



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

103

Dramatic Chronicles: Tracing the Tapestry of Indian English Theatre Across Time

Dr. Madhu Galchar

Assistant Professor,

Dr. V. R. Godhaniya Mahila Arts and Commerce College,

Porbandar

Madhugalchar18@gmail.com

Abstract

To offer a comprehensive account of the historical evolution of Indian English play, the objective of this inquiry is to investigate the advancement of the play over time. The purpose of this study is to investigate the delicate strands of theatrical expression that are present within the context of Indian English, starting with the language's early origins and continuing all the way up to the current day. The book provides a comprehensive analysis of the development and transition of Indian English theatre by concentrating on significant movements, noteworthy playwrights, and significant milestones in the history of the theatre. To shed light on the variety of influences and cultural resonances that have led to the construction of this dynamic part of Indian literary and performing arts, the objective of this study is to reveal the many factors that have contributed to its formation. A combination of historical study and critical observations will be used to reach this goal.

Keywords: Indian English Drama, Theatrical Evolution, Playwrights, Movements, Cultural Resonances, Historical Milestones, Theatrical Expression, Literary Intersection, Performing Arts, Dramatic Traditions

Indian theatre has a rich and storied past that stretches back to prehistoric times. The origins may be traced back to plays composed in Sanskrit. The sixth century finds little in the way of theatre. From the early seventh century forward, two plays were written by King Sri Harsha.



Ratnavali and *Nagananda* are the plays in question. Love, passion, and politics were recurring themes in the plays written during this time. Famous for his Western romances, the eighteenth-century playwright Bhavabhuti was a major character in Indian theatre. His first play, *Malati Madhava*, is a Prakarena with ten acts. While it has a joyful conclusion, like all Sanskrit dramas, some Western critics have called it the Indian *Romeo and Juliet*. The "Natyasastra" is said to be the one responsible for keeping Indian customs alive. Play philosophy may be found in the first Western work, "Poetics" by Aristotle. With its roots in the Vedic era, Indian drama has come a long way from its classical theatrical traditions to its modern counterparts, most notably the theatres of Hindi, Marathi, and Bengali.

Bharata, which gives out a whole philosophy of play, is magnificently explained by the history of Indian theater. The Bharata literary tradition teaches that although mime and dance may create emotion in life's drama, only theater can provide taste (Rasa). The eight basic emotions used in theater are love, pity, anger, scorn, heroism, wonder, terror, and comedy. Inspiring the audience in general, these emotions are used. There were a lot of Rasa that had to be included in the play, but ultimately, one would take centre stage. As part of the festivities honouring Lord Indra's victory over the "asuras" and "danavas," the Natya Veda was reportedly played. This happened at a period when the performing arts were well-understood. Somewhere in chapter six of the *Natyashastra*, Bharat Muni gives his own opinion on his theatrical philosophy. The poem goes on to say: "The combination called 'Natya' is a mixture of 'rasa,' 'bhavas,' 'abhinayas,' 'dharmis,' 'vrittie,' 'pravrittis', 'siddhi', 'svaras,' instruments,' song, and theater-house."

Within the Western canon, the only two main forms of drama that are recognized are tragic and humorous. The 10 distinct kinds of theatre that Sanskrit scholars have identified are Nataka, Prakarana Bhane, Vyayoga, Samavakara, Dima, Ihamriga, Anka, Vrithi, and Prahasana. On top of that, the *Natyashastra* lays out every detail of what an actor or stage manager must know. The lessons learned from 'Rasa,' which have far-reaching implications, may be used to control the actions of the story's elements, characters, and emotions.

A number of states in our country staged Sanskrit plays in the fifteenth century. These included, but were not limited to, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat. The ancient world produced some of its most renowned and



accomplished playwrights, including Ashwaghosh, Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidas, Harsha, Murari, Bhattanarayam, and Rajeshkhora. Their works, including Madhya-Mavyaayoda, Urbhangham, Karnabharan, Mrichkatikam, Abhigyana Shakuntalam, Malankagnimitram, Uttar Ramacharitam, Mudrarak, Shasa, Bhagavadajjukam, and many more, helped advance Indian theater. Kalidas, often called the "Shakespeare of India," is widely considered to have had a significant impact on Indian theater. After the 15th century, Indian drama came to a near halt due to foreign invasions of the country. *Loknatya*, or people's theater, emerged at this time and quickly became famous throughout all of India beginning in the 17th century. Several states came up with dramatic fashions that were new and different. While Madhya Pradesh embraced Mach, Bengal embraced yatrakirtaniya, paal, and gaan. Bhandya was used in Kashmir, whereas Bhavai was used in Gujrat. Raslila, Nautanki, Bhand, and Ramlila were all located in northern India. Tamasha was utilized in Maharashtra, while Raas and Thoomer were used in Rajasthan. The Punjabi people used Bhangra Ahiyanat and Ankinaat.

Among all forms of literature, maybe the theater is most suited to influence people and cultures on a personal and societal level. For this reason, taking risks is crucial for dramatists, yet unlike novelists, they are not allowed to go to the same extremes. While writing about a character, a writer might frame them, write around them, remark on them, and explain them to the reader. Because of this, writers have little choice but to rely on spoken language to convey their ideas, and the success of their performances depends on the director, actors, and audience members. It is the writer's responsibility to ensure that the language used fits the character's natural speech pattern.

In what is essentially the birth of the modern drama series—the early 18th century—the British Empire solidified its grip and influence in India. There was a revival in Indian art, particularly via the field of play, once western culture was introduced to Indian society.

Also, the education offered by the English language gave a push and a boost to the critical study of both western and traditional Indian theater. Great performances of Shakespeare's plays, largely set in Bombay (now Mumbai) and Madras (formerly Chennai), were staged by theatrical troupes from England and Italy as they journeyed throughout India. When the Portuguese arrived on the West Coast, they brought with them a kind of dance theater. It is said that the first contemporary theater in the city of Calcutta (today called Kolkata) was



produced by a Russian music director called Rebecloff around the end of the 18th century. Because of western influence, "the dormant critical impulse in the country to bring Indians face to face with new forms of life and literature and to open the way for a fruitful cross-fertilization of ideas and forms of expression" was reawakened. As stated by Gupta in 1994, The most successful plays in Indian theater have always been those written in regional languages, as these plays were easier for spectators to understand. The early English-language playwrights of India were unable to gain the support of an affluent, English-speaking public, which meant that the growth of Indian English theater was slow. Being a foreign language, English was not understood intelligibly by the people, and the writer, who did not grow up in an English-dominated milieu, also struggled to produce natural and crisp dialogue in English. Because they learned the language later in life, the dialogue they made up sounded quite synthetic and forced.

Despite the limitations above, several Indian playwrights who write in English have persisted in their efforts to develop plays in English. Writing in 1831, Krishna Mohan Banerji depicted *The persecuted or dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindu Society in Calcutta*. As far as Indian literature is concerned, it is the first drama written in English by an Indian. As a social drama, the play shows how traditional Hindu families in Bengal face resistance from more modern western values. To our knowledge, this play is the first of its kind to include a cross-cultural encounter. Almost an entire generation had been schooled in English and had their worldview impacted by the West when this play was produced after the establishment of a Hindu college in Calcutta. The dramatic media allows one to see the reformation wave.

The English language was founded by the great Bengali playwright Michael Madhusudan Dutt, who translated two of his plays, *Ratnavali* (1859) and *Sermista* (1859), into English. His drama *Is This Called Civilization?* premiered in 1871. He passed away in 1922, and after his passing, another play of his, "Nation Builders," was published. Ramkinoo Dutt's *Manipura Tragedy* (1893) is the last drama on the list, completing the collection. This anthology of Bengali Indian English plays published in the nineteenth century delves into the formative years of Indian English theater, focusing on Bengal in particular. Commentary from M.K. Naik:



“In fact, even in Bengal – the fountainhead of most forms of Indian English literature – drama in English failed to secure a local theater habitation, in sharp contrast to plays in the mother tongue (both original and in the form of adaptations from foreign languages): and the appetite for plays in English could more conveniently beef on performances of established dramatic success in English by foreign others.” (M.K. Naik, Pg. 103)

M.K. Naik further observes:

“Owing to the lack of a firm dramatic tradition nourished on actual performance in a live theater. Early Indian English drama in Bengal as elsewhere in India grew sporadically as mostly closet drama; and even later, only Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Harirdranath Chattopadhaya produced a substantial corpus of dramatic writing.” (M.K. Naik, Pg. 103)

In 1776, the city of Bombay (today called Mumbai) had its first theater, the Bombay Armature Theater. However, up until then, it was only used by visiting European groups for performances. C.S. Nazir's poetry drama *The First Parsi Baronet* (1886) was part of an English translation of a play staged in Mumbai. Just two plays from this early period have made it to the present day: *The Indian Heroine* (1877) by D.M. Wadia, which is based on the First War of Independence (1857), and *Dolly Parsen* (1981) by P.P. Meherjee. These two plays were written in the 17th and 18th centuries, respectively.

Madras was the site of the founding of the Oriental Drama Club in 1882. The Sarasa Vinodidini Sabha was an amateur theater organization that Krishnamachary founded in 1895. Extreme vivacity and energy defined the Madras theatrical scene. Comedians, actors, and musicians from many walks of life demonstrate their dramatic talents. The playwrights tackled social themes with mythological and historical subjects. We should not forget the plays of P.V.R. Raju's *Dasaratha or the Fatal Promise* (1901), Krishnamachary's *Harischandra or the Martyr to Truth* (1912), A. Srinivasacharya's *Lord Clive* (1913), Krishna Iyer's *Nur Jalan*, and K.S. Ramaswami's *Sastri*, among many others. However, among these playwrights, V.V. Srinivasa Iyengar produced the most work. His plays were collected in two volumes in 1921 under the



title *Dramatic Divertissements*. Plays like this depict habits that are common among middle-class people. It seems like the original goal was to provide some lighthearted entertainment or force.

The three illustrious writers, sometimes called the "big three," have left indelible marks on the genre. Before the country declared independence, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, and H.N. Chattopashaya all created outstanding works, and this fact must be remembered. These three English-speaking Indian audiences rendered an enduring contribution to the development of Indian English drama.

We have translations of almost all of Rabindranath Tagore's Bengali plays, even though most of his works were written in Bengali. A few of his more famous works are the dramas *Chitra*, *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice*, *Red Oleanders*, *Chandrika*, *Muktadhara*, *Natir Puja*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *Sanyasi*, and *the Mother Prayer*. *Visarjan (Sacrifice)*, his most famous play, is widely considered to be his finest theatrical achievement. The original Bengali versions of these works had extensive monologues and intricate subplots. Compared to his early works, Tagore's later tragedies delve deeper into philosophical and allegorical themes. The ancient Buddhist practice of Ananada, who visits an Adivasi girl to ask for water, is the inspiration for Tagore's *Chandralika*. *Red Oleanders* tells the tale of a cruel king who hides behind an iron curtain while his subjects suffer unimaginably terrible punishment and even death for little offences. To help the ruthless king and his henchmen accumulate even more wealth, they forced the populace to labour in the mines. Nandini, the play's protagonist, leads the peasants and, in the end, the king himself to demolish the object the monarch has made to control them. "*Red Oleanders* is a symbolic presentation of the triumph of humanistic values over soul-billing Maunonism," says M.K. Naik, who praises the rose. Despite her demise, Nandini—the embodiment of happiness, love, and beauty—overthrows the despotic government of Yaksha Town and frees its inhabitants from their servitude as gold diggers (Pg. 108). *Citra* is Tagore's embodiment of the spiritual ascent of human love from its earthly manifestation.

Sri Aurobindo was an expert in our rich Sanskrit literature and knew his way around the great classics of Italy, Germany, France, Spain, and Greece. A multi-talented genius, Sri Aurobindo produced most of his work. Along with the six plays he had already written, he also penned



five unfinished plays in blank verse. The plays *Eric*, *Vasavaduta*, *Radogunna*, *the Viziers of Bassora*, and *Perseus the Deliveror* are all works that he has executed uninterrupted. All five of these plays have three acts each. His unfinished plays include *The Witch of Ilni*, *Achab and Esarhaddon*, *The Maid and the Mill*, *The House of Brut*, *The Birth of Sinband Prince of Edur*, and many more. His plays are purely dramatic, and his characters seem like Indian takes on Elizabethan figures. The tale of *Oerseus* is rooted in an old Indian myth; *Rodogune* is a Syrian romance; *The Vizier* is evocative of the famed Haroun al Rashid; and *Eric* is a Scandinavian romance. Sri Aurobindo takes tremendous pains to chisel his heroines. When asked about the heroines of these plays, Srinivas Iyengar said, "Their beauty is both their birthmark and their fate; their beauty and their capacity for love enable them to defy and master their fate." Page 153 of the Iyengar book.

Aurobindo draws significantly on Elizabethan storytelling and character development when it comes to crafting stories and depicting people. Aptly complementing the story's characters and their predicament, Aurobindo makes superb use of blank poetry in English. The people seem less like authentic Indians and more like Elizabethan figures ensnared by the Indians, which adds an uncomfortable layer of tension to the representation at times. Also, here is something that M.K. Naik noticed:

“In spite of some scenes of dramatic tension, stray passages of poetic beauty and a few moments of bright wit and humour in the comedies, the drama of Sri Aurobindo is perhaps hardly in the same class as his major poetry and prose.” (M.K. Naik, Pg. 105)

The last member of the Indian Trio, Harindranath Chattopadhaya, was more known for his poetry than his plays. He began publishing plays in 1918 with the light fantasy *Abu Hassan* and went on to publish a slew of plays over his career. He has seven verse plays based on the lives of Indian saints in his collection: *Pundalik*, *Saku Bai*, *Jayandeva*, *Chokla Mela*, *Eknath*, *Ramdas*, and *Tukaram*. These pieces were published in the anthology *Poems and Plays* (1927). His tales highlight the quest for pleasure and fulfillment by individuals in opposition to societal limits and hierarchies.



In 1937, Harindranath Chattipadhaya released a collection of *five plays*. Most critics agree that these social dramas are his best works. This set consists of the following items: *The Window*, *The Parrot*, *The Coffin*, *The Evening Lamp*, and *The Sentry's Lantern*. *The Window* depicts "The Brave Textile Workers of Parel, Bombay" and how businessmen take advantage of low-wage labour. To these workers, *The Window* is dedicated. *The Parrot* delves into moral dilemmas and the limitations imposed by traditions. An essay that addresses the immoralities of imperialism, "To all the victims of imperialist Gallows", is the subject of *The Sentry's Lantern*.

The play's three main characters a worker, a bourgeois poet, and a merchant share their stories and thoughts with the audience just before they are beheaded. Workers are the ones who fearlessly face death. Three characters in the play a shopkeeper, a bourgeois poet, and a worker give speeches to the audience before they are beheaded. Employees are the ones who fearlessly confront mortality. In addition to mocking a bourgeois artist, *the coffin's* inscription, "Dedicated to the progressive writers of India," shows us the responsibilities that writers have. A young romantic is the subject of *The Evening Lamp*, a satirical skit. His work highlighting systemic injustice and the achievements of the downtrodden and oppressed has earned him praise. Modern audiences are captivated by his plays because of his talent for crafting simple, direct language.

Another dramatic voice that needs careful examination is T.P. Kailasam's. He writes well and knows two languages inside and out. It was his work, written in Kannada and English. The English plays written by Kailasam include, among others, *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfillment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karna* (1946), and *Kechaka* (1949). Although his English-language plays demonstrate his skill, many see him as the creator of modern Kannada theater. His enthusiasm for drama and true genius are lauded by G.S. Amur, who makes the following observation:

“A talented actor who appeared on the amateur as well as the professional stage, he brought to the writing of drama an intimate knowledge of the theater. It is for this reason that his plays, whether in Kannada or English, have a uniform technical excellence.” (Amur, Pg. 186)



Indian epics provide the basis for most of the main characters and plot points in Kailasam. Based on the Ramayana, the film *The Burden* shows Bharata's range of feelings upon hearing the news of his father's death. The tales of Karna and Keechaka are based on the account of Eklavya in the Mahabharata. Most people recognize kalasam for its ability to merge the best parts of Western and Indian cultures.

Bharti Sarabai wrote both plays. Two works that demonstrate Gandhi's impact on society are *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Woman* (1952). An older woman in *The Harijan* is shown as being unable to go to Kashi, and Haridwar decides to build a well for the uncultured. The second composition, *Two Woman*, depicts a devotional singer named Urvashi and a widowed girl named Anuradha, who was married to Kanakaraya and killed by an Englishman. It seems like the play is trying to say that if you want to find inner peace, you should stop worrying about other people and their worldly possessions and concentrate on yourself. A changing society is the setting for both plays.

This is J.M. Before India gained its freedom, Lobo Prabhu was the last great name in Indian English playwriting. Some of the reformist themes explored in his plays include interracial marriage, marital incompatibility, and women's education. His only two plays that were staged before India's independence were *Mother of New India: A Play of the Indian Village in the Acts* (1944) and *Death Abdicate* (1845). His playwriting repertoire includes almost a dozen works. The publication of his *collected plays* occurred in 1956. A movie star is at the centre of *Apes in the Parlour's* narrative, which centres on the theft of a sacred stone from a temple. Subsequently, her life is taken. Melodramatic plot points obscure the fact that *The Family Cage* is really about a sister's plight after the death of her spouse in a blended family. "Lobo Prabhu's energy is obvious; he can write dialogues with the facility, he can devise, and his documents are seldom wholly convening." (Page 242). According to K.R.S. Iyengar, who comments on Lobo Prabhu's artwork, *Flag of the Hearts* is about emotional love.

More than 300 English-language plays were staged in India before independence. Lyrical genius, subject variety, technical prowess, symbolic significance, and commitment to human and moral principles are some of the hallmarks of Indian English theater. These several attributes make Indian English theater exceptional, even though Indian English plays flourished after independence.



There was a marked difference between the English-language theater scene in India during the plan of the independence period and its subsequent emergence. According to the initial five-year plan for independence, the performing arts were encouraged to participate because of their effectiveness in bringing the people together. The founding members of the "National School of Drama" met in Delhi. The first dramatic training facilities were set up in large metropolitan areas. In 1954, the National theater Festival was established by the Sangeet Natak Academy in Delhi, and other institutions also established theater departments. The Indian capital of Delhi played host to both of these occasions.

With their unique takes, Manjeri Isvarama, Lakhan Deb, and Pretish Nandy carried on the poetic drama tradition started by Tagore, Aurobindo, and Kailasam. The truth is that other nations showcased the works of the few Indian English dramatists who achieved any degree of fame. Once the nation achieved its freedom, G.V. The three most famous Indian playwrights to write in English were Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, and Desani.

The incestuous love between Yami and her brother is the central theme of *Yama and Yami*, a literary work by Isvaran that comprises a prologue and an epilogue detailing their connection. *Tiger Claw*, a historical play created by Lakhan Deb in 1976, focuses on the clash between Shivaji and Afzal Khan. The verse is left blank throughout the play. The other two blank verse plays, *Vivekananda and Murder at the Prayer Meeting* are chronicle plays, the later dealing with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Nandy's *Rites for a Plebeian Statue* is a free verse play with a knit of symbolic plot.

In addition to penning the humorous novel *All About H. Hatter*, G.V. Desani also penned the script for the 1950 stage production of *Hali*. *Hali* is now a 300-page poetry drama, although it was originally intended to be an epic and was originally written with that goal. The name of the show is taken from a very feminine Hindu hymn, and he accessorizes with long hair, bangles, and anklets. The drama, which is based on the life of a Muslim saint, is a metaphor for the pursuit of happiness and the human condition. *Hali* represents all humans. This short poem, *Hali*, is written in the style of an attempt at poetry. It is said by K.R.S. Iyengar, "*Hali* is an attempt to project the story of a 'passion': in other words, Hail's confrontation of the powers of creation and destruction, his grapple with life and death, his surrender to the play of this phenomenal world, his communion with love, and his transcendence of the dualities of



time and place." (p. 143).

Throughout the country, people went to see *A Touch of Brightness* (1968) and *The Professor Has a War Cry* (1970), two prose plays written and directed by Pratap Sharma. Pratap Sharma wrote both of these plays. No country ever staged a production of his plays despite their enormous popularity elsewhere. For a while, the movie *A Touch of Brightness* was really banned in Mumbai. The bold topic presentation in the play is commendable, as it paints an image of Bombay's red-light neighbourhood. The drama describes the goings-on inside a brothel in an unadorned manner. Once again, this theatrical presentation of *The Professor Has a War Cry* is a remarkable work of words and stagecraft. Here, Virendra, a young man, finds out that his mother was raped by two men—an Englishman and a Muslim—and that he is the "illegitimate" child of one of them. This transpired after the mother's boyfriend—a Hindu scholar—leaving her. Finally, the killings of Virendra and the professor are mutually accountable. A fascinating and inventive technical innovation created by Pratap Sharma is the use of the devil from Kathakali to symbolize Veranda's inner state.

Even in Mumbai, Asif Currimbhoy became a household name. Contemporary social and political issues are central to Currimbhoy's plays. He was a very productive playwright, penning 29 plays over his lifetime. Regarding his plays, Shanta Gokhle says, "his uses monologues, sound effects, mime, and anything in fact that furthers the dramatic purpose." (Page 340) One of his banned plays, *The Doldrums* (1960), dealt with Anglo-Indian culture and hippie subculture. The drama shows how widespread the sensation of exclusion can be among young people and the havoc that may ensue as a result. Filmed in 1963, *The Captives* centers on the conflict between India and China. The 1965 film *Monsoon* deals with colonialism, while the 1969 film *An Experiment with Truth* discusses the independence movement and Gandhi's assassination. The 1973 film *The Miracle Seed* depicts a famine in the Indian state of Maharashtra. Some films that explore the relationship between the East and the West include *Darjeeling Tea* (1971), *The Tourist Mecca* (1959), and *The Hungry Ones* (1965). Written in 1959, *The Clock* is a psychological play. It reflects the disappointments of a middle-aged salesman who has failed to make a deal. In 1961, there was another psychological drama called *The Dumb Dancer*. The story revolves around a Kathakali dancer. A female psychiatrist becomes too concerned about helping (Kathakali



dancer) Bhima to the point that she loses her composure and becomes angry instead of being able to help him.

John N. Rai notes that Asif Currimbhoy's plays are "like Arnold Weaker; he is a social realist, and he reminds us of Strindberg and Tennessee Williams in the use of his theatrical techniques and stage directions." The plays are emotive, symbolic, poetic, and dramatic. He can conjure up the right mood, thrilling situations, and interesting, dynamic people. Rather than delving thoroughly into the ideological and dialectical discussion, he sometimes seems more concerned with creating dramatic events and pre-existing situations. The playwright's distinctive and outstanding accomplishments, despite his plays' occasional weak storylines, sketchy characters, lack of wit and humour, and excessive repetition, contribute to the overall impression that Currimbhoy is a talented writer.

The famous poet Nissim Ezekiel has an unusually acute sense of theater. He demonstrates an understanding of the language in its urban, middle-class and upper-class use. He does a poor job of directing the plot or constructing the drama. Nissim Ezekiel's three 1969 plays—*Marriage Poem: A Tragi Comedy*, *Nalini: A Comedy*, and *The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Force*—deal with social issues and personal relationships, but they fail to captivate audiences despite their easy-to-understand language. To expose the generosity of two young and successful businessmen named Raj and Bharat, the play *Nalini* distinguishes between the real and phantom Nalini. *Marriage-Poem* is excellent in its art. The drama takes place in an upper-middle-class marriage and explores a housewife's need for her husband's love and attention. In *The Sleepwalker*, you will only find one satirical performance. Following the lead of M.K., A humorous look at the prejudices and assumptions that permeate our culture is shown in the film Naik *The Sleepwalker*. An Ezekiel play is highly esteemed for its symmetrical construction and abundance of components. The findings of his meticulous investigation of the elements constituting human life and conduct are unveiled. "In his satire of current fashion, in his exposure of prose and presence, Ezekiel comes very close to the spirit of some English social satirist in theater." (page 174) That being said, despite the fact that Ezekiel's lyrical personality shaped his theatrical credo, his plays are still regarded as 'pleasant reading.'



Another famous playwright, Gurcharan Das, is on the other side. One of Gurcharan Das's most popular and well-respected plays is *Larins Sahib* (1970). The play spans three acts and centers on an event that occurred in Punjab 150 years ago. Das dramatizes the life of Henry Lawrence, a British official who lived in Punjab in Dalip Singh's court from 1846 to 1847. A once enlightened liberal, Lawrence becomes an authoritarian as a result of his experiences, regardless of the fact that they take place in the past. The author has put together what happened based on the major characters' letters and documents that were exchanged. Using all the intricacies that modern theater can provide, Das's *Mira* aims to portray the idea of Mira's pure God Love. His other works include plays such as *Karna and Jokhoo Villa*.

Winner of the Sultan Padamsee Award, Dina Mehta's *The Myth Makers* is a three-act drama about the violent riots in Bombay that occurred in response to migrants from other states, especially those from the south. The BBC's 1971 international playwriting contest declared Mehta's *Brides Are Not For Burning* the finest play of all time. Tragically, the drama is based on the social reality of violence against women, which may be perpetrated by both powerful individuals and weaker individuals seeking revenge for coercion.

Ebrahim Alkazi, like Ezekiel before him, hired Gieve Patel to work at the theater. Three of Patel's plays are full-length works. The bulk of his life and his parents' ancestral homeland are in south Gujarat, the setting for the plays. The story's protagonists are the Parsis, an Iranian religious minority who converted to Zoroastrianism in order to escape Islamic oppression. Approximately one thousand years ago, they reached the western coast of India. In the era after independence, the 1970 film Patel's *Princess* follows the story of many Parsi families who had acquired land. Prohibition began to cut into these people's income as they were entangled in the struggle between the Property Ceiling Act and the law. For the purpose of creating closely related speech patterns, *Princess* modifies syntax and grammar. The setting of Patel's play, *Savaska*, is a big village that is shrinking into a little town. *Savaksa*, a sixty-year-old political leader and rich landowner from the province, is the protagonist of the drama. A young woman from a humble Bombay household, Savaksa falls head over heels with an 18-year-old girl and plans to marry her.



Mister Bheram (1988), Patel's third play, is based on the life of the famed nineteenth-century Gujarati reformer and lawyer Bherman. Bherman takes in a young tribal child who is left without parents, mentors him, and helps him become a lawyer, much like himself. Bherman eventually approves Naval's marriage proposal to his daughter. Indeed, the play shows how Bherman influences Naval's life and damages the excellent fortune he has bestowed upon him.

The book *Doongaji House*, written by Cyrus Mistry, was nominated for the second Sultan Padamsee Award in 1978. The Parsi Community is going to be the center of attention. The drama shed light on the predicament of the Parsi community in regard to other religious communities, including Muslims and Hindus. The psychological anguish and familial disintegration brought on by the new restricted circumstances are vividly shown in the play. While seeking a common history, *Doongaji House* on to the era when different parts of India were divided along religious, social, and linguistic lines. All of Mistry's plays deal with existential and universal themes.

Modern Indian theater deviates from the norms of classical and European forms in its exploration of new ideas and techniques. Its departure from Western models is the reason for this. It laid the framework for a distinct tradition in the annals of world play by reexamining myth, history, religion, folk love, and legend through the lens of contemporary sociopolitical challenges. Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, and Vijay Tendulkar all helped build a strong dramatic legacy in India, which is considered the birthplace of contemporary Indian English theater.

Throughout his career, Girish Karnad made great strides in the realistic style of theater via his theatrical endeavours. Among the new Indian theater's dramatists, he stands head and shoulders above the others. He has helped advance the genre thanks to his talents as a performer, filmmaker, writer, and producer. Throughout the world, people are praising Karnad's plays for their excellence. His plays have had several productions in the US and Europe. The plays that have received the most acclaim are *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlag* (1962), *Hayvadana* (1970), and *Nagmandala* (1972). His plot was based on ancient legends, myths, and historical accounts that were rife with symbolism, and he sought to show how these stories had relevance to the current political and social climate.



In the drama *Yayati*, modern ideas are used in one of the traditional Mahabharata stories. The play follows the Aristotelian format of a well-organized work with four acts and a prologue. It follows the unities, has a lofty theme and an exalted hero, and achieves a catharsis of repressed emotions; it also has a balanced beginning, middle, and end. *Tughlag* is the name of a historical play. Shown here is India in the fourteenth century, under the rule of Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughlag. King, who was once a kind person but became nasty as the story progressed, is the central character in this complex drama. All the action revolves around the protagonist's unusual position and his remarkable personality. He proves to be a monarch who is capable of both daydreaming and really making his fantasies a reality. As the political structure begins to fall apart in *Tughlag*, the audience is treated to a series of dramatic situations. The play mainly revolves around the counter-political forces that were challenging Nehru's vision of a new Indian nation at the time.

Hayavadana also touches on the difficulty of defining one's own identity and the search for meaning in one's life. This account is based on two sources: the *Kathasarit Sagar* by Vidyasagar and Thomas Mann's *Transposed Heads*. The mask technique is reminiscent of O'Neill's "Memoranda on Masks," which Karnad has used. Not only that, but he has also included folkloric elements, namely dolls, who reveal Padmini's inner thoughts and feelings. Padmini, a woman, is wed to Devadutta, a learned Brahmin, in the epic *Hayavadana*. Eventually, she develops romantic feelings for his friend Kapila. Devadutta commits suicide at the shrine of Kali after learning the truth about his wife. Kapila, too, resolves to cut off his head after hearing about it. The goddess Kali grants Devadutta and Kapila the gift of life when Padmini discovers the tragedy and persuades her. Padmini inadvertently causes the torsos and heads to get confused. As a result, Devadutta ends up with Kapila's body, and Kapila ends up with Devadutta's head. The story goes on to show Padmini's inner turmoil in more detail.

The drama *Nagmandala* has a prologue and two acts. *Nagmandala* is a window into the conflict between patriarchal and matriarchal worldviews. The heroine of the story is Rani, an ordinary Indian woman. She becomes pregnant after having sexual relations with Naag. She is encouraged, like his other female heroines, to undergo the chastity fight.

Badal Sircar is among the most renowned Bengali playwrights. A watershed moment in



Indian theater history, Badal Sircar, occurred at a time when Indian playwrights were using more conventional forms of storytelling. He praised the stage in a way that was structurally new and exciting. What he has created is a genuine people's theater, often called the third theater. The kind of theater where the people not only act but also fund and shape its future. The *procession*, *Bhome*, and *State News* are some of his later pieces that are based on the idea of the third theater. In these three typical street plays, Sircar shows how he wanted to make individuals think about their responsibilities to society. An experimental play in the style and content of the absurdist theater, Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* follows in the footsteps of its predecessors.

The dramatic atmosphere in Hindi theater is something that is sought, says Mohan Rakesh. *Asadh Ka EkK Din*, his first major play, was staged in 1958, marking his theatrical debut. After that, in 1963, *Lahron ka Rajhans*, another full-length drama, was staged. Many consider his 1969 theatrical production of *Aadhe Adhure*, his first drama with a contemporary setting, to be his magnum opus. On several levels, the gap between the sought-after and the actual acted as a striking metaphor for man's incompleteness. In the beginning, there are no names or other identifiers for the characters. They are exemplified by the man in the black suit, the woman, the girls, and similar descriptions like man one, man two, man three, and man four. Their lives are structured around their responsibilities, and they are easily identifiable by their clothes, gender, or age.

Modern Indian dramatist Vijay Tendulkar is well-known for his work. In his contributions to modern Indian theater, he has included thirty full-length plays, and twenty-three one-act plays. His writings cover a wide range of issues, including cultural emancipation, gender roles, social class formation, social consciousness, and the fight against injustice. Notable awards include the Pudmabhushan (1984), the Maharashtra Gaurav Puraska (1990), the Kalidas Sanman(1992), the Pandit Mahadev Shastri Joshi(1999), and the Dinanath Mangeshkar (1998). The National Academy of the Performing Arts in New Delhi bestowed the Lifetime Fellowship upon him in 1998, and the Nehru Fellowship in 1973 were other strokes of luck. Among their works are *Sakharam Binder and Ghashiram Kotwal's* (1972) *Vultures*, and *Silence! The Court is In Session* (1968) are his four successful experiments on the Marathi theatre.



Ghashiram Kotwal delves into the lives of the corrupt Brahmins of Pune and the morally rotten Peshwa king, Nana Phadnavis. Dashavatara style, which is characterized by song and dance, is used in the drama to heighten the situation's comedic value. The baser instincts of man, such as the need for sexual intercourse, which may drive him to aggressive and destructive behaviour, are at the heart of *Vultures*. A family's decline via acts of compassion and cruelty is at the heart of the story. As a realistic drama, *Sakharam Binder* delves into the nitty-gritty of human nature, namely how aggressiveness and sexual desire originate in relation to one another. The depiction of relentless objectivity is emphasized by the triangular relationship that forms between Sakharam and his two mistresses, Laxmi and Champa. The reality that a Dalit writer is a drunk, an abusive parent, and a slave-owning husband is exposed in *Kanyadaan*. *Silence! The Court is in Session* deals with patriarchal value on woman. Famous for his stage artistry, Vijay Tendulkar depicts pictures of numerous themes, cultural practices, and taboos that have strong roots in Maharashtra. There are plays on religion, philosophy, music, and theater. His stage directions are so systematic that you may be certain that the show will go off without a hitch. Members of the middle class striving for external achievement, female characters and their place in contemporary society are the subjects of his plays.

The multi-talented Mahesh Dattani is one of the few English-language playwrights who deviate from the standard Western theatrical canon. The playwright aspires to write plays with both domestic and international audiences in mind. The urban landscape of India is the setting for his plays, which represent the common man's anxieties and constraints. The Sahitya Academy Award was bestowed to his film *Final Solutions* (1992–1993) in 1998. The film tackles the ubiquitous problems between communities. Some plays that depict family tensions when they remain at home for the same reason include *Where There's a Will* (1988), *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991), *Dance Like a Man* (1989), and *Tara* (1990). The tragic practice of female feticide—when parents choose their boys over their daughters—is tackled head-on in the drama *Tara*. The play's intended audience is anybody and everyone who can relate to the necessity of shielding young girls from harm. The murder of a eunuch named Kamala and the subsequent investigation by the police are the central themes of the drama *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. The drama shows how society treats eunuchs and how



brutal it is. The conflict between contemporary values and those of the past is addressed in *Dance Like a Man*.

An interesting theatrical work, *Ek Alag Mausam* centres on the socially excluded individual living with HIV/AIDS. The dramatist wrote this play to draw attention to the terrible situation of HIV-positive people who are affected. Love and compassion are what those living with HIV need, he adds. Dattani has written a few plays, including *Do the Needful* (1997), *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (1998), *The Swami and Winston* (2000), *A Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child* (2000), *Clearing the Rubble* (2000), and *Uma and the Fairy Queen* (2003). *Thirty Days in September* (2001) and *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998) are two more significant plays. A great deal of Dattani's work has been adapted for both the stage and radio. *Ek Alag Mausam* (2005), *Morning Raga* (2004), and *Mango Souffle* (2002) are among his other stage creations. World politics and social issues take centre stage in Dattani's plays.

Manjula Padmanabhan is a famous and prominent English-language Indian woman writer of plays. As a result of her highly acclaimed 1997 play, 'Harvest,' she won the prize for dramatic plays at Greece's Onassis International Cultural Competition. As far as Indian English playwriting is concerned, Manjula stands alone as the first author to achieve widespread renown. Harvest explores the topic of human body exploitation from the modern-day perspective. Based on a 1982 gang rape that occurred in the Santa Cruz, Mumbai complex of a middle-class family, Her *Lights Out* is another powerful work.

Her most famous work, the META-nominated play *So Many Socks*, is a writer herself. Modern Indian-English writer Annie Zaidi is only a young woman. Her work is well-known. In a world where rejection may happen to other people but not to one's own identity, the play explores this concept. The story follows three generations of a Tibetan family who have been living in exile in India. She had a full-length play, 'Name Place Animal Thing,' considered for the Hindu Metro Plus dramatist award. The BBC International radio prize went to her song 'Jam.'

Swar Thounaojam is a famous writer and theatre director, and his most famous piece is *Finding the Voices*. Despite all the sad news about Manipur, the play promotes and shares a story that is inspirational, upbeat, humorous, optimistic, and full of life. 'The Mountain of



Bones, written by Northwestern State University professor Manjima Chatterjee, is a horrifying account of the new paradigm of development in India and the supremacy of neoliberal ideology.

Optimism over the Indian English play's future is warranted. Dattani, Karnad, Tendulkar, and Sircar are just a few of the many playwrights who have dared to try new things and whose keen awareness of the importance of live theater has led them to achieve unprecedented levels of dramatic success. Theatrical performances in India have been around since ancient times, and the country's writers have left an indelible mark on world literature. Because of its multifaceted nature and the passage of time, Indian English theater has evolved in many respects. On a global level, Indian dramatists make a big impact with the variety of drama they give. Its uniquely Indian character helps to portray Indian civilization and its evolution over the ages, which is why it has become so popular. By presenting stories from a variety of perspectives, Indian English women playwrights have undoubtedly broken out of the silent style. They convey every emotion imaginable. Women have been able to effectively highlight the liberty of thought and body from the tyranny of men because they are becoming more vocal and aware of their rights and personal space. They have also begun to use their plays as a means of exposing male-imposed exploitation and domination. In reality, they have dared to criticize patriarchal authority and delve into taboo subjects, which women have traditionally been forbidden to discuss.

Conclusion:

Finally, looking at Indian English play offers a fascinating history of creative expression. Cultural influences, social dynamics, and literary breakthroughs are all intricately woven into the beautiful fabric that is Indian English theatre. Its origins reveal this diverse blend, and it keeps expressing itself in modern forms. Regarding the course of this theatrical heritage, the research emphasizes the everlasting importance of playwrights, movements, and historical landmarks. In conclusion, this historical perspective makes it quite evident that Indian English plays contribute significantly to the global landscape of theatrical expression while also reflecting the cultural ethos of their time. The ever-changing interplay of literature, culture, and performance in Indian culture may be better understood via ongoing research and celebration of this dramatic history. Also included is a historical tour of Indian English play,



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

which shows how resilient and flexible this art form is. Because it has the remarkable capacity to weather changes in culture, politics, and society, it has evolved into a versatile and ever-evolving platform for creative expression. As a consequence of blending old practices with contemporary ideas, an Indian theatrical style has developed that is both distinctive and universally appealing.



References

- A. B. Keith. 1992. *The Sanskrit Drama*, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi,
- Bharat Gupta. 1994. *Dramatic Concepts: Greek and Indian – A Study of Poetics and Natya Shastra*. D. K. Print Worlds, New Delhi.
- Ghokale Shanta: *The Dramatist in a History of Indian Literature in English*, ed – Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., India, 2003.
- G. S. Amur – Kailasam's Onest for Greatness – *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English*, Macmillam, Madras, 1977. K. R. Srinivas Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1995.
- K. R. Srinivas Iyengar. 1995. *Indian Writing in English*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
- Kumar, Satish. 1993. *A Survey of Indian English Drama* Barielly; Prakash Book Depot.
- M. K. Naik. 2009. *A History of Indian English Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi
Ibid 103.
- Mukhejee, Tutun. 2005. *Staging Resistance Plays by Women in Translation*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press.
- Rai R. N.: Perspectives and Challenges in Indian English Drama in *Perspectives in Indian English Drama*, ed – Neeru Tendon, Atlantic Publishers & Distrubuter (p) Ltd., New Delhi, 2006.
- Sridhar Rajeshwaran: Girish Karnad Tying Beginnings to Ends in *Contemporary Indian Drama Astride Two Traditions*, ed – Urmil Talwar and Bandana Chakraborty, Rawat Publications, 2005, New Delhi.