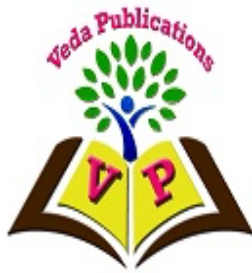




RESEARCH ARTICLE

**ORIGIN AND ITS GROWTH OF INDIAN DRAMA: A CONCISE CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY**Dr. Jamirul Islam^{1*}, Dr. Md Nasir Hossain²^{1,2}(Assistant Professor (English), Department of H&S, Malla Reddy College of Engineering and Technology, Maisammaguda, Hyderabad, 500100, Telangana.)Email: Jamirul2801@gmail.com, mdnasir0097@gmail.comDoi: <https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2025.12106>**ABSTRACT**

Drama in ancient period was one of the significant media of communication in India. There were many dramatists in India who wrote several dramas on several themes. Edmund Spenser in his epoch-making sonnet sequence titled *Amoretti* talks about poetry or verse to immortalized his beloved. Hence, he wrote sonnet 75 titled *One day I wrote her name upon the strand* where he has immortalized his beloved on the following way: *To die in dust, but you shall live by fame; My verse your virtues rare shall eternize, And in the heavens write your glorious name; Where when death shall all the world subdue, Our love shall live, and later life renew.* (Spenser, 1595)

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Similarly, Indian dramatist did the same. They took help of the genre named drama and they have immortalized themselves through it. This paper will try to shed some lights from ancient dramatist like Kalidasa and Bhasa to the modern dramatist. In order to give a clear-cut idea on the origin and its growth in Indian drama, the study will deeply concentrate on *Natyashastra*. Malyaban Chattopadhyay in his article titled "A Historical Study of Ancient Indian Theatre-Communication in the Light of Natyashastra" quoted Richard Salomon who in his typological analysis of inscription in *Indian Epigraphy* has mentioned that in the literary inscription we can find the reference of drama and it proves that dramatic performance was popular in ancient India. According to *Natyashastra*, a performance could be done at a period of day or night which was most appropriately suitable to communicate, the mood of the performance.

Keywords : *Drama, Ancient, Medieval and Modern Drama, Natyashastra, Pre- and Post-Independence Drama.*



INTRODUCTION

Drama is the specific mode of fiction represented in performance. The term comes from a Greek word meaning "action", which is derived from "to do". The enactment of drama in theatre, performed by actors on a stage before an audience, presupposes collaborative modes of production and a collective form of reception. Considered as a genre of poetry in general, the dramatic mode has been contrasted with the epic and the lyrical modes ever since Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE)—the earliest work of dramatic theory. The use of "drama" in the narrow sense to designate a specific type of play dates from the 19th century. Drama in this sense refers to a play that is neither a comedy nor a tragedy—for example, Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* (1873) or Chekhov's *Ivanov* (1887). It is this narrow sense that the film and television industry and film studies adopted to describe "drama" as a genre within their respective media. "Radio drama" has been used in both senses—originally transmitted in a live performance, it has also been used to describe the more high-brow and serious end of the dramatic output of radio. Drama is often combined with music and dance: the drama in opera is sung throughout; musicals include spoken dialogue and songs; and some forms of drama have regular musical accompaniment. In certain periods of history (the ancient Roman and modern Romantic) dramas have been written to be read rather than performed.

A play, or stage play, is a form of literature written by a playwright, almost always consisting of scripted dialogue between fictional characters, intended for theatrical performance rather than reading. There are rare dramatists, notably George

Bernard Shaw, who have had little preference whether their plays were performed or read. Therefore, the term "play" can refer to both the written works of playwrights and to their complete theatrical performance. The difference is that a drama is a type of play. A movie or TV show can also be dramas but are not plays. Some other types of plays are musical, comedy, Shakespearean, and biopic. So, a drama can be thus understood as-

- A prose or verse composition, especially one telling a serious story, that is intended for representation by actors impersonating the characters and performing the dialogue and action.
- A serious narrative work or program for television, radio, or the cinema.
- Theatrical plays of a particular kind or period: Elizabethan drama.
- The art or practice of writing or producing dramatic works.
- A situation or succession of events in real life having the dramatic progression or emotional effect characteristic of a play: the drama of the prisoner's escape and recapture.
- The quality or condition of being dramatic: a summit meeting full of drama.

DRAMA IN ANCIENT INDIA

Indian drama dates back to the Rigvedic dialogue hymns in the Vedic period. Folk theatre and dramatics can be traced to the religious ritualism of the Vedic peoples in the 2nd millennium BC. This folk theatre of the misty past was mixed with dance,



food, ritualism, plus a depiction of events from daily life. It was the last element which made it the origin of the classical theatre of later times. Many historians, notably D. D. Kosambi, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, Adya Rangacharaya, and others have referred to the prevalence of ritualism amongst Indo-Aryan tribes in which some members of the tribe acted as if they were wild animals and some others were the hunters. Those who acted as mammals like goats, buffaloes, reindeer, monkeys, etc. were chased by those playing the role of hunters. In such a very simple and crude manner did the theatre originate in India during Rig Vedic times.

Drama was later established as a distinct art form in the last few centuries BC. Bharata Muni wrote *Natya Shastra* (ca. 200 BC - 200 AD), a dissertation on the structure and purpose of theatre in society. Bharata Muni was an ancient Indian writer best known for writing the *Natya Shastra of Bharata*, a theoretical treatise on Indian performing arts, including theatre, dance, acting, and music, which has been compared to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Bharata is often known as the father of Indian theatrical arts. His *Natya Shastra* seems to be the first attempt to develop the technique or rather art, of drama in a systematic manner. The *Natya Shastra* tells us not only what is to be portrayed in a drama, but how the portrayal is to be done. Drama, as Bharata Muni says, is the imitation of men and their doings (*loka-vritti*). As men and their doings have to be respected on the stage, so drama in Sanskrit is also known by the term *roopaka* which means portrayal...

The *Natya Shastra* is incredibly wide in its scope. It consists of minutely detailed precepts for both playwrights and actors. Bharata describes ten types

of drama ranging from one to ten acts. In addition, he lays down principles for stage design, makeup, costume, dance (various movements and gestures), a theory of aesthetics (*rasas* and *bhavas*), acting, directing and music, each in individual chapters.

Bharata sets out a detailed theory of drama comparable to the *Poetics* of Aristotle. He refers to *bhavas*, the imitations of emotions that the actors perform, and the *rasas* (emotional responses) that they inspire in the audience. He argues that there are nine principal *rasas*: love, pity, anger, disgust, heroism, awe, terror, ----- and comedy, and those plays should mix different *rasas* but be dominated by one. According to the *Natya Shastra*, all the modes of expression employed by an individual viz. speech, gestures, movements and intonation must be used. The representation of these expressions can have different modes (*vritti*) according to the predominance and emphasis on one mode or another. Bharata Muni recognizes four main modes: speech and poetry (*bharati vritti*), dance and music (*kaishiki vritti*), action (*arabhatti vritti*) and emotions (*sattvatti vritti*). *Natyashastra* remained an important text in the fine arts for many centuries; so much so that it is sometimes referred to as the *fifth veda*.

Some of the most famous playwrights in ancient Sanskrit drama included Śudraka, Bhāsa, Kalidasa and Dandi. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* can be considered the first recognized plays that originated in India. These epics provided the inspiration to the earliest Indian dramatists and they do it even today. Indian dramatists such as Bhasa in the 2nd century BC wrote plays that were heavily inspired by the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.



Kālidāsa in the 1st century BC, is arguably considered to be ancient India's greatest Sanskrit dramatist. Three famous romantic plays written by Kālidāsa are the *Mālavikāgnimitram* (*Mālavikā and Agnimitra*), *Vikramuuvashīya* (*Pertaining to Vikrama and Urvashi*), and *Abhijñānaśākuntala* (*The Recognition of Shakuntala*). The last was inspired by a story in the *Mahabharata* and is the most famous. It was the first to be translated into English and German. In comparison to Bhasa, who drew heavily from the epics, Kālidāsa can be considered an original playwright.

DRAMA IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

Theatre in medieval India was not only a narration of the epic poems but also was a period when the 'theatrical art' was introduced. The 'nine rasas' of Bharata's *Natya Shastra* were implemented on each drama in order to bring out a greater objectivity and harmony in the writing. Bhavabhuti (c. 7th century), the famous dramatist of the medieval India in his three important plays- *Malati-Madhava*, *Mahaviracharita* and *Uttara Ramacharita* played with the nine rasas distinctively. Among these three, the last two cover between them, the entire epic of *Ramayana*. The powerful Indian emperor Harsha (606-648) is credited with having written three plays: the comedy *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarsika*, and the Buddhist drama *Nagananda*. Many other dramatists followed during the Middle Ages.

Till the fag end of fifteenth century, the Sanskrit dramas were performed on stage in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra, Utter Pradesh and Gujarat. Theatre in medieval India further witnessed a new genre of Indian drama with the introduction of

Classical Indian Dance Drama. Songs, dance and recitation-based plays like *Rasaleela*, *Ramlila*, *Bhand*, *Noutanki* and *Wang* ruled the drama pattern in the medieval India writing on the epics.

Religion played an important role in shaping the medieval Indian theatre as devotional plays, mythological plays and the religious plays reverberated the aura of the 'Bhakti Movement' in the Indian theatre. Slowly the regional theatres started evolving during that era. Historically during fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the folk theatre emerged forcefully with in respective regional languages. Thus, theatre in medieval India unveils the voyage of Indian theatre from the age-old eposes to the traditional *rasa-lilas*.

During the Middle Ages, the Indian subcontinent was invaded a number of times. This played a major role in shaping of Indian culture and heritage. Medieval India experienced a grand fusion with the invaders from the Middle East and Central Asia. British India, as a colony of the British Empire, used theatre as one of its instruments in protest. To resist, the British Government had to impose "Dramatic Performances Act" in 1876. From the last half of the 19th century, theatres in India experienced a boost in numbers and practice. After Indian independence in 1947, theatres spread throughout India as one of the means of entertainment.

DRAMA IN THE MODERN INDIA

The beginnings of Loknatya (People' Theatre) are noticed in every state of India from the 17th century onwards. We see in Bengal "Yatrakirtaniya" 'Paol' and 'Gaan', in Madhya Pradesh, "Mach", in Kashmir "bhandya thar" and in Gujarat the forms were



"Bhavai' and 'Ramleela', in Northern India there were 'Nautanki, Bhand, Ramleela and Rasleela', in Maharashtra 'Tamasha', in Rajasthan 'Raas' and 'Jhoomer', in Punjab 'Bhangra' and 'Song', while in Aasam it was 'Ahiyanat' and 'Ankinatya', in Bihar it was " 'Videshiya' and 'Chhari'.

The rise of the modern drama dates back to the 18th century when the British Empire consolidated its stable power in India. In 1795, two English comedies *Disguise* and *Love Is the Best Doctor* were staged in Bengali translation. But the real beginning was in 1831 when Prasanna Kumar Thakur established 'Hindu Rangmanch' at Calcutta and staged Wilson's English Translation of Bhavabhuti's Sanskrit drama *Uttar Ramacharitam*. Social drama of Girish Chandra Ghosh, historical dramas of D.L. Roy and artistic dramas of Rabindranath Tagore (*Muktadhara*, *Chandalika*) continued to reach up to the stage of realistic dramas during the period of the worst - ever famines of Bengal and the Second World War. In 1852-1853, the famous 'Parsi Theatre' was launched in Bombay which influenced the whole country in no time. Postagi Pharmji was the pioneer in establishing the Parsi Theatre Company in India. Many new theatre experiences were brought up on stage during Parsi Theatre evolution in India. On the other hand, the amateur theatre also developed with the works of Bharatendu Harishchandra, acclaimed as the father of Hindi drama.

PRE - INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

Indian English drama was started when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote *The Prosecuted* in 1837. The real journey of Indian English Drama begins with

Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilization?* which appeared on the literary horizon in 1871. Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, the two great sage- poets of India, are the first Indian dramatists in English worth considering. Tagore wrote primarily in Bengali but almost all his Bengali plays are available in English renderings. His prominent plays are *Chitra*, *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice*, *Red Oleanders*, *Chandalika*, *Muktadhara*, *Natir Puja*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *Sanyasi* and *The Mother's Prayer*. These plays are firmly rooted in the Indian ethos and ethics in their themes, characters and treatment.

Sri Aurobindo is a major voice in Indian English Drama. He wrote five complete blank verse plays besides his six incomplete plays. His complete plays are *Perseus*, *the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, *Radoguna*, *The Viziers of Bassara* and *Eric* and each of these plays is written in five acts. His incomplete plays are *The Witch of Ilni*, *Achab and Esarhaddon*, *The Maid and the Mill*, *The House of Brut*, *The Birth of Sin* and *Prince of Edur*. The length of these incomplete plays varies from one scene of fifty-two lines to three acts. The most striking feature of Sri Aurobindo's plays is that they deal with the different cultures and countries in different epochs, ringing with variety of characters, moods and sentiments. There is almost a global coverage in the total content of Sri Aurobindo's dramatic literature. In matters of plot construction and characterisation, Sri Aurobindo's debt to Elizabethan drama is undeniable. The use of the English blank verse is flawless and in the right tune with the characters and situations. But at the same time, we do not miss the impact of Sanskrit



playwrights like Bhasa, Kalidas and Bhavabhuti. as Dr. K. R. S. Iyenger observes,

“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.”

Another prominent playwright who has made significant contribution in the growth of Indian English drama is Harindranath Chattopadhyay. He started his career as playwright with *Abu Hassan* (1918). There are seven verse plays to his credit published under the title of *Poems and Plays* (1927) and all the seven plays are based on the lives of Indian saints. His *Five Plays* (1929) are written in prose where the writer's socialist bent of mind is quite palpable.

The next great name one encounters is A.S.P. Ayyar who wrote six plays. *In the Clutches of The Devil* (1926) is his first play and the last one is *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* (1942). Ayyar's plot and characterisation are subordinated to the message and he uses the drama as a mode of apprehension of reality pertaining to contemporary life.

P. A. Krishnaswamy is also a name in the history of Indian English drama whose fame rests chiefly on his unusual verse play *The Flute of Krishna*. Another dramatic voice on the Indian literary scene that demands attention is that of T.P. Kailasam. He wrote both in English and Kannada. Though Kailasam is regarded as the father of modern Kannada drama, his genius finds its full expression in his English plays such as *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfilment* (1933), *The*

Purpose (1944), *Karna* (1964) and *Keechaka* (1949).

He has a real genius and love for the drama. G. S. Amur holds a very high opinion about T.P. Kailasam. Amur rightly remarks,

“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 theatre. It is for this reason that his plays whether in Kannada or English, have a uniform technical excellence.”

Bharati Sarabhai is the modern woman playwright during the colonial era of Indian English drama. She has written two plays *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* with some considerable measure of success. Of these two plays, the former is symbolic, poetic and is besides a significant contribution to the Gandhian social order, while the latter is realistic, written in prose and probes the private world of a sensitive individual.

J. M. Lobo Prabhu is the last great name in pre-Independence Indian English drama. He has written over a dozen plays but only *Mother of New India: A Play of India Village* in three Acts (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945) appear before Independence. His *Collected Play* was published in 1956. Lobo Prabhu is capable of writing dialogues with felicity, situation – creation is also admirable but his characters do not appear life like, soothing and convincing to the audience.

POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

During the post – independence era, drama in English in Indian soil could not flourish as a major current of creative expression. The dramatists were not



successful to evolve an independent dramatic convention to suit Indian climate. Although the pre-Independence Indian English drama is notable for its poetic excellence, thematic variety, technical virtuosity, symbolic significance and its commitment to human and moral values, it was by and large not geared for actual stage production. In the post-Independence era, Indian English drama does not make a noteworthy presence unlike poetry and fiction. A prime factor for this is that "drama essentially a composite art involving the playwright, the actors and the audience" in a shared experience and the stage has its own problems of which the other literary forms are free. India, being a multi-cultural nation, cannot be associated with a unique trend and feature in its theatres. Presently, major threats to Indian theatre are the spread of the television industry and the spread of films produced in the Indian film industry based in Mumbai. Lack of finance is another major trouble. However, the post-Independence Indian English drama was benefitted by the increasing interest of the foreign countries in Indian English literature in general and Indian English drama in particular. The climate slightly changed. Contemporary Indian Drama works with two literary and cultural traditions - the oriental and the western - and it moves from the page to the stage. A good number of plays by Indian playwrights Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Gurucharan Das were successfully staged in England and U.S.A. But the plight of Indian English drama is that no regular school of Indian English drama was established in our country. This was mainly because the encouragement drama received from several quarters immediately after India got freedom but it was monopolised by the theatre in the Indian regional languages while

Indian English drama continued to feed on crumbs fallen from its rich cousin's table.

The plays have been written in prose but at the same time poetic plays also survive in the post-colonial era. M.K. Naik rightly opines "..... that Tagore-Aurobindo-Kailsam tradition of poetic drama continues, but with a difference in the hands of Manjeri Isvaran, G.V. Desani, Lakhan Dev and Pritish Nandy." Manjeri Isvaran's *Yama and Yami* (1948) is a dialogue in poetic prose, with a prologue and an epilogue, dealing with the incestuous love of Yami for her brother. G.V.Desani's *Hali* (1950), an entirely different kind of play, received high praise for its originality, symbolism and rich imagery. Lakhan Dev's *Tiger Claw* (1976) is a historical play in three Acts on the controversial murder of Afzal Khan by Shivaji. His two plays are *Vivekananda* (1972) and *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976). The use of blank verse is flawless and the last play compels us to remind of T.S.Eliot's *Murder In The Cathedral*. Other verse plays of the period include P.A.Krishnaswami's *The Flute of Krishna* (1950) M.Krishnamurti's *The Cloth of Gold* (1951). S.D.Rawoot's *Immortal Song, Karna and The Killers* (1959) Satya Dev Jaggi's *The Point Of Light* (1967) Pritish Nandy's *Rites for a Plebian Salute* (1969). Hushmat Sozerekashme's *Vikramjeet* (1970), Sree Devi Singh's *The Purple Braided People* (1970), P.S. Vasudev's *The Sunflower* (1972) and S.Raman's *Karna* (1979). The number of prose playwrights is larger in comparison to verse playwrights.

The most prolific playwright of The Post-Independence period is Asif Currimbhoy, who has written and published more than thirty plays. Some important plays are *The Tourist Meeca* (1959), *The Restaurant* (1960) *The Doldrumness* (1960) *The*



Captives (1963) Goa (1964), Monsoon (1965) An Experiment With Truth (1969) Inquilab (1970) The Refugee (1971), Sonar Bangla (1972) Angkeer (1973) and The Dissident M L A (1974).

Pratap Sharma wrote two prose plays *A Touch Of Brightness (1968) and The Professor Has A War Cry (1970)*. His plays were staged even abroad successfully but they failed to be staged in the country. Sex, moreover remains the prime theme of his plays. But Pratap Sharma shows a keen sense of situation and his dialogue is often effective.

Nissim Ezekiel's Three Plays (1969) including *Nalini: A Comedy in Three Acts, Marriage Poem: A One -Act Tragi-Comedy and The Sleep Walkers: An Indo-American Farce* are considered to be a welcome addition to the dramaturgy of Indian English drama. *Songs of Deprivation: A Comic Morality in One-Act (1969)* is also a short play by Ezekiel. In spite of strong sense of dramatic concept, Ezekiel could not transform his poetic talent into appropriate dramatic talent. His plays can be appreciated for symmetrical construction with abundance of irony. They unveil his sharp observation of the oddities of human life and behaviour. Ezekiel's poetics self-swayed his dramatic creed but his plays make a 'pleasant reading'.

Contemporary Indian drama, deviating from classical and European models, is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical qualities. It is not an off spring of any specific tradition and it has laid the foundation of a distinctive tradition in the history of world drama by reinvestigating history, legend, myth, religion and folk love with context to contemporary socio-political issues. A cumulative theatrical tradition evolved by Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sirkar, Vijay Tendulkar and

Girish Karnad, prepared the background of contemporary Indian English theatre.

Girish Karnad in the capacity of writer, director and actor substantially contributed to enrich the tradition of Indian English theatre. His dramatic sensibility was moulded under the influence of touring Natak Companies and especially *Yakshagana* which was in those days not accepted as the purified art form. His well-known plays are *Yayati (1961), Tughlaq (1962), Hayvadana (1970), Nagmandala (1972)*. He borrowed his plots from history, mythology and old legends but with intricate symbolism, he tried to establish their relevance in contemporary socio-political conditions. The play *Yayati* reinterprets an ancient myth from Mahabharata in modern concept. The plot of the play *Hayvadana* is adopted from Katha Saritsagar, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit. *Tughlaq* is Karnad's best historical play where he mingles facts with fiction. Karnad projects the curious contradictions in the complex personality of Sultan Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. In the play *Tale Dande*, he discovers the vital relationship between contemporary society and literature. His use of myth as a structure and metaphor in his play gives "new meaning to the past from the vantage point of view of present". In the play *Nagmandala*, the conflict is between patriarchal and matriarchal views of society. The collective efforts of Karnad and Karalam Narayana Pannikar are significant in their binding of the traditional forms of Indian theatre with the modern.

Born in 1828, Vijay Tendulkar began his career as a journalist but from the very first play *Grihasth* in 1955 to *Safar* in 1992; his plays have given Indian



theatre a rich and challenging repertoire. Leading the Vanguard of the avant-garde Marathi Theatre, Vijay Tendulkar symbolizes the new awareness and attempts of Indian dramatists of the century to depict the agonies, suffocations and cries of man, focusing on the middle-class society. In all his plays, he harps upon the theme of isolation of the individual and his confrontation with the hostile surroundings. Tendulkar relates the problem of anguish to the theme of violence in most of his plays. He does not consider the occurrence of human violence as something loathsome or disgusting in as much as it is in note in human nature. He says,

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

While depicting violence on the stage, Tendulkar does not dress it up with any fancy trapping so as to make it palatable but rather keep it raw and natural. The plays *Chimanicha Ghor Hote Menache (1960)*, *Kalojanchi Shalai (1968)*, *Ek Hoti Mugli (1967)* reflect Tendulkar’s concern with authority and the idea of exploitation of individual. In the plays *Silence! The Court is in Session (1968)* and *Ghasiram Kotwal (1972)*, the theme of oppression dominates. *Sakharam Binder (1972)* is a study in human violence amounted to powerful dramatic statement. *Kamala (1982)* and *Kanyadaan (1982)* are written on the lines of naturalistic tradition. *Kamala* is a study of marital status as well as study in the theme of exploitation. *Kanyadaan* is a complex play about the cultural and emotional upheavals of a family. Tendulkar was

associated with New Theatrical Movement in Maharashtra. He presents a fictional reality in which the reality of life acquires a sharp focused character having rare dramatic power.

Badal Sircar too is a prestigious name in the realm of contemporary theatre. He represents New Theatrical Movement in India. He has created an appropriate ‘purples’ theatre’ a theatre supported and created by people. His dramatic career began with a humorous play like *Solution X*. His earlier plays are *Evan Inderjit (1962)*, *That Other History (1964)* and *There Is No End (1971)*. All these plays are based on political, social, psychological and existential problems. *Evam Indrajit*, is a tale of a playwright who struggles in vain to write a play. In the play *There’s No End*, Sircar develops the thesis that “We are all accused” and share the burden of guilt. Afterwards, he wrote *Pary Konodin*, *Jadi Aur Ek Baar*, *Palap* and *Pagla Ghoda*. His later plays *Procession*, *Bhoma* and *Stale News* are based on the concept of Third Theatre. The play *Procession* is about the search for a ‘real home’ in new society based on equality. It suggests a ‘real way’ to new way in which man does not have to live exploiting man but should work according to his own needs. *Bhoma* is a dramatization of the life of oppressed peasants in sexual India. The analysis of these three plays suggests remarkable changes in Sircar’s concept of a ‘real home’ a new society based on equality and free from the horrors of exploitation. Tendulkar in 1967 established his theatre group called ‘Satabdi.’ Sircar’s first contact with Godowsky’s ‘Poor Theatre’ influenced him greatly in formulating his ‘Third Theatre’.



In Indian English drama the influence of Mohan Rakesh cannot be ignored. He wrote in Hindi but for exceptional dramatic relevance, his plays have been translated in English and other regional languages. He published his first major play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* in 1958, *Leharon Ke Rajhansa* appeared in 1963 and *Adhe Adhure* was first staged in 1969. The play *Pair Tale Ki Zamin* was completed by Kamleshwar after his death and published in 1974. As a playwright, his main concern was to portray the crisis of contemporary man caught in the web of uncongenial surroundings and the persistent threat to human relationship. Mohan Rakesh perceived drama as a complex art involving the uniform contribution of actors, scenic effects, light and music and effective stage direction. Mohan Rakesh made extensive experiments in theatre. He used words and language not as dialogues or direct statements but as the tools of suggestion to convey the meaning beyond the verbal connotation. In *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*, he highlights the dangers of sycophancy that whites of his age face in desire of dignified official position. In *Leharon Ka Rajhans*, he reflects on the problem of relations between man and woman, ego clashes, divided self and ongoing illusion and nothingness. *Adhe- Adhure* deals with the clash of ego between husband and wife, disintegration of family relationship, the prominence of individual interest against the commitments of the family.

Besides, women dramatists also tried to enrich the soil of Indian drama by projecting the inner world of feminine psyche in the theatre. Women's theatre coalesces with Street Theatre movement, using the same technique in performance and production. It can be attributed as a 'Theatre Of Protest' because

women writers expressed their resentment against the politics of exploitation on the basis of gender discrimination. They also revived the traditional myths of Sita and Savitri and tried to reinterpret the epics from women's point of view. The dramatic work of Usha Ganguli and Mahasweta Devi can be placed in their category. Mahasweta Devi emerged as a dramatist having a quest to explore something challenging and new. Her five plays are *Mother of 1084*, *Aajir*, *Urvashi O' Johnny*, *Byen* and *Water*. The play *Mother of 1084*, is a moving account of the anguish of an apolitical mother who had witnessed the horrors of Naxalite Movement. In *Aajir*, Mahasweta Devi deals with the issue of the fast deterioration of values and their effects on society, particularly on illiterate people. *Urvashi O' Johnny* is a play written for emergency through the love affair of Johnny with Urvashi, a talking doll. The play *Bayen* presents a moving account of harsh reality of a woman's life in rural India. The play *Water*, is the story of a professional water-diviner, Maghai Done who is an untouchable boy. Her plays represent a profound concern for human predicament and sincere hope for the better future of mankind.

Younger writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan have emerged as radical playwrights in the Indian drama in the recent times. Mahesh Dattani is from Bangalore and has many forceful and powerful plays to his credit. *Where There Is a Will, Dance like a Man*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Final Solutions*, *Tara* talks about middle-class life, family relationships and conflicts in relationships. Gender identity and homosexuality are some of the recent sociological and psychological concepts dealt by Dattani in his plays. Dattani's plays are very



successful on the stage and have captured the imagination of the middle-class audience.

Manjula Padmanabhan's Onassis-award winning drama *Harvest* presents the lower-class life in a chawl in Mumbai. Driven by unemployment, poverty and hunger, the protagonist decides to become an organ-donor to a White First-World buyer. *Lights Out* and *Gaslights* are other plays of Padmanabhan which establish her as a promising, intellectual playwright of the modern times.

In spite of the fact that the European theatre has seen a remarkable growth with many novel trends in the twentieth century, in the Indian scenario, drama in various Indian languages like Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, and Tamil has shown a marked development, but the Indian English drama has a stunted growth. It may be because of the lack of a living theatre and audience and funds. However, the Indian drama in the regional languages translated into English has registered a remarkable growth in the recent decades. The themes of the dramas which in the past were mainly from religion, myths and epics are reinterpreted from the post-modern socio-cultural society point of view as one observes in the dramas of Tagore and Karnad. Slowly the dramatists like Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar picture the more agonising social problems of oppression of the working class. The more recent playwrights like Dattani makes drama as his medium to convey the magic realism of the postmodern life through the use of stage directions, appropriate language where there is a perfect mingling of a narratorial linearity and simultaneity. These show that the Indian theatre has been on a linear progression with many

experiments and innovations made as the footprints on the sands of time.

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