
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE & INDIAN THEATRE: A PEEP INTO
PRE AND POST – INDEPENDENT PERIOD**

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ABSTRACT

English language originating from a foreign root is supposed to be a major reason behind a hampered progress of Indian English drama after its initiation during mid-19th century. After a long pause came a period during the pre-independence era which marked an affluent progress of the Indian English drama, with its great promoters, bringing it on a strong footing with its great development and progress. Though, Indian English drama of the pre-independent era is remarkable for a large variety of themes and techniques yet it was not basically constituted for the stage performance. Stage performance is definitely the most distinguished feature of drama; and it was only after independence, when this phenomenon was marked by certain dramatists. Contemporary Indian drama in English translations is found getting quite innovative and experimental regarding the selection of its themes and the techniques. At present, Indian English drama has got quite prominent with the young talented playwrights who have made the dramatic writing to be quite lively and forceful, focusing on the vital issues of the society. The basic reason behind this decline of Indian English drama is the absence of a living theatre for this. However, some occasional stage performances of Indian English plays take place in some big

cities of India as Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. The American Centre and the British Council, devoted to the development of Indian English theatre, do initiate for the same cause.

Key Words: Indian English Theatre, Pre-Independent Era, Post-Independent Era.

The historical moment came in 1831 with the production of the very first original Indian English play. Krishna Mohan Banerjee produced *The Persecuted* or *Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the present state of Hindu Society in Calcutta*, a social play presenting the conflict emerging between the new ideas coming from western education and the deep-rooted orthodoxy. Later came Michael Madhusudan Dutt with the translation of his three plays from Bengali into English which were *Ratnavali* (1858), *Sermista* (1859) and *Is this called civilization?* (1871). Then, for a very long time, there was not marked any such fruitful creative effort. There are several authentic reasons for such a hampered development of Indian English drama. First of all, it can be said that drama's success lies on a combined co-operation of a number of people as the playwright, the actors and the audience to make a perfect performance and leave a lasting impression as it is an integrated form of art, contrary to novel or poetry. Along with this, another major factor is found in the form of language difference; as English, being a foreign language for the Indians, was not a quite comfortable and natural medium to present a dramatic performance with, as the dialogues of the drama, making a conversation among the characters, could not make the audience feel that affinity, which they could feel with their mother tongue.

After a long pause came a period during the pre-independence era which marked an affluent progress of the Indian English drama, with its great promoters, in the form of Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, T.P.Kailasam,

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Bharathi Sarabhai, Lobo Prabhu and many others, bringing it on a strong footing with its great development and progress. Tagore's plays are full of allegory, symbolism and lyricism. His most famous plays as *Mukta Dhara*, *Sacrifice*, *The Post Office*, *Chitra*, *Red Oleanders* and *The King of the Dark Chamber* present a unique blend of two

contradictory or opposite features in the form of modernity and conventionality as well as complexity and simplicity. Tagore has, indeed, a rich collection of his plays with a variety of taste but they are quite symbolic and suggestive in nature thereby causing a huge hurdle in their dramatic performance as it is rightly said:

Tagore's dramatic art is simple and complex at the same time. From the point of view of style and manner of expression, his dramatic art is simple, whereas in terms of variety of its forms and depth of its meaning, his dramatic art is complex. Tagore is essentially a lyric poet and sometimes his lyricism goes to such an extent that we find it difficult to distinguish his plays from ordinary dramatic productions such as lyric drama or dramatic lyrics (Myles 4).

Tagore's plays basically belong to Bengali Drama only; despite most of them getting translated into English by the playwright himself.

Sri Aurobindo, getting influenced by the poetic drama of the Elizabethan period – that of Marlow and Shakespeare which got revived in the Victorian era by Stephen Phillips and Robert Bridges, produced a number of plays. Apart from six incomplete plays, the five complete verse plays of Aurobindo being written originally in English, are *Perseus*, *Vasavadatta*, *Rodogune*, *The Viziers of Bassara* and *Eric* which display his great dramatic genius. The play *Perseus* is based on a Greek legend presenting the vision of such a world which moves through evil and anarchy to attain a blissful state. The other play *Vasavaddata* taking its theme from Somadeva's *Kathasaritasagara* is presented in the form of a romantic comedy which depicts the love story of the princess of Avanti named Vasavadatta and the young king of Cosambie named Vuthsa Udayam, who is kept in the prison of Avanti. *Rodogune*, being inspired by the Shakespearean and Jacobean tragedies, presents the idea that suffering, coming to man's life, is not to destroy him but to take him to a higher state with a new consciousness. *The Viziers of Bassara*, deriving its theme from the *Arabian Nights* and presenting itself in the Elizabethan pattern, depicts the love story of Vizier's son named Nur-ul-din, having a very sophisticated nature, and a slave girl

named *Ania-al-jalice*. The play *Eric* is presented in the form of comedy, focusing on love and adventure as displaying several different stages of love, and the establishment of man's affinity, not just with the people around him but with the whole universe. *Eric* is a great attempt of Aurobindo to put it in the form of classical drama; and like Shakespeare's *Tempest*, this play too maintains the dramatic unities of time, place and action.

With the study of Aurobindo's all these five plays one can easily get aware of his dramatic excellence and outstanding craftsmanship in verse. Apart from getting influenced by the Elizabethan drama with the use of blank verse in his plays, Aurobindo also seems to be inspired by the stalwarts of the Indian Sanskrit drama as K. R. S. Iyengar rightly remarks: "But all five plays are steeped in poetry and romance, recalling the spirit and flavour of the distinctive dramatic type exemplified in different ways by Bhasa, Kalidas and Bhavabhuti – though, of course, all have Aurobindonian undertones" (Iyengar 226). Besides their being quite poetic in nature, these plays are put in the category of 'closet drama', which are designed just to be studied rather than getting them performed on the stage. Still these plays definitely present Aurobindo's excellence of portraying unique characters with their distinctive features as it is said that Aurobindo has created "extremely interesting men and women by developing psychological element which endows his plays with inexhaustible human interest and significance" (Naik and Punekar 7). Apart from this, Aurobindo introduced an optimistic approach in Indian English drama by presenting in his plays quite positive visions regarding the future of mankind:

Thus it is quite obvious that the plays of Aurobindo have a variety of periods and locales ranging from ancient Greek times to medieval India and covering several countries like Iraq, Syria, India, Spain, Britain and Norway. Through all these plays run two characteristic themes used by Aurobindo: the idea of human evolution and love as a benevolent force capable of destroying evil. His plays may not have contemporary significance but they succeeded in keeping alive interest in Indian English Drama, which as a genre had yet to establish itself (Myles 8).

Though T. P. Kailasam derives the themes of his English plays from the *puranas* as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* yet they are rendered into contemporary context. *The Burden* (1933) depicts the story of Bharata from the *Ramayana* presenting him in a state of predicament at the time of his father's death; and his elder brother's exile to communicate the message that one should abide by one's duty, despite having any adverse condition. Though the theme of *Fulfillment* (1933) is based on an episode from the *Mahabharata*, it contains the high imagination of Kailasam narrating the story of Eklavya who decides to join the Kauravas against the Pandavas; and brings his disaster this way when Krishna slains him stealthily and gets his mother spare from the grief of her son's loss. *The purpose* (1944) also depicts the story of Eklavya, a character from the *Mahabharata*, who is highly devoted to the art of archery to protect the lives of the weak creatures of the forest from the strong tyrannous elements. Kailasam's another play *Karna* (1946) also picks a character named Karna from the *Mahabharata* and presents it in an idealized state. The play describes that the fairness of killing is assessed through the purpose behind it, not by the ways in which it has been done.

The play *Keechaka* (1946) also demonstrates a character with the same name from the *Mahabharata*. Though the Keechaka of the *Mahabharata* was a mean-spirited person yet the play presents him in a quite idealized form; who falls in love with Sairandhri after returning from the war and is killed by Valala. Thus, the English plays of Kailasam reflect his intense interest in the presentation of the epical characters with their idealization. Despite lacking the proper use of the dramatic style and a perfect command on the art of characterization, Kailasam's most plays remained successful on the stage.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya widened the horizon of Indian English drama with his revolutionary ideas and leftist inclination. On one hand, where he has some devotional plays as *Tuka Ram*, *Raidas*, *Saku Bai*, *Pundalik*, *Jayadeva* and *Chokha Mela*, etc. presenting the lives of some Indian saints, on the other hand, he has some social plays as *The Parrot*, *The Window*, *The Sentry's Lantern*, *The Evening Lamp* and *The Coffin* showing his deep knowledge of the problems prevalent in the society; and his great sympathies for the suffering people or the victimized ones. *The Parrot* is a revolutionary play against the oppressive state of the women

confined within the four walls; and *The Window* is against capitalism. *The Sentry's Lantern* displays the evil forces of imperialism. *The Coffin* is a biting comment on those snobbish creative writers who remain confined in their own blissful world, staying quite unaware of the problems of the outside world. The play asserts the need of a purposeful writing. Thus, the plays of Chattopadhyaya project his deep analysis of the most vital issues of the then society.

Bharati Sarabhai, a prominent woman dramatist, was inspired by the *Gandhian* philosophy which is projected in her plays. As her play, *The Well of the People* (1949), is based on a quite famous doctrine of Gandhi called *Daridra Narayana* which considers the poor as equal to God. It is the story of an old widow who could not go on a pilgrimage. Then she utilizes her savings for the pilgrimage by spending it on building a well in her village for the untouchables. It is a lyrical play presenting the problems of the untouchables during the age of Gandhi. Her next play, *Two Women* (1952), is a presentation of conflict between two opposite forces as spiritualism and materialism, modernity and tradition, asserting the idea that God is within.

A.S.P. Ayyar and J.M. Lobo Prabhu are two other distinguished playwrights who made a remarkable contribution to Indian English drama. Ayyar's plays as *In the Clutches of the Devil* (1926), *Sita's Choice* (1935), *The Slave of Ideas* (1941) and the *Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* (1942) are full of reformist ideas dealing with the most prominent evils existing in the society in the form of superstitions or blind beliefs, caste system, widow-marriage and the deep-rooted materialism. Thus, Ayyar gets quite critical of the contemporary life in his plays produced in the prose form. J.M. Lobo Prabhu's plays belong to both, pre and post-independence period as his two creations *Mother of New India: A Play of the Indian Village in three acts* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945) are from the pre-independence era. His post-independent plays were published under the title *Collected Plays* (1954), possessing dramas of a good grade. *Apes in the Parlour* targets the sophisticated life making a biting comment on it. *The Family Cage* displays the predicament of a widowed sister living in a joint family. *Flags of the Heart* is a play which considers the service and sacrifice, made for the poor, to be of a great value. Lobo Prabhu's employment of proper dramatic situation and dialogues compensates his drawback of presenting unconvincing characters. A mention may be made of a few more playwrights with

their little contribution to Indian English drama. V.V.Srinivasa Iyengar's publication of *Dramatic Divertissements* is found in two volumes, Sudhindra Nath Ghose produced his play *The Colours of a Great City*, R.K.Narayan came with the *Watchman of the Lake*, K.R.S.Iyengar produced two plays, *The Storm in a Tea Cup* and *The Battle of the Optionals*, Balwant Gargi's creation is *The Vulture and Other Plays* and Mrinalini Sarabhai wrote the play; *The Captive Soil*.

Though, Indian English drama of the pre-independent era is remarkable for a large variety of themes, higher skills of technique, proper employment of symbolism, its devotion to moral and human values and, most importantly, a great lyrical excellence yet it was not basically constituted for the stage performance. The pre-independent tradition of verse plays continued in post-independent India, too; with the writing of some more verse plays, but during this period, prose plays are more in number and higher in quality as compared to the verse plays. Therefore, before we come to analyze the prose plays of this period, a reference should be made to the verse plays; regarding which M.K.Naik says: "The Tagore-Aurobindo-Kailasam tradition of poetic drama continues, but with a difference, in the hands of Manjeri Isvaran, G.V.Desani, Lakhan deb and Pritish Nandy" (Naik 268). Manjeri Isvaran's poetic play *Yama and Yami* (1948) presents Yami's incestuous love for her brother Yama. This play employs the classical devices of prologue and epilogue. G.V.Desani's *Hali* (1950) is a unique play which is full of imagination and symbolism. Later, come the plays of Lakhan Deb getting presented in blank verse. His play, *Tiger's Claw* (1967), depicts the nobility and the heroic nature of the historical character, Shivaji, who murders Afzal Khan. Deb produced two other plays as *Vivekanad* (1972) and *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976). His last play, being inspired by T.S.Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, depicts the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Along with employing the classical devices in the form of prologue and chorus, this play is cast on the model of Greek tragedy; employing its dramatic unities of time, place and action. A mention may be made of some other significant verse plays as well belonging to this period like P.A.Krishnaswami's *The flute of Krishna* (1950), Satya Dev Jaggi's *The Point of Light*, Pritish Nandy's *Rites for a Plebeian Statue* (1969), Sree Devi Singh's *The Purple Braided People* (1970), P.S.Vasudeva's *The Sunflower* (1972) and S.Raman's *Karna* (1979), etc.

Stage performance is definitely the most distinguished feature of drama; and it was only in the post-independence era, when this phenomenon was marked in the form of the plays by Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma and Gurucharan Das which were successfully staged abroad. Asif Currimbhoy's plays were basically written for theatre. Comprising the elements of singing, dancing and pantomime, the plays of Currimbhoy culminate into the full-fledged pieces of dramatic performances with their capability of creating strong auditory and visual images. Currimbhoy has written around thirty plays being based on a variety of themes as contemporary politics, history, religion, art, philosophy, psychological conflicts, economic crisis, social problems and east-west relations etc. A theme-wise division of his plays may be made to have a better understanding of them as *The Captives* (1963), *Goa* (1964), *Valley of the Assassins* (1966), *Abbe Faria* (1968), *An Experiment with Truth* (1969), *Inquilab* (1970), *The refugee* (1971), *Sonar Bangla* (1972), *Om Mane Padme hum!* (1972), *Angkor* (1973) and *The Dissident MLA* (1974) belong to historical and political themes. The only play *Om* (1961) comes in the category of a religious theme. *The Clock* (1959), *The Dumb Dancer* (1961), *This Alien....Native Land* (1975) are the plays based on psychological themes. While, *The Doldrummers* (1960), *Thorns on a Canvas* (1962) and *The Miracle Seed* (1973) reflect the social themes. And the most prominent theme of the post-colonial period being influenced by British colonialism in the form of East-West encounter is displayed through *The Tourist Mecca* (1959), *The Hungry Ones* (1965) and *Darjeeling Tea?* (1971). These are the published plays while there are a number of unpublished plays which were successfully performed on the stage as *Monsoon*, *The Lotus Eater*, *The Restraunt*, *The kaleidoscope*, *The Mercenary*, *And Never the Twain shall Meet*, *The Temple Dancers* and *The Great Indian Bastard*. Thus, K.R.S.Iyengar rightly remarks about his dramatic genius as: "Farce, comedy, melodrama, tragedy, history, fantasy: Currimbhoy handles them all with commendable ease" (Iyengar 732).

Nissim Ezekiel, a renowned name in Indian English poetry has also contributed to the enrichment of Indian English drama in his own distinguished way. His *Three plays* (1969) comprising *Nalini: A Comedy*, *Marriage Poem: A Tragi Comedy* and *The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce*, depict the hollow life of the urban middle-class people, fickle

relationships of modern lovers and a greedy temptation to adopt the American life-style, respectively. His another play, *Songs of Deprivation* (1969), exposes the hypocritical and rigid nature of the contemporary Indian society. Ezekiel is an outstanding craftsman presenting his plays in a symmetry being quite witty, humorous and ironical. He observes quite minutely the oddities existing in the behaviour of the people of the contemporary society and demonstrates them quite satisfactorily in his plays. Regarding this Chetan Karnani opines that “in his satire of current fashion, in his exposure of pose and pretence, Ezekiel comes very closer to the spirit of some English social satirists in the theatre” (126).

Like Lakhan Deb, Gurucharan Das also promoted the historical play by producing *Larins Sahib* (1970) presenting some historical events, taking place during the period of one year ranging from 1846 to 1847 in Punjab. The events are depicted through the letters and the documents which the major characters of the play exchange. It is a distinguished historical play with a fruitful demonstration of history as well as the proper employment of the required qualities in the historical characters. Moreover, the play’s success lies in its perfect presentation of the colonial background of the nineteenth century India.

Gieve Patel can be mentioned over here as the next playwright with the production of his play, *Princes* (1970), being the first Parsi play. The play is set in the background of a semi-urban area of South Gujarat, having the Parsi culture, where a great conflict is observed between the two Parsi families over the possession of a single male child. This play is remarkable for its perfect handling of situation and presentation of characters; and their dialogues along with the use of experimental language. The situation presented in the play introduces the typical Indian mentality of yearning for male children, with the perfect use of sub-cultures’ language in the form of modified English, containing Indian rhythms as contrary to the standard English.

Pratap Sharma has occupied a distinguished place among contemporary playwrights with the treatment of bold themes in his two plays as *The Professor Has a Warcry* (1970) and *A Touch of Brightness* (1970). The first one demonstrates the mental anguish of the protagonist of the play named Virendra; after being aware of his illegitimacy, while the second one is the true

presentation of Bombay's red light area. Both these plays received a praise for the boldness of theme, perfect presentation of characters and technical virtuosity. Habib Tanvir, a man of versatile genius, being a playwright, poet, actor, director and founder of a theatre company, called 'Naya Theatre' in Bhopal, produced a number of plays, among which the most famous are *Agra Bazar* (1954) and *Charandas Chor* (1975).

Ranganathan Parthasarathy, with the pen name of Indira Parthasarathy, is widely known as Ee. Paa. His first production *Mazai* or *Rain* (1972) was the first modern Tamil play which was performed on the stage by a Delhi group. Then, he produced *Aurangzeb* (1973) with the alteration in the characteristics of the historical figure of this emperor. *Nandan Kathai* or the *Legend of Nandan* (1978) depicts the story of an untouchable peasant who yearns to have a glimpse of God Shiva in the temple which he is forbidden to enter. Then came *Kala Iyantirankal* or *Time Machines* (1977) and *Porvai Portiya Udalkal* or *Bodies Wrapped under Blankets* (1978). Thereafter, he produced his most popular drama, *Ramanujar* (1996), presenting the character of the founder of the 'Vaishnava School' of Vishishtadvaitam, who was a great philosopher and reformer belonging to the eleventh century.

Mahasweta Devi, a social activist, devoted herself completely to the upliftment of the untouchables, the downtrodden and the marginalized. She also backs the struggling tribal people of Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Her same zeal is reflected in her dramatic works also which are based on the problems of *Dalits*, women and the rural tribal communities of West Bengal. Her *Five Plays* (1997) contains *Mother of 1084*, *Aajir*, *Urvashi and Johnny*, *Bayen* and *Water*. These works basically were in other genres as novel and stories which she later converted into plays and combined them in *Five Plays*.

Contemporary Indian drama in English translations is found getting quite innovative and experimental regarding the selection of its themes and the techniques applied in it. Social, historical, mythological, legendary and folk themes have been largely used in these works maintaining their vitality which brings out outstanding popularity for them. Mohan Rakesh writing in Hindi, Badal Sircar in Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi and Girish Karnad in

Kannad are regarded to be the most prominent representatives of the contemporary Indian drama, on the pan-Indian level, with the English translations of their plays written in regional languages.

Mohan Rakesh stepped out of the traditional threshold of Hindi drama and entered his self-created dramatic world which is full of innovation. An influence of Marxism is marked on him, with his new and challenging experiments, in the form of his endeavours to project vital tragic issues of the life of modern man as how they fail to understand each other or even themselves. It is known as the drama of 'non-communication', taking a step ahead of the typical Hindi drama, based on traditional symbolism and pseudo-modernism. His plays demonstrate the agonies of the men and the women of the society who suffer at the hands of the socio-economic hierarchical forces and cultural hegemony. His two plays, *One Day in Ashadha* and *The Great Swans of the Waves*, employ historical and legendary base to project the contemporary problems. The characters of his plays use smooth flowing dialogues, containing a great meaning and depth, which are quite suitable to them.

On one hand, where Mohan Rakesh presents communication gap among contemporary people with the help of historical figures, Badal Sircar, on the other hand, presents the existential problem of modern man, with the help of contemporary situations, which are well depicted in his play, *Evam Indrajit*. Along with this, Sircar is also a prominent experimental dramatist regarding the themes and techniques of dramatic creations and performance. He is widely known as a 'barefoot playwright', with the establishment of his 'Third Theatre'. It is authentically a theatre of the people which is not only performed by them but also created and supported by them. Beyond the restrictions of the classical and the folk theatre, the 'Third Theatre' breaks the wall standing between the performers and the audience, by allowing a four way communication between the actor and the actor, actor and audience, audience and actor and ultimately audience and audience. It is a portable and inexpensive theatre with no use of the accessories during performance, and no sale of the tickets to watch the performance as it is performed anywhere in the open area as a street, market place or outside the office where people moving around can watch it. It is not just to make people aware of the socio-economic and political problems but

also to awaken them to take a strong step which could bring a radical social change. Sircar's prominent plays *Procession*, *Bhoma* and *Stale News* belong to 'Third Theatre' only.

Procession depicts man's search for a real home belonging to a society in which everyone is treated equally, without any exploitation. *Bhoma* presents the deplorable condition of the poor peasants of rural India; who are oppressed and exploited by the powerful people at the social and economic level. *Stale News* is based on the theme of revolt; in which the heart of an indifferent young man is ultimately moved by the pathetic condition of the victimized poor people. Thus, he decides to take an action against such inhumanity.

Vijay Tendulkar, being the pioneer of the avant-garde Marathi theatre, demonstrates the sufferings, agonies, cries and suffocations of the man belonging to the middle-class society. The prominent theme of his plays is that of man's isolation and his confrontation with the alienated surroundings. Most of Tendulkar's plays, being inspired by Antonin Artaud, present man's anxiety taking the form of violence. He does not look down upon human violence but considers it to be an inborn element in human nature. Tendulkar presents violence in its quite natural and raw form on the stage as against presenting it in a refined form to look pleasant. His plays, *Sakharam Binder*, *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Silence! The Court is in Session*, caused a thunder in society. They deal with several problems regarding love, marriage, sex and moral values existing in the society. Tendulkar's latest plays, *To Hell with Destiny* and *The Tour*, project the mentality of the middle-class people and value system. In place of paying more attention, to increase the number of characters and the range of episodes and situations, Tendulkar gives more importance to convey deeper meanings and their corollaries in both these plays. Vijay Tendulkar, along with other playwrights as Mohan Rakesh, Badal sircar and Girish Karnad, has brought a great change in Indian theatre. He employed new models and avoided the three-act play and, thus, brought a change in the existing pattern and form of Indian drama. With the development of cautiously crafted flexible forms of storytelling belonging to his region, Tendulkar tries to bridge the gulf between two contradictory theatres in the form of traditional and modern by producing a living and novel form of theatre, an instance of which is his play *Ghashiram Kotwal*. It is, therefore, said of him: "As a playwright, he has dwelt on all aspects of urban life in Indian cities. He has

delineated the alienation of the modern individual, satirized modern politics, depicted social and individual tensions, portrayed the complexities of human character and exploited man-woman relationship” (Dodiya and Surendran 93).

As contrary to Badal Sircar and Vijay Tendulkar, who deal with the problems of middle class people, Girish Karnad employs history, myths and legends as the basis of his plays to project a new vision. With the use of such themes, he tries to present modern life, being full of internal conflict and anguish and modern man’s endless struggle to obtain perfection. Karnad in his plays *Yayati*, *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana* and *Tale-Danda* presents as how the archetypal, historical and mythic experiences relate to the contemporary problems. His creative reworking of history, myths and folk-tales reminds one of the great scholars as T.P.Kailasam and Adya Rangacharya. Girish Karnad, being one of the stalwart dramatists of the roots movement, does it by exploiting the traditional themes for the purpose of reviving the authentic Indian theatre. On the whole, it is rightly said that:

Modern Indian English theatre has, on the one hand, with the application of various modern theories and innovative tools, extended its focus from rural to urban India, while, on the other, these plays, as a part of the ‘Theatre of Roots’ movement, are significant in their binding of the traditional forms of Indian theatre with the modern (Chakraborty 1).

Thus, the combination of three dramatic traditions as, classical, folk and, western, is quite evident in the contemporary Indian drama in English translations, culminating into a new style and form of production. Karnad has taken the Indian theatre, to a great height, making it quite rich. Along with contributing into the theatre, Karnad has also directed and acted in several television serials, films and documentaries. As an ambassador of art and culture he has also represented India abroad.

At present, Indian English drama has got quite prominent with the young talented playwrights as Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan, who have made the dramatic writing to be quite lively and forceful, focusing on the vital issues of the society. Dattani’s plays are based on

various problems of middle-class people; as his *Where There is a Will* (1988) displays familial relationships, *Dance like a Man* (1989) projects the problem of generation gap, while his three plays *Bravely fought the Queen* (1994), *Do the Needful* (1997) and *A Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998) deal with the bold theme of homosexuality. His *Seven Steps around the Fire* (1999) depicts eunuch's lives. *Tara* (1990) reveals the male domination prevailing in Indian society and *Final Solution* (1994) is based on the theme of communalism. Thus, it is truly said about Dattani that he "is a dramatist of the modern times who has earned considerable repute by focusing on the burning issues that hog the limelight" (Chakraborty 264). Padmanabhan's play, *Harvest*, got a world-wide fame with the reception of Onassis award. Raising the issue of organ-selling by a poor Indian, for a little amount of money, to a western buyer, displays the problem of poverty in India. It is the story of Om Prakash, a twenty year old poor young man, living in a single room with his family in a *chawl* of Bombay, getting unemployed and suffered from hunger, is ultimately bound to become an organ donor. Padmanabhan exposes the problems of big cities in India, where population explosion causes unemployment, which is followed by poverty and poverty in return forces the man to adopt the unfair means for the survival as is done by Om Prakash in the form of organ-selling. These two contemporary playwrights do not base their plays on the traditional themes but go out of the track and choose a unique subject to work on. Dattani exposes a mean and ugly face of life, with a number of unhappy things; while Padmanabhan depicts a quite inhuman and horrifying world, where people feed themselves at the cost of their bodies. Padmanabhan's play displays the picture of a more disgusting world as compared to the plays of Dattani. *Harvest* is quite intellectual in place of being stageworthy; as contrary to Dattani's plays, which have marked a great success on stage relating to middle-class audience's imagination. Thus, R.K. Dhawan Perfectly remarks about Dattani and Padmanabhan : "Very recently Indian English Drama shot into prominence. Younger writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan have infused new life into this branch of writing" (Dhawan 19).

After having a detailed discussion on the origin, growth and development of Indian theatre, a concluding assessment of the contemporary drama can be made which is in the process of being

written and performed on the stage. A deep analysis of Indian drama reveals the fact that Indian English drama has been lagged behind by the Indian regional dramas, being developed to a great extent. The basic reason behind this decline of Indian English drama is the absence of a living theatre for this. Stage performance is an integral part of drama which distinguishes it from other genres of literature. A true success of a play can be analyzed with its convincing stage performance only as it intimates the playwrights through., the reaction of the audience whether his work is perfect or needs some improvement. Thus, the lack of stage performance of Indian English drama proved to be the greatest drawback of its development.

However, some occasional stage performances of Indian English plays take place in some big cities of India as Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. The American Centre and the British Council, devoted to the development of Indian English theatre, quite often, arrange the visits of some foreign troupes for such performances. ‘Yatrik group’, a theatrical troupe, performed several plays on stage in Delhi, and a famous director named Bary John also contributed prominently to the Delhi theatre. A few Indian English plays provide a great satisfaction, as *Mira* by Gurucharan Das, *A Touch of Brightness* by Pratap Sharma and *The Dumb Dancer* by Asif Currimbhoy, having made a successful stage performance in the West.

During a few decades, a noticeable development is marked in Indian drama produced in Indian languages and the drama in English translations. At the contemporary time, a number of plays written in the regional languages are found being translated into English. Now, a bulk of such plays is in existence, which offers the literary scholars to make an analysis and evaluation of Indian drama in its total form. The translations bridged the gap between the east and the west, north and the south and, thus, helped in the enrichment of today’s creative consciousness. Regional drama, with its great success and prevalence in India, suggests the formation of a national theatre which includes all types of theatrical art.

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