

Indian Drama: A Dynamic Art of India**Dr. Anshika****Assistant Professor****Department Of English****PDM University, Bahadurgarh**

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Abstract

Indian theatre has an unbroken history of more than two thousand years. In India, over the years, street theatres have a significant role in spreading awareness. The theatre is an emotionally dependable and creatively reliable medium and drama has been the most effective genre of expression in literature. With the headway of time, numerous recreative frames have become obsolete, yet theater holds a unique place holding its ever-renewing interest in individuals at all levels. Drama is a composite art that shows the actions and characters within the limitations of time and space, and also reveals factual and fictional realities of life. Theatre cannot maintain itself without great practices of drama. Also, its effect on society has been generally under-used. Thus, the theater and drama hold enduring visual impact upon one and all.

Despite all controversies, drama in India has had a rich and glorious tradition. The development of Indian theatre can be generally isolated into three particular stages: the classical period, the traditional period, and the modern period. It begins its journey with the Sanskrit plays. There were mimes, pageants, rituals and various folk dramas in the history of drama. In India it has a divine origin and a close connection with the sacred Vedas. It started from the Vedic period when Bharta, in his *Natyashastra*, described drama as “NatakoPanchamo Veda”, meaning ‘drama is the fifth veda’. The genesis of Indian drama is traced right to the ancient period of *Rigveda*. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are other examples of Indian Classical drama, and they were dramatized at public places. These kind of dramatic activities are still popular in India, especially during the time of *Dussehra* festival.

Bharatmuni’s *Natyasastra* is wider in range and scope than Aristotle’s *Poetics*. He borrowed the art of effective speech from *Yajurveda* and the *Rasas* from *NatyasastraAtharvaveda*. Tiwari says that “no object can be comprehended without the aid of *rasa*. Sentiment is produced from a combination of determinants, consequents the transitory states. In other words, when the dominant and permanent states come in contact with transitory feelings, they result in the awakening of *rasa*, a complete state of enjoying the flavor” (7-8). Since ages Sanskrit drama is the important part of Indian literature. The title *Natyasastra* literally means

“the science of drama.” It encompasses within itself not only drama but it has a blend of music and dance as well. It is by and large accepted to have been created between 200 B.C. and 200 C.E. It is notable for being the only text on dramaturgy for long and it is also popular for its aesthetic theory. According to “Rasa” theory, the primary goal of any text is to make the audience empathize with the characters, and not to entertain them.

The concept of Indian drama is more serious when compared with the ideas of Western drama. Generally, the topic of Indian drama is the life of an individual instead of contemporary, imaginary and nonexistent. Indian dramatists reveal the fundamental mental state of characters. On the other hand Western dramatists go for the action. Consequently, in Western drama activity possesses the central place and in Indian drama, the psychological concern is of prime concern.

Some of the most renowned personalities of the ancient Indian theatre are Ashwaghosh, Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidas, Harsha, Bhavabhuti, Visha-Khadatta, Bahttanarayan, MurariansRajshekhara. They enriched the Indian theatre with their works. The supreme achievement of Indian drama is the works Kalidas. He is the most important figure among the Sanskrit drama artists. His unique achievement in the Sanskrit dramaturgy cannot be compared. He belong to the 1st century B.C. He is the brightest star of his era and even today occupies same position in Sanskrit literature of India. He used Hindu legends and themes in his plays. Haksar rightly said “In his dramatic works he has ably combined the divine and the mortal (heaven and earth), the urban and the rural cultures” (Haksar 111). Except all these themes Kalidas has adopted his themes from nature as well. Nature is fully alive in his plays and his love for nature is a unique feature of his plays.

Sudraka is another important Sanskrit literature in India. He reveals the issues related to society in his plays. He shows various social distortions in his plays. The themes and topics of his plays are really debatable. His important plays are *Mṛcchakaṭikam* or *The Little Clay Cart*. All his plays mirror the contemporary society and its features. There is humour and laughter as well, which makes his plays different and light for the audience.

Harsavardhana is the ruler of Kanyakubja and he belongs to the Vardhana dynasty of Sthānvisvara. He had a different taste related to academics. He was a great lover of fine arts. His important plays are Priyadarska, Ratnavali and Nagananda. He had great knowledge of various shastras. It is clear from his works that he is a romantic dramatist.

Bhavabhuti belonged to Padampura Vidarbha. He took his themes and characters from Indian shastra. The characterization of his plays is brilliant. His famous plays are

Malatimādhavam, Mahaviracharitam and Uttaramacharittam. He wrote several dramas which make him immortal in the mind of Indian audience. He is often known as the Shakespeare of India. The earliest form of Indian drama, the Sanskrit drama flourished till 12th century that was the time of peace in the history of India. With the arrival of the Islamic conquest, theatre was discouraged and damaged.

The Sanskrit drama shows a blend of music, dialogue and acting. It develops around three essential factors specifically Vastu (plot), Neta (hero) and Rasa (sentiment). In Sanskrit plays plot is the foremost factor and the other factors supplement the fundamental subjects. Further it got the division like banner (pataka) and incident (parkari). The banner is a small episode that improves the plot and creates an added excitement, whereas the incident involves minor characters. The Natyasastra depicts the hero as modest (*Vineeta*), sweet tempered (*Madhura*), sacrificing (*Tyagi*), capable (*Daksha*), civil in talks (*Priyamvada*), enthusiastic (*Utsaha*), young (*Yuva*), pure (*Suchi*), articulate (*Vagmi*), consistent (*Sthera*), good memory (*Smrthi*), aesthetic (*Kola*), energetic (*Tejaswi*), learned (*Pandita*), endowed with intellect (*Buddhi*), pride (*Maan*), brave (*Shurva*), strong (*Dridha*) and pious (*Dharmika*).

Loknatya (People's Theatre) is seen everywhere in India from seventeenth century onwards. One can find 'Yatrakirtaniya' in Bengal, 'Paol' and 'Gaan' in Madhya Pardesh, 'Mach' in Kashmir, and 'Bhavai' in Gujrat. There were 'Nautanki, Bhand, Ramleela, Rasleela and 'Tamasha' in Maharashtra, 'Raas and Jhoomer' in Rajasthan, 'Bahngra and Melody' in Punjab, in Assam it were 'Ahiyanat and Ankinatya', whereas 'Videshiya and Chhari' were performed in Bihar.

In 1756, a Russian show, Horasinand Bengali drama lover, Qulokhnath staged two English comedies, to be specific *Disdain* and *Love is the Best Doctor*. But the real start was in 1831, when Prasanna Kumar Thakur set up Hindu Rangmanch at Calcutta and staged Wilson's English translation of Bhababhuti's Sanskrit drama *Uttar Ramacharitam*. On the other hand, the amateur theatre also developed with the works of Bharatendu Harishchandra, who is acclaimed as the father of Hindu drama. When we talk about the development of Modern theatre in Indian, it is highly influenced by the western theatre. It is because of the western influence that having uniqueness in its origination as an art, Indian dramahas not been prosperous both in quality and quantity. Since the distribution of the first Indian English play *The Persecuted* (1831) by Krishna Mohan Banerjee, around four hundred plays have been written in English and a couple of them organized in India as well as.

Rabindernath Tagore is one of the most prolific play writers of the world. He was fully acquainted with Bengali and English. He wrote fundamentally in Bengali but almost all his Bengali plays are accessible to us in English. His plays are generally based on Indian ethos and ethics. His characters present a distinctive combination of lucidity and complexity, conventionality and modernity. Tagore was the first Indian writer who permeated Indian English drama with emblematic and metaphorical significance. Diana Devlin pivots that “the philosopher, writer and teacher Rabindernath Tagore set out to unify Indian and European traditions creating plays which have been described as a mixture of Bengali folk drama and Western medieval mystery plays” (110). He has experimented a wide range of writing styles, symbols and images in his plays. He has contributed a lot to Indian theatre as well as Indian English drama. His important plays are *Chitra*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice*, *Chandalika*, *Muktadhara*, *Natir Puja*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *Sanyasi*, *Red Oleanders* and *The Mother’s Prayer*.

Sri Aurobindo was a multi-skilled genius who was well versed not only in the great classics of Greece, Rome, Germany, France, Spain and Italy but also in Sanskrit texts. D.L. Murray adeptly says that Sri Aurobindo is “a new type of thinker, one who combined in his vision, the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East.”(qtd. In Rai 15). His plays are based on late Victorian pastiches of Shakespearean drama. In Aurobindo one can find romance, heroic play, tragedy, comedy, farce. His important plays are *Perseus the Deliver*, *The biziers of Bassora*, *Eric and Vasavadutta*. He composed his plays on an assortment of subjects which are illustrative of significant culture of the world. His plays reveal different cultures and countries in different ways. In his plays we find romance, heroic play, tragedy, comedy, farce. He is influenced by Elizabethan drama and impact of Sanskrit playwrights like Bhasa, Kalidas and Bhavabhuti can be seen in his plays. One can consider him an Indian philosopher, poet, essayist, critic, historian, translator, playwright and story writer. He has given a unique flavor to Kalidasa’s Sanskrit plays. He shows theme of love in most of his plays.

It is a pity that talented artists like Tagore and Aurobindo ended up creating sensational ballads as opposed to dramas proper. M.K.Naik rightly observes that “They showed a predilection for casting their full length plays in the age old Shakespearean mould without trying to evolve a new dramatic form which would have deemed artistically viable in the modern context and their failure is comparable to the failure of the romantic and the Victorian poets who copied the Shakespearean verse plays”. (A History 185)

Another writer who has made huge contribution to the development of Indian English drama is Harindranath Chattopadhyay. He has deep interest in theatre. K. Venkata Reddy has termed him as “one of the most versatile and vigorous literary personalities of contemporary India, Harin is a poet, painter, playwright, musician, actor—all rolled into one” (Reddy 53). His plays are not serious in tone and soul. There are seven stanza plays incredibly distributed under the title of *Poems and Plays* (1927) and all the seven plays are based on the lives of Indian saints. They present the brighter and nobler parts of human life. *His Five Plays* (1929) uncovers his communist approach towards life. His first play *The Window* reveals the misuse of laborers of Bombay by the big industrialists who are denying them their basic right of decent livelihood and also reveals their pathetic condition. *The Parrot* delineates the lady's desire for freedom from her bothersome spouse's bond of marriage. His other plays include *Sentry's Lantern* expresses the agonizing sentiments of three victims. *Siddhartha: Man of Peace* shows the crisis in human civilization and *The Coffin* reveals the pathetic condition of the bourgeois family. Most of his plays are about life. He took his characters from the common people. Working class people occupied a special place in his plays.

Another dramatist who is worth consideration is T.P. Kailasam, a ground-breaking Kannada and English playwright, who wrote in both English and Kannada. In spite of the fact that Kailasam is viewed as the father of current Kannada plays, his virtuoso discovers its full articulation in such English plays, as *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfilment* (1933), *A Monolog: Don't Cry* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karna* (1964) and *Keechaka* (1949). G.S. Amur rightly observes: "A talented actor who appeared in the amateur as well as the professional stage, he brought to the writing of drama an intimate knowledge of the theatre. It is for this reason that his plays both in Kannada or English have a uniform technical excellence" (qtd. in Shukla 7). In his plays, Kailasam has mixed both Indian and Western conventions. His *Karna* is the main full-length play which has some huge likenesses to Sophocles' powerful tragedy *Oedipus the King*. Both *Karna* and *Oedipus* experiences the ill effects of a deadly revile which shapes their life and predetermination. We find an uncommon mixing of virtuoso and natural vision in the plays of Kailasam who has the credit of altering Kannadadrama. Despite the fact that the topic depends on *Mahabharata*, he is strikingly unique in treating the subject from another perspective. In his social vision he can be effortlessly contrasted with Ibsen or Shaw. He stands apart from Sri Aurobindo and Rabindernath Tagore. In his plays one can find the blend of Indian and Western tradition. Most of the themes in his plays are taken from ancient Indian literature. S. Krishna Bhatta has this to say on Kailasam:

It appears that his knowledge of ancient Indian literature and history and his stay in England urged him to contribute something concrete to this spacey cultivated field...his plays breathe throughout, a deep reverence for our ancient culture with a modern critical approach. We find in him a blending of genius and intuitive vision, a fertile imagination, ready wit and subtle humour and a serious presentation of the theme” (Bhatta 86).

In the Post-Independence time, drama, in English, couldn't prosper as a noteworthy current of innovative articulation. The dearth of Indian Drama in English is credited to a few reasons- absence of a living theater, specific expertise and ability in choosing the themes and innovative techniques which could be presented on the stage. Drama is meant to be staged and its success depends on the audience. R.K. Dhawan says that “It is a well-known fact that the real success of a play can be tested on stage. A playwright needs a living theatre to put his work on acid test, evaluate its total effect on the audience and thereby get a chance to improve upon his performance” (19). Thus, the real evaluation of drama is done by the audience. It is somewhat artistic and mostly sociological in light of the fact that it comes in direct contact with the majority. One major problem that occurs in the success of drama is that, it is still waiting for the touch of Indianization. Indian literature adopted various genres from the western literature but most of them were successfully assimilated in the works in Indian English and regional language. Except drama every genre has been successfully adopted by Indian literature and Indian writers. Writer like Girish Karnad tried to Indianize drama by using various methods of Indian classical drama and folk theatre but could not get success. Another important factor which affects the growth of Indian drama is the failure of Indian dramatists in using the rich plenty of Indian fantasy and Indian recorded legacy.

Language is another hurdle in the advancement of Indian English Drama. English has dependably been one of the major hurdles for the Indian dramatists and for the audience because it is a ‘learnt’ language. Indian writers find it difficult to express their true feelings through this second language. One of the important features of drama is to attract the audience by conveying natural dialogues but when two Indian characters converse in English, it seems artificial and fails to find resonance in the hearts of audience. In this way, the Indian audience, explicitly from the northern part of the nation, likes to visit the theater which presents drama in local language.

Any piece of writing, especially a play is known for its content, not for its structure. When we translate a play, the original form is misrepresented. By translating English language, we can do intellectual make up but for a drama emotional make up is necessary. By imitating the language

of Raja Rao's novel, *Kanthapura*, Indian dramatists can easily overcome the problem of language. They can make their characters speak a kind of Indian English. In addition, the Indian English dramatists have to present their ideas with a sense which represents a true Indian sensibility. To attract the Indian audience, Indian dramatists have to imitate the western models blindly. In this way, the Indian English dramatists can shed the difficulties and prepare a better and more promising time to come for Indian English Drama which has endure the trial of time which can face all the challenges to make its position strong in the days to come in Indian English literature. The post-independence show was profited by the expanding enthusiasm of the remote nations in Indian English writing as a rule and Indian English dramas specifically. A great number of plays by Indian dramatists like Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Gurucharan Das was effectively staged in England and U.S.A. In any case, the predicament of Indian English drama is that no regular school of Indian English dramatization was built up in our nation.

The current decades have seen a spurt of the Indian plays in local dialects and the drama in English translation. Extensive translations of provincial plays into English have set up a bond amongst East and West, North and South. In any case, Indian English Drama has not accomplished much as far as amount or quality. Contrasted with all other scholarly genres its output has been inadequate. Indian English drama has enrolled a wonderful development and development through English translations of Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Kannada plays.

Indian drama has had some powerful expression in such dramatists as Pratap Sharma, Nissim Ezekiel, Vijay Tendulkar, GirishKarnard, Asif Currimbhoy and Mohan Rakesh. The points of view of Indian drama in English are bound by our history, ancestry, old stories, folklore, social traditions, and customs and by our servility to the intruders, first Muslim and afterward imperialist. These connections to the past are critical, as they are the roots and soil, which give food and sustenance to the Indian personality. Memories, sentimentality and retrospection have driven once in a while to an impersonation of the subjects received by before journalists, at different circumstances; similar topics have been recast with another outlook.

Pratap Sharma composed two composition *A Touch of Brightness* (1968) and *The Professor Has a War Cry* (1970). His plays were staged even abroad effectively. However his plays failed to mark their presence on Indian stage. Sex remains the prime topic of his plays. Pratap Sharma demonstrates a sharp feeling of circumstance and his discourse is regularly powerful. Prof. M.K. Naik values his sensational workmanship for his sharp feeling of circumstance and compelling dialogues. *A Touch of Brightness* shows life in the red-light district in the city

of Bombay and is noteworthy for its topical intensity. Likewise, sex is the primary topic in Sharma's another play *The Professor Has a War Cry*. In the play, a young fellow Virender comes to realize that he is an ill-conceived offspring of a mother assaulted sexually by a Muslim and an Englishman after she was abandoned by her lover, Gopal, a Hindu Professor. Finally, Virender and Professor kill each other.

Nissim Ezekiel was an Indian Jewish Poet, playwright, editor and art critic. In the domain of Indian drama, Nissim Ezekiel is known for his excellent beautiful statement of faith and dramatic sensibility. Nissim Ezekiel's three plays *Nalini: A Comedy*, *Marriage Poem: A Tragic Comedy* and *The Sleep Walker: In Indo-American farce* are viewed as welcome expansion to the dramaturgy of Indian English drama. The play *Marriage Poem* presents the conflict of common working class husband got in the conflicts of responsibilities of married life and it also reveals his desire for love. The *Sleep Walker* reveals the theme of National "preconception and prejudices". Ezekiel plays could not mark the success as his poetry did. His plays make a "Pleasant reading". It is attributed: "In his satire of current fashion, in his exposure of prose and presence, the spirit of some English social satirist in theatre" (Beston 49)

Modern European playwrights like G.B. Shaw, Camus, Giraudoux and Brecht took help of the myths or history to give a message to the society but they failed to do so. The only exception is GirishKarnad, an impressive actor, wise executive and amazing writer. When he started his career as dramatist, he had no established theatrical tradition to begin with. In his "Author's Introduction" to *Three Plays* (1994), GirishKarnad stated:

To my generation a hundred crowded years of urban theatre seemed to have left among nothing to hang on to, take off from. And where was one to begin again? Perhaps by looking at our audience again, by trying to understand what experience the audience expected to receive from the theatre (30).

Girish Karnad is an essential supporter of Indo-Anglian Theater. His commitment goes past theater. He has produced movies, documentaries, and TV serials. He is a playwright, actor, critic and emissary of Indian art, literature and culture. He has a different mindset than other writers of his age. He took his themes from Indian history, folk-lore, myths and legends. But he is modern in his approach. Karnad has a wide range of subject and technique. He has explored different avenues regarding the combination of the conventional and current emotional structures and substance. The motivation behind utilizing historical structures is to accomplish an uncommon knowledge into the contemporary reality on the ground.

GirishKarnad utilizes the gadgets of legend, old stories and history not simply to visit the past but rather to look at the present and furthermore to foretell what's to come. He acquired his plots from history, folklore and old legends. His well-known plays are *Yayati (1961)*, *Tughlaq (1962)*, *Hayavadana (1970)* and *Nagmandala (1972)*.Karnad is a famous artist with various versatile qualities but he is at his best in play writing. He himself says: "I have been fairly lucky in having a multi-pronged career. You know, I've been an actor, a publisher, a film maker. But in none of these I felt quite as much at home as in playwriting" (Karnad 362). He borrowed his themes from history, mythology and legends but his approach is modern.

Badal Sircar, an esteemed name in the domain of contemporary theater, represents New Theatrical Movement in India. He made a certifiable people's performance center known as Third Theater, a venue bolstered and made by people. This performance center was once portrayed by RustomBharucha 'as the most thoroughly non business political theatre in India'. Sircar's striking plays venture existential rationality of breakdown of correspondence and delineate the existential state of mind of present day man in the postcolonial India..His dramatic career began with a comedy *Solution X*. His earlier plays are *EvamInderjit (1962)*, *That Other History (1964)* and *There Is No End (1971)*. All these plays are based on political, social, psychological and existential problems. His other important plays are *ParyKonodin*, *JadiAurEkBaar*, *Palap* and *PaglaGhoda*, *Procession*, *Bhoma* and *Stale Newsetc*.Through his plays, Sircar proposes social change in society.

A Marathi dramatist, Vijay Tendulkar, altogether changed the shape and example of Indian drama. He crossed over all barriers dividing the traditional and modern theater. He is one of the most influential playwrights of Indian English literature. His plays show his deep understanding of human complexity and predicament. He is one of the few writers who have transformed Indian theatre and gave it a new content and form. He took up his themes from common life and made them dramatic. He has contributed thirty full length plays, seven one act plays, two novels and seven films scripts. His works are inspiring and show the situation of contemporary society. In an interview, Tendulkar has once said, "I have not written about hypothetical pain or created an imaginary world of sorrow. I am from a middle class family and I have seen the brutal ways of life by keeping my eyes open. My work has come from within me, as an outcome of my observation of the world in which I live. If they want to entertain and make merry, fine go ahead, but I can't do it, I have to speak the truth".

In the entirety of his plays, Tendulkar harps upon the topic of seclusion and the power of an individual to fight against with the unfriendly environment. He investigates the socio-political network of contemporary Indian themes in his plays. He unequivocally believes that thoughts are solidly implanted in our mind at an early age. He relates the issue of anguish to the topic of savagery in the vast majority of his plays. Tendulkar depicts the violence on the stage but he does not dress it up with any fancy trapping but he keeps it natural. He says:

Unlike the communists I don't think violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or for that matter, in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that human being is born with. Not that it is bad. Without violence man might have turned into a vegetable (Choudhari 512-513)

In his plays he has depicted the plight of women. He has also displayed the ways, how society ill-treats women and deprived them of, most of their rights, liberty, equality and respect. His characters appear very real and he always allows his character to live fully their roles.

Mohan Rakesh, a Hindi writer, anticipated Marxism in his plays. As a writer, his principle concern was to depict the crisis of contemporary man caught in the adverse environment. He issued his first major play *AshadhKaEk Din in 1958*, *LeharonKeRajhansa in 1963* and *Adheadhure in 1969*. His plays sensationalize the affliction of people who become victims of financial order and social authority. He made broad investigations in theater. He utilizes historical characters to display the breakdown of correspondence in modern life. He utilized words and dialects not as discoursed or direct articulations but rather as the instruments of suggestion to pass on the significant message beyond the verbal meaning. In Indian English drama the impact of Mohan Rakesh cannot be overlooked, through his plays he tries to reveal the crisis of contemporary man caught in the web of uncongenial surroundings.

Dattani is married to theatre and theatre is Dattani's lifelong passion. Dattani discusses his decision of English as a medium since his characters however basically in reality, talk in English in a typical and inconspicuous way. English is for him a kind of given. It's his dialect as it is to a ton of Indians here and abroad. Dattani's specialty is refreshing for the assorted variety of themes, the awareness of the issues in charge of tension in contemporary society and uncommonly splendid contribution to technical innovations. Dattani's work tests tangled states of mind in contemporary India towards common contrasts, consumerism and sexual orientation and so on. His important plays are *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, *On a Muggy*

Night at Mumbai, Do the Needful, Final Solutions, Bravely Fought the Queen, Tara, Dance Like a Man and Where There's a Will under the title of *Collected Plays*.

Another significant development in Indian drama was in the form of emergence of female dramatists. Last three decades have seen the flowering of female theater in India. Women playwrights like PoileSen Gupta, Devi Mehta and Mahasweta Devi. They additionally revived the traditional fantasies of Sita and Savitri and endeavored to reinterpret the legends from female's perspective. The emotional work of UshaGanguli and Mahasweta Devi can be put in their class. Her five plays are *Mother of 1084, Aajir, Urvashi O Johny, Byen and Water*. The play *Mother of 1084* is a moving record of the anguish of an unopinionated mother who had seen the revulsions of the Nexalite development. The play *Water* is the tale of an expert water-diver, Maghai Done, who is an untouchable boy. Her plays reveal a significant worry for human bind and earnest seek after the better fate of humankind. Female writers confront violence in numerous parts of their daily life. This violence is multi-faceted. It isn't just physical however more often mental and passionate. It is profoundly intricate, inconspicuous and circuitous, difficult to perceive and substantially more hard to survive. PoileSenGupta is one of the foremost Indian writers in English. She is well known as a playwright and a writer for children.

Thus, one can see that despite all the hurdles, Indian Drama enjoyed a very rich past in India. It has a glorious history and a very bright future in Indian English Literature.

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