



SIGNIFYING HISTORICAL ASPECTS RELATED TO INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

Satish Kumar

Research Scholar Monad University Hapur U.P

Dr.Ajit Kumar

Associate Professor In Monad University Hapur U.P

ABSTRACT

Indian English drama has a rich and diverse history that reflects the intersection of Indian and English cultural influences. This abstract aims to provide a concise overview of the historical aspects related to Indian English drama, highlighting key periods, prominent playwrights, themes, and the evolution of this dramatic form. The roots of Indian English drama can be traced back to the colonial era when English theater was introduced to India by the British. The first significant phase of Indian English drama emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, known as the "ParsiTheater" period. This era witnessed the rise of Parsitheater companies, which adapted English plays and incorporated Indian elements, language, and themes, catering to a mixed audience. Notable playwrights during this period include JamshedjiFramjiMadan, who authored plays like "Rustomjee" and "SitaSwayamvar."The mid-20th century marked a significant shift in Indian English drama with the emergence of prominent playwrights who began to write original works in English. One of the most influential figures was Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel laureate, who explored diverse themes such as patriotism, social issues, and human relationships in plays like "The Post Office" and "Red Oleanders." His works laid the foundation for a distinct Indian identity in English drama. Another notable playwright of this period was Vijay Tendulkar, known for his gritty and politically charged plays like "GhashiramKotwal" and "Sakharam Binder." Tendulkar's works reflected the social realities of post-independence India and challenged traditional norms, sparking controversy and debates.

Keywords: - English, Literature, India, Greece, heritage.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian English Drama

Drama has always been one of literature's most potent forms. It combines live performance with video presentation. India, Greece, Rome, and England all had important roles in drama's history and evolution. It has been assessing ethical stances, philosophic stances, social and political shifts, and more as an intrinsic aspect of culture, religion, and societal beliefs. Drama is a



portrayal of life that combines elements of fiction and reality. According to Martin Esslin, "it is a narrative made visible".

The Indian theatrical heritage is long and illustrious. India, a nation with a rich cultural heritage and a wide range of geographical, social, linguistic, and literary landscapes, also has an illustrious theatrical history. The Indian Theatre's history is murky and hard to pin down. Despite disagreements among experts, it is likely that Sanskrit Drama developed from the country's sophisticated folk theatre. To quote A. B. Keith: "Indian tradition preserved in the *Natyashastra*, the oldest of the texts of the theory of drama, claims for the drama a divine origin and a close connection with the sacred Vedas themselves" (Shukla 3). The Vedic era is when theater first emerged. The ancient Hindu theatrical tradition may have been completely formed before the emergence of Greek theater. Over 2000 years ago, Hindus developed their own unique notion of theatre. *Natyashastra*, written by Bharata, states, "Theatre is life." Nothing that can be seen cannot be considered art, craft, study, yoga, or activity.

The great writer not only specifies what should be performed on stage because it is entertaining and instructive, but also what the audience should be like. Guidelines for directors, performers, and reviewers may be found in *Natyashastra*. The history of the multifaceted art form known as theater is laid out for us here. R. N. Rai makes the following observation on Bharata's *Natyashastra*:

II. REASONS FOR THE SETBACK OF INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

It's embarrassing to discover there's nothing to be proud of in Indian English Drama when a study project shifts its focus to the field's accomplishments. Remarks on the English-language Indian Drama by Iyengar, K. R. S. "Modern Indian Dramatic writing is neither rich in quantity, nor on the whole of high quality" (*Indian Writing in English* 226).

Then, what do you think the issues and causes are? What challenges have the playwrights encountered, and how have they sought to address those challenges in their work? In what ways do playwrights successfully mine our culture's wealth of folklore, history, politics, and society for themes? Since native English speakers are a minority in this nation, how do the playwrights deal with the difficulties of finding an appropriate language for dialogue? Such weighty topics are often tackled in Indian English Drama. English drama, unlike poetry, novels, and prose, has struggled to establish a foothold in India. The fact that English is still foreign in India is a major barrier to the development of English-language drama in the country. Audience engagement is often facilitated by the use of the native language rather than a foreign language.

That's why it was mostly Indian theater that developed in regional languages. However, the field of Indian English Drama does not have this luxury and instead must endure arduous conditions.



Indian English drama has been enriched by the work of many talented authors, including Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, T. P. Kailasam, Bharati Sarabhai, and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya; and more recently, Asif Currumbay, G. V. Desani, Lakhan Deb, Gurucharan Das, Nissim Ezekiel, and Girish Karnad. The English versions of Badal Sircar's, Mohan Rakesh's, and Vijay Tendulkar's plays have made important contributions as well.

III. PRE-INDEPENDENCE PHASE OF INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

In 1819, with the publication of *The Persecuted*, Krishna Mohan Banerjee marked the debut of Indian English Drama. In the course of this study, we encounter perceptive and skilled authors who opted for the dramatic form to convey their ideas and emotions.

Like Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Michael Madhusudan Dutt first wrote his plays in Bengali before adapting them for the English-speaking audience. *Rathnavali* (1858), *Sarmista* (1859), and *This Called Civilization* (1871) are three of his plays. *Manipura Tragedy* (1839) was a dramatic work written by Ramkinoo Dutt. However, the only relevance these plays have now is as historical artifacts. In contrast to the widespread development of play in regional languages, this marked the beginning of the English play in India. When compared to plays in the mother tongue (both original and in the adaptations from foreign language), drama written in English has struggled to find a local theatrical habitation, as noted by M.K. Naik (*Dimension of Indian English Literature*, p. 98).

Indian English Drama, which got off to a slow start in the nineteenth century, continued to thrive, if intermittently, during the twentieth. The plays of this period were inspired by myths, epics, real-life occurrences, and contemporary social issues. Bharati Sarabhai, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, T. P. Kailasam, A. S. P. Ayyar, and T. P. Kailasam are some of the most important playwrights.

IV. POST-INDEPENDENCE PHASE OF INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

After India gained its independence on August 15, 1947, the Indian English literary scene saw the emergence of several very brilliant playwrights. In fact, the National School of Drama was founded in Delhi under the first Five Years' Plan following independence to promote the performing arts as a tool of public enlightenment. The Sangeet Natak Akademi began the annual National theatre Festival in Delhi in 1954 and also created theatre departments at a number of institutions. However, these changes have facilitated the expansion of theaters that present works in regional languages, whereas most Indian English plays have had to settle with performances.



Some writers, like their predecessors, looked to the West for inspiration. Plays are rich with opportunities to observe and learn from novel experiments, models, and methods. Both AsifCurrimbhoy and Lobo Prabhu released collections of plays after Independence, despite having begun writing in the pre-Independence era.

After India's independence, a new wave of innovative playwrights such as G. V. Desai, Lakhan Deb, Gurucharan Das, Nissim Ezekiel, and Pratap Sharma emerged. Indian English Drama has been bolstered by initiatives like the Five Year Plan, the National School of Drama, and the National Drama Festival.

Since 1970, several up-and-coming regional dramatists have shown their mettle with adaptations of plays originally written in Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, and Kannada. Mohan Rakesh, BadalSircar, GirishKarnad, and Vijay Tendulkar are just a few of the playwrights whose daring and originality have altered the direction of theatre forever. Their involvement with the theater has been just as important as their playwriting in advancing Indian English Drama.

V. CONCLUSION

The historical aspects related to Indian English drama reveal a fascinating journey of cultural fusion, artistic exploration, and social commentary. From its early roots in the ParsiTheater period to the emergence of original works by influential playwrights, Indian English drama has evolved into a distinct and vibrant form of theatrical expression.

The colonial era introduced English theater to India, and the ParsiTheater period witnessed the adaptation of English plays with Indian elements, marking the first significant phase of Indian English drama. This period not only entertained audiences but also contributed to the development of a unique Indian theatrical identity.

The mid-20th century marked a turning point with playwrights like Rabindranath Tagore and Vijay Tendulkar, who wrote original plays in English that explored Indian themes and societal issues. Their works delved into patriotism, social norms, and the human condition, leaving a lasting impact on Indian English drama and setting the stage for future playwrights.

Contemporary playwrights have continued to push boundaries, addressing a wide range of topics such as gender, identity, globalization, and cultural clashes. Their works reflect the complexities and diversities of Indian society, sparking discussions, and provoking thought among audiences both in India and abroad. The growth of Indian English drama has been facilitated by theater festivals, workshops, and alternative performance spaces, providing platforms for experimentation, collaboration, and recognition. The genre continues to evolve, adapting to the changing socio-cultural landscape of India, while maintaining its connection to



both Indian and English cultural influences. The historical aspects of Indian English drama demonstrate its resilience and relevance in reflecting and commenting on Indian society. It has proven to be a dynamic and powerful medium for self-expression, cultural exploration, and social critique. As Indian English drama moves forward, it is poised to continue shaping and enriching the theatrical landscape, contributing to the global discourse on the stage.

REFERENCES

1. Sinha, K. N. Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1979. Sri Aurobindo. Kalidasa: Essays and Translations. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2004.
2. Tendon, Neeru. Perspective and Challenges in Indian English Drama. New Delhi: Antlantica Publishers and Distributers (P).Ltd., 2006.
3. Verma, K. D. The Indian Imagination: Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd., 2001.
4. Prasad, Amarnah and S. John Peter Joseph. Ed. Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons. 2006.
5. Pakle, G. S. Image, Symbol and Myth in Sri Aurobindo's Poetry. New Delhi: Harman Publishing House, 2006.
6. Naikar, Basavaraj. Indian English Literature. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2004.