of Bengali performers.

Performance, Panic and Policing

The belief that *Nil Darpan* directly caused the Dramatic Performances Act oversimplifies the historical context. While the play was symbolically important as Bengal's first protest drama, it was not the primary trigger for censorship. British authorities noted its influence, but several lesser-known, provocative plays circulated in the 1870s, many now lost. One such play, *Bharat Bilap* (1873), depicted Mother India as a mourning, impoverished woman. Others, like *Mustaphi Sahibka Pakka Tamasha*, a satirical farce by Ardhendu Mustaphi, mocked British mannerisms in response to English vaudeville acts that ridiculed Bengalis. Though subversive, these performances stayed within colonial tolerances.⁷

Following *Nil Darpan*'s success, many plays adopted the “darpan” or “mirror” format to reflect social issues. Notable examples include *Jamidar Darpan* (1873) on peasant revolt, *Ca-Kar-Darpan* (1875) on tea plantation labor, and *Gaekwar Darpan* (1875) on the trial of Maharaja Mulhar Rao. *Ca-kar Darpan* and *Gaekwar Darpan* in particular unsettled British authorities. Sir Richard Temple, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, advocated for urgent censorship measures, warning that allowing the British name to be vilified “evening after evening” before a

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“susceptible, quick-witted, and impressionable” Bengali audience could have dangerous consequences. He sought immediate legislation, receiving approval from the Secretary of State for India, Marquis of Salisbury, on September 30, 1875.⁸

Before the British could finalize a formal censorship law, Upendranath Das staged consecutive anti-colonial plays, including *Sharat-Sarojini*, *Surendra-Binodini*, and *Gajadananda O Jubaraj*. The latter mocked Jagadananda Ray for hosting the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) in Calcutta, especially the prince’s controversial entry into Ray’s zenana, which many Bengalis saw as disrespectful. The play’s satire outraged both the public and the colonial authorities, prompting its swift ban after just two weeks for insulting the monarchy.

To pre-empt further theatrical subversion, on February 29, 1876, Viceroy Lord Northbrooke issued an ordinance under Section 23 of the Indian Councils Act, 1861, granting the Bengal government direct powers to regulate theatrical performances. In protest, the Great National Theatre staged *The Police of Pig and Sheep* on March 1, 1876, satirizing two prominent British officials — Sir Stuart Hogg, Calcutta’s Police Commissioner, and Mr. Lamb, a superintendent.⁹

The authorities cracked down harder: during a performance of *Sati ki Kalankini* three nights later, the police arrested playwright Upendranath Das, manager Amritlal Basu, and six others, accusing them of “obscenity” in connection with *Surendra-Binodini*, performed days earlier. The contested scene showed a European magistrate assaulting an Indian girl, who later reappears bloodied, symbolizing violence. Prosecuted under IPC Sections 292 and 294, the defence argued that obscenity was subjective and the scene did not incite lust. However, on March 8, 1876, Magistrate D.P. Dickens sentenced Das and Basu to one month in prison, dismissing the expert testimony and calling the scene “grossly obscene” by common standards.

An appeal for revision was made to the High Court. Justice Phear, delivering the judgment on March 20, 1876, sharply criticized the Magistrate’s handling of the evidence. He concluded that the alleged obscene words and acts, even if tasteless, did not meet the legal standards of obscenity under Sections 292 and 294 IPC. He ruled that there was no legal ground for the convictions, and both prisoners were set free.¹⁰

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Following the collapse of the fabricated “obscenity” charges against *Surendra-Binodini* and the expiration of the February ordinance (on May 31, 1876), the government moved towards permanent legal control. Mr. Hobhouse, a law member, introduced a bill “for the better control of dramatic performances.”¹¹ Within a year, the Vice Regal Council passed the Dramatic Performances Control Act on December 26, 1876. The act granted sweeping powers to local government authorities across British India to prohibit any dramatic performance deemed “seditious,” “obscene,” or otherwise “prejudicial to public interests.” The Act defined prohibited performances broadly, targeting any play likely to stir “feelings of disaffection” against the government, corrupt public morals, or harm the public good. It also expanded the meaning of “public place” to include any venue where people gathered to watch performances upon paying an entry fee. Under the Act, not only performers but also owners of the venues hosting prohibited performances could be punished. Upon conviction before a Magistrate, they faced up to three months’ imprisonment, a fine, or both. In effect, the Act gave colonial authorities wide discretion to police theatre and suppress political or moral dissent through legal means.¹²

The Bengali professional theatre was still in its infancy—barely four years old—and lacked both the institutional maturity and the political commitment required to confront colonial censorship effectively.¹³ After the implementation of the censorship act, theatres entered a period of political quiet, with increased surveillance and pressure discouraging subversive content. Though the Act did not formally allow pre-screening, it normalized unofficial censorship. By 1910, police routinely reviewed play manuscripts, and theatre managers complied to avoid trouble and protect profits.¹⁴ In response, playwrights shifted to mythological dramas, which were less likely to be censored due to their religious nature and the colonial government's reluctance to provoke religious backlash.¹⁵

The Making of the 1876 Act

Before the Dramatic Performances Act was enacted in 1876, colonial authorities dealt with politically or socially provocative plays using the existing legal frameworks in the Indian Penal Code. These included laws on libel—like the trial of Reverend James Long—obscenity laws – the arrest of Upendranath Das and Amritalal Basu for *Surendra-Binodini*.

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Playwrights were rarely charged with sedition under Section 124A of the IPC during this early period—a deliberate strategy by the colonial state. Sedition was a politically charged accusation that could legitimize a play’s message and attract public sympathy. Instead, authorities used charges like libel or obscenity, which seemed more neutral and avoided openly admitting to political censorship. These charges allowed the government to suppress dissent under the guise of protecting civil respectability rather than enforcing political control.

Libel and obscenity laws could only be applied after a performance had already taken place. These were post-facto legal tools, meaning that by the time a play was brought to court, it had already been staged, consumed by an audience, and possibly circulated through word-of-mouth or print summaries. The colonial state wanted more than the ability to punish after the fact—it wanted the authority to *prevent* a performance from ever reaching the public. The Dramatic Performances Act granted precisely that power.

The trials over libel and obscenity functioned as a form of legal performance, carefully choreographed to project an image of the British colonial state as just, lawful, and committed to principles of fairness. By adhering to procedures such as public trials, evidentiary hearings, and reasoned judgments, the colonial government could distance itself from accusations of despotism and present itself as the upholder of the “rule of law.”¹⁶ However, this commitment to legalism was ultimately instrumental rather than principled. When the outcomes of such trials threatened to undermine colonial authority—when courts acquitted defendants or public opinion was mobilized—the Raj did not hesitate to abandon legalistic procedures in favour of direct authoritarian interventions, such as the passage of sweeping censorship laws. Thus, while legality served as a crucial tool for legitimizing colonial rule, it remained subordinate to the imperatives of imperial control.

The Dramatic Performances Act marked authorized pre-censorship through executive orders. Magistrates could now ban plays or shut down theatres without needing to follow due process or prove guilt in a court of law. This meant the colonial administration moved from judicial punishment to executive policing, prioritizing control and suppression over legality and justice. Crucially, the law targeted not just content but performance itself. While libel and obscenity laws criminalized specific messages or statements, the Dramatic Performances Act

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criminalized the very act of performance—the public gathering, the staging, the spectacle. It was less about the exact words used and more about *how*, *where*, and *to whom* those words were delivered. The colonial state began to regulate space, emotion, and bodies, not just text.

Additionally, colonial law in particular thrived on open-ended language—words like “obscene,” “scandalous,” “seditious,” “defamatory”, or “likely to excite feelings of disaffection”,¹⁷ in acts like the Dramatic Performances Act left enormous room for interpretation. These were not accidents. The ambiguity was not a flaw; it was a feature—a way to allow colonial administrators to stretch the law to fit specific threats or anxieties without ever having to codify them explicitly. The devil was in the *non*-detail.

The move from libel/obscenity to a theatre-specific censorship law shows the colonial state recalibrating its control mechanisms in response to the changing forms of popular expression. Libel was about reputation. Obscenity was about morality. But the Dramatic Performances Act was about power, spectacle, and dissent—about shutting down political affect before it could take form.

The Empire of Censorship

It is noteworthy, however, that the British had long experience with theatrical censorship, well before its introduction in colonial India. The Stage Licensing Act of 1737 marked the first formal effort to regulate theatre under law, driven by Prime Minister Robert Walpole’s frustration with political satire. It gave the Lord Chamberlain sweeping powers to demand advance copies of plays and ban any performance, a system that remained largely intact even after the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843.

Earlier, censorship was exercised more arbitrarily by officials like the Master of the Revels and later the Lord Chamberlain, who regulated plays for public decency and political content. The 1843 Act did abolish the monopoly of the two patent theatres (Drury Lane and Covent Garden), which had exclusive rights to perform “legitimate” drama, but it extended censorship to all theatres.

Many minor theatres had previously circumvented the monopoly by adding music to their performances, yet still sought Lord Chamberlain approval for legal protection. While theatres in

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Westminster regularly submitted scripts for censorship, suburban theatres—licensed by local magistrates from the 1750s—only did so if legal risks emerged. By the early 19th century, theatrical censorship in Britain had become widespread, formalized, and centrally enforced; especially after the 1843 Act brought all theatres under the Lord Chamberlain's control.¹⁸

When examining the Dramatic Performances Act of 1876 in colonial India, one might expect a stark contrast in the ways censorship was employed by the British in the colony versus in the metropole. After all, the colonial state was often thought to use censorship as a tool of political domination, controlling the "subjugated" colonial subject population, while in Britain, censorship was framed as part of the liberal state's commitment to morality, order, and public decency. However, a closer comparison reveals striking similarities between the Dramatic Performances Act and British theatre censorship laws, suggesting that the regulation of performance as a medium of cultural expression was not merely a colonial instrument of oppression, but a universal tool of governance in both metropolitan and colonial contexts.

At the core of this similarity is the fundamental tension between law and art. Where law attempts to impose structure, performance art can unsettle those boundaries, making it a unique site for tension between control and expression. Theatre, with its immediacy and visceral impact on live audiences, challenges the neat categorization of law. It can embody multiple meanings, provoke collective emotion, and, as a result, become a site of conflict between state power and artistic freedom. This tension between the structured, regulatory world of law and the disruptive nature of artistic performance explains why both British and colonial authorities saw theatre as a dangerous medium that could incite unrest and challenge authority.

The Dramatic Performances Act can thus be understood not as a colonial anomaly, but rather as part of a broader, trans-imperial logic of censorship that views performance as uniquely dangerous. In Britain, the Lord Chamberlain's powers to censor theatre were grounded in the protection of public morals and the monarchy. Plays could be banned if they were deemed offensive to public order, morality, or the established order. This principle of censorship, in both Britain and colonial India, rested on the idea that certain forms of artistic expression—particularly public performances—had the power to shape mass sentiment, stir emotions, and even challenge the political status quo. The British colonial state, similarly, feared the emotional

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contagion that theatre could provoke, particularly among colonial subjects whose potential for collective action was seen as volatile and unpredictable.

Yet, while the mechanisms of censorship were broadly similar, the justifications for such regulation diverged. In Britain, censorship was typically framed in terms of protecting public morals or safeguarding the reputation of the monarchy. In colonial India, however, the rationale for censorship was explicitly racialised. In the colony, it was often justified through paternalistic claims: that native populations were too volatile or emotional, too prone to sedition, to be entrusted with unregulated speech. The racialised logic of censorship thus emerged as a means to both control the emotional expressions of colonial subjects and to reinforce the authority of the imperial state.

The other point of divergence was in the intensity of application of censorship in the metropole and the colony. In Britain, although censorship was often repressive, it was also marked by a degree of pragmatism and flexibility. The system was primarily concerned with maintaining social order and political stability, but it allowed for some leeway in accommodating certain types of artistic expression. Private theatre clubs, for example, could perform unlicensed plays, and refusals to grant licenses were rare and often used only as a last resort. This approach, grounded in a strategy of repressive tolerance, allowed for a degree of artistic freedom while still upholding the state's authority.

In contrast, colonial censorship systems, such as the Dramatic Performances Act in India, were far more draconian and authoritarian. The passing of the Vernacular Press Act in 1878 further reveals the growing colonial anxiety over vernacular modes of expression. The close succession of this legislation, following the Dramatic Performances Act, reveals how deeply the British authorities feared the power of Indian-language publications and performances to foster dissent and mobilise public opinion against colonial rule.

Despite these differences, the underlying conflict between law and art remains consistent in both the British and colonial contexts. Both the British and colonial authorities sought to regulate not just the content of performances, but the very act of performance itself. In both contexts, theatre was seen as a public and affective medium, capable of stirring collective emotions and sentiments.¹⁹ Theatre's power to provoke, unify, and mobilise was recognised by

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both British and colonial authorities, who sought to limit this power through legal frameworks that restricted artistic expression in ways that were less common in other forms of media. This regulatory impulse suggests that the control of art and performance was not an inherently colonial phenomenon but one rooted in the politics of governance, which viewed art as a tool for emotional and social mobilisation. Whether in the metropole or the colony, states recognised the potential for art to stir social and political change, and sought to contain this threat through formalized censorship laws. Thus, the Dramatic Performances Act did not necessarily represent a deviation from British norms, but rather revealed the coercive underside of those norms. In that sense, the colony becomes the space where the violence of liberalism is made legible.

Conclusion

The enactment of the Dramatic Performances Act in 1876 marked a significant shift in the British colonial state's approach to regulating theatre in India. Prior to this, colonial authorities primarily relied on existing legal frameworks, such as libel and obscenity laws, to suppress provocative performances. However, these tools were reactive, applied after the fact, and less effective in preventing the performance from reaching audiences. The Dramatic Performances Act, on the other hand, gave the colonial state proactive control, allowing it to pre-emptively shut down plays and regulate public performances directly. The transition from using libel and obscenity laws to a theatre-specific censorship law was not just about content but about controlling the very act of performance—shaping public space, emotions, and bodies. This shift highlighted the colonial state's deeper concern with preventing dissent before it could manifest. The censorship systems in Britain and colonial India shared several key similarities. Both saw theatre as a powerful tool for emotional mobilization and dissent, prompting authorities to regulate not only the content of performances but also the act of performance itself. Censorship laws, whether in the metropole or the colony, reflected the tensions between law and expressions of mass art like theatre. While the British justified censorship in terms of public morals and monarchy protection, colonial India framed it as a means to control perceived instability among native populations. Ultimately, both systems sought to prevent theatre from stirring political

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unrest, demonstrating a trans-imperial logic of censorship aimed at maintaining social and political order.

Notes and References

¹ Before European theatre arrived in Bengal, the region's cultural life was dominated by indigenous folk forms such as *jatra*, *tarja*, and *kabi-gaan*. However, over time, these traditional forms came to be seen as vulgar and overly loud, particularly by the urban, educated elite and middle classes of Calcutta. As a result, these folk traditions were gradually marginalized. The cultural gap left behind was soon filled by European-style theatre, which introduced the concept of the proscenium stage — an elevated platform with audiences seated in a darkened, enclosed auditorium facing the performance. In contrast to the earlier *jatra* tradition, where spectators sat around a central, flat stage, the proscenium stage created a new cultural experience based on distance, hierarchy, and separation between performers and audience. - Subhayu Chattopadhyay, "Stage, Society and Stricture: Bengali Theatre, 1800-1876," *Vidyasagar University Journal of History*, vol. Vol.2, 2013, <https://ir.vidyasagar.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/1819/1/11.%20Subhayu%20Chattopadhyay.pdf>.

² Rustom Bharucha, *Rehearsals of Revolution: The Political Theater of Bengal* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 7–16.

³ Ranajit Guha, "Neel-darpan: The Image of a Peasant Revolt in a Liberal Mirror1," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 2, no. 1 (October 1, 1974): 1–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066157408437914>.

⁴ James Long, *The History of the Nil Durpan, with the State Trial of ... J. Long ... for Its Publication, Fully Reported; with Mr. Long's Statement; Statement of W. S. S. Karr ... &c. Reprinted from the "Englishman"* (India: n.p., 1861); Geoffrey Archdall Oddie, "The Rev. James Long and Protestant Missionary Policy in Bengal, 1840 - 1872" (1964, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, n.d.).

⁵ Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature*, 1st ed (W. W. Norton & Company, Incorporated, 2014), 100–101.

⁶ The first two performances of Neel-Darpan were a resounding success, with ticket sales exceeding five hundred rupees — a significant sum at the time. Critical reception was overwhelmingly positive. Even *The Englishman*, a newspaper known for echoing British colonial views, recognized the play's popularity. In its issue dated April 19, 1873, it noted that a special performance of Neel-Darpan was planned at the National Theatre to accommodate the demand among Europeans to see it staged, praising the Bengali actors' talent for histrionic art.

However, one notable incident occurred during an 1875 performance of *Nil Darpan* by the Great National Theatre in Lucknow. A disturbance broke out involving a few British soldiers in the audience. Binodini Dasi, one of the most famous Bengali actresses of the 19th century, provides a vivid firsthand account of this event in her autobiography. She recalls that although the actors were initially nervous, their confidence grew as the play progressed. Trouble erupted during the scene where the planter character, Mr. Rogue tortures a native woman, Kshetromoni. European spectators, particularly a group of red-faced British soldiers, became agitated and stormed toward the stage. Some soldiers drew their swords and even climbed onto the stage, while others tried to restrain them. The curtain was hurriedly dropped, and panic ensued among the cast. The local magistrate intervened by calling soldiers from the fort to restore order. The performance was stopped, and the magistrate asked to meet the theatre manager, who, terrified, was eventually found hiding under the stage. The women actors were escorted

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back to their boarding house, while the police took custody of the scenery and costumes. Despite the panic, it appears that the incident was less a political confrontation and more a drunken outburst by the soldiers. The fact that the magistrate offered police protection to the actors suggests that Neel-Darpan was not considered politically dangerous by the authorities at that point. - Binodini Dāsi, *My Story and My Life as an Actress*, ed. Rimli Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998), 145–47; Bharucha, *Rehearsals of Revolution*, 1983, 19–20.

⁷ Bharucha, *Rehearsals of Revolution*, 1983, 21–22

⁸ Home Department Proceedings, "Proposed Introduction of a Bill to Empower the Government to Prohibit Certain Dramatic Performances," Public-B, 25 1-54, Confidential Proceedings, November 1875, quoted in Nandi Bhatia, *Acts of Authority, Acts of Resistance: Theater and Politics in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, 1. Publ. (New Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 38.

⁹ Partha Sarathi Nandi, "Surveillance, Sedition, and Censorship: Control and the Proscription of Performative Spaces in India from the Colonial Era to the Postcolonial Era," in *The Indigenous Voice of Poetomachia: The Various Perspectives of Textuality and Performance*, ed. Sayan Dey and Robert Masterson (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 9–10.

¹⁰ Theatre Case Trial extract from Hemendranath Das Gupta, *The Indian Stage Vol. II* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publications, 1934), 276–80.

¹¹ Home Department Proceedings, "Dramatic Performances Bill. Minute by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, dated 13th June 1876," August 1876, quoted in Nandi Bhatia, *Acts of Authority, Acts of Resistance: Theater and Politics in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, 1. Publ. (New Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004)

¹² *The Dramatic Performances Act*, Act XIX of 1876 (India).

¹³ Bharucha, *Rehearsals of Revolution*, 1983, 23.

¹⁴ Nandi, Surveillance, Sedition, and Censorship, 11.

¹⁵ Bhatia, *Acts of Authority, Acts of Resistance*, 43–45.

¹⁶ Darnton, *Censors at Work*, 142–144

¹⁷ *The Dramatic Performances Act*, Act XIX of 1876 (India).

¹⁸ John Russell Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama, 1824-1901* (Cambridge [Eng.]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 5–16; Dominic Shellard, Steve Nicholson, and Miriam Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets: A History of British Theatre Censorship*, 1. Publ. (London: The British Library, 2004), 1–21.

¹⁹ As late as 1949, Lord Clarendon, the Lord Chamberlain stressed that watching a play publicly had a stronger psychological impact than privately reading controversial books. This fear was shared across Europe, where theatre censorship persisted even after print censorship ended. Authorities worried that public audiences, especially the largely illiterate lower classes, could become disorderly or rebellious through the collective, emotional experience of live theatre, making it more socially dangerous than print. - David Thomas, David Carlton, and Anne Etienne, *Theatre Censorship: From Walpole to Wilson* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 148; Robert Justin Goldstein, review of *Censorship of Political Plays in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Bavaria, France, Prussia, and Spain*, *Comparative Drama* 43, no. 1 (2009): 120–22, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23038043>.