

Native drama commenced to appear in Bombay about the middle of the 19th century,¹ the pioneer being a certain Rambhau, who borrowed the plots of his plays from the Sanskrit Purans. The language at first employed was Hindi, which subsequently yielded place to Urdu and Marathi. In 1865 a Gujarat Hindu put a Gujarathi play upon the boards, and between that date and 1875 a large number of plays in this language were performed. The native companies utilised the theatre at Grant road mentioned above, and also a theatre which was erected a few years later on the site now occupied by the Head Police Office, opposite the Crawford Market. Subsequently four or five other theatres sprang into existence in the Grant road neighbourhood, namely, the Elphinstone, the Original, the Victoria, the Ripon and the Bombay theatres. Between 1875 and 1885 several new native dramatic companies were formed, the most popular of which were the Niti Darshak and the Hindustani, the former being under the management of a Gujarat Hindu and the latter of a Parsi. The closing years of this decade also witnessed the foundation by Dadabhai Ratanji Thudhi of the Parsi Natak Mandali. Dadabhai introduced a higher standard both of acting, scenic effect and music, substituting the Western harmonium for the Indian string instruments (*sarangis*), which had up to that date formed the only orchestra. In 1888 a permanent Gujarathi company was formed, which has been enabled to purchase the Gaiety Theatre and the site on which it stands out of the proceeds of a series of successful performances. The native theatres of Bombay present performances in Urdu, Gujarathi and Marathi; but whereas there are permanent companies for the

production of plays in the two first-named languages, Marathi dramas are performed only by travelling companies, the chief of which are the Kirloskar and the Shahu Nagarvasi companies. The actors of Gujarathi plays are usually drawn from a special caste, the Targalas, whose headquarters are in the Ahmadabad District, and, except in one Urdu company, all the female characters are portrayed by boys.¹ The salaries drawn by native actors are Rs. 5 per month with board and lodging in the case of boys, and from Rs. 30 to Rs. 50 per month in the case of adults, while the leading actors may draw anything from Rs. 50 to Rs. 300 per month. The minimum pay of an actress is Rs. 100 per month.