



A Journey of Indian English Drama Before And After Independence

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Drama is a composite art in which the written word of the playwright is concretized when it became the spoken word of the actor on the stage. Indian drama in English was not quite significant during the late nineteenth century. There were some plays in Bengali but English plays were very few. The pre-independence playwrights drew material for their plays from a variety of sources, the principal being Mahabharata and Ramayana.

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For the post-independence playwright the mind of man is his canvas, and he focuses his inner turmoil, search for an identity, changing values, changing morality and the confusion and complexity that comes with change.

Drama unlike 'novel' is not new to Indian genius, though it appears to be less popular, India with a variety of cultures, languages and literatures, has a long glorious dramatic tradition of her own drama has been considered 'fifth veda' and grouped under the category of the 'Drishya Kavya'.

Most of the Indian English dramatists of the pre-independence period followed the tradition of Elizabethan drama in general and of Shakespeare in particular.

Indian drama in English is an important branch of Indian English Literature though, as Kr. Srinivasa Iyengar points out, "it is neither rich in quantity nor, on the whole, of high quality." It took a century and a quarter for Indian drama in English to reach a respectable stage and it now challenges comparison with the other forms of literature- poetry and fiction-in terms of quality, if not quantity. The first play in English entitled *Is This Called Civilization?* Was written in 1871 by Michael Madhusudan Dutt.

If Indian English Literature is the Cinderella of Literature in English, Indian drama in English is the Cinderella of Indian English literature.

The pre-independence era saw some stalwarts-Rabindranatha Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, T.P. Kailasam, A.S.P. Ayyar. Labo Prabhu, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Bharati Sarabhai who contributed substantially to the growth and development of Indian English Drama. Rabindranath Tagore was the first major playwright who invested Indian Drama in English with lyrical excellence, symbolical overtones and allegorical significance. *Sanyasi* is the first important play that Tagore wrote.

Sri Aurobindo inherited and carried forward the tradition of Elizabethan poetic drama of Marlowe and Shakespeare revived by Robert Bridges and Stephen Philips in the Victorian era. T.P. Kailasam's plays are inspired by Puranic themes taken from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya added a new dimension to Indian English drama with his leftist leanings and



revolutionary zeal. Bharati Sarabhai is the first, most distinguished women dramatist, who gave a Gandhian touch to the Indian English drama.

The Post- Independence play wrights life Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Nisim Ezekiel, Asif Currimbhoy, Gurucharan Das and Badal Sircar have made a significant contribution to the development of Indian English Drama.

Quite a few contemporary playwrights like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Nissim Ezekiel, Asif Currimbhoy, Gurcharan Das and Badal Sircar have made a significant contricution to the development of Indian English Drama. Karnad is regarded as one of the great writers of the contemporary Indian drama. Girish Karnad has given the Indian theatre a richness. He has represented India in foreign lands as an emissary of art and culture. Vijay Tendulkar is noted for criticizing the hypocrisy, promiscuity, dishonesty and such other vices existing in the society. Tendulkar focuses on the sufferings of the urban middle class people. Tendulkar raises several questions about love, sex, marriage and moral values prevalent in Indian society making ample use of irony, satire and pathos. Asif currimbhoy is a playwright with a social purpose. Nissim Ezekiel, a well established Indian English poet who has also enriched Indian English drama in his own characteristics way.

The modern literature is at present a combination of emotion, irony and the suffering of masses trapped in social whirlpool of contradictions. As such, Indian English drama is the Cinderella of Indian English Literature, getting draped in its bridal finery & stepping towards a bright future.

Karnad is regarded as one of the three great writers of the contemporary Indian drama, the other two being Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar. While as Badal Sircar and Vijay Tendulkar deals with the problems of the middle-class, Girish Karnad takes refuge in the Indian myths and legends and makes them a vehicle of a new vision.

Karnad's Tughlag, is a historical play, based on the life of Sultan Mohammed Bin Tughlag, who was at once a dreamer and man of action. While his Yayati retells the popular Indian theme of responsibility and self-denial, in Hayavadana, Karnad deals with the problem of identity by weaving into the play the myth of half-horse and half-man, that hovers between man and god in search of fulfillment.

Vijay Tendulkar is noted for criticizing the hypocrisy, promiscuity, dishonesty and such others vices existing in the society. In his early plays, Tendulkar focuses on the suffering of the Urban middle class people.

Tendulkar raise several questions about love, sex, marriage and moral values prevalent in Indian society, making ample use of irony, satire pathos and mock-element to highlight the hollowness of middle-class morality. He exposes the hypocrisy in the traditional Indian Society. Vijay Tendulkar's plays, along with those of playwrights like Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar and Mohan Rakesh, have changed the face of Indian theatre. Tendulkar is fighter for cultural freedom.

Silence, the court is in Session, exposes the cruelty of modern society in which women are maltreated. Tendulkar has cleverly used the technique of 'play within the play' to bring out the inner agonies of Miss Benare, a character, who is closed in by goblin-like men intent upon tearing her apart in a male-



dominated world. In Sakharam Binder, Tendulkar concerns himself with the economic and sexual aggression inherent in our inequitable and repressive society. Nissim Ezekial, has also enriched Indian English drama in his own characteristic way.

Conclusion:

Indian literature is both single as well as pluralistic. One does wonder whether the literature, written in many languages, can be considered one literature. India is a country with many states and languages. But in spite of its bewildering variety and diversity, India has continued to be a nation down the centuries. A survey of the panoramic history of Indian literature, from the early times to the present, reveals a running thread of continuity against the back-ground of regional diversity. The regional languages of India have had a free and independent growth through centuries.

The purpose of the present study is to contrast the aims of the earlier playwrights with the modern ones. Whereas the pre Independence Indian English drama is notable for its poetic excellence, thematic variety, technical virtuosity, symbolic significance and its commitment to human and moral values. The post-Independence Indian English drama, on the other hand has made bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of both thematic concerns and technical virtuositities

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