

Indian English Drama and its contributions to the World Literature

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Abstract: As a cultural practice, drama is a significant performance in Indian society. Drama illustrates shifts in the social, political, or cultural environment. We could rewrite our past and comprehend the culture we live in if we studied drama. Dramatic heritage is most extensive in India. The Vedic Aryans staged the theatre in a fairly straightforward manner. In front of the audience, several scenes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavat Gita were performed. It illustrates circumstances that are closely tied to both good and bad people. They also provide those in need with courage, humour, happiness, and counsel. Indian play has made a considerable literary impact on English literature. Indian playwrights have grown in power, notoriety, and appeal. English drama from India has a unique place in literature because it greatly influenced English writing worldwide. A new drama in nearly all of the regional Indian languages emerged after World War I. Movements like Marxism, symbolism, psychoanalysis, and surrealism had a major influence on it. The Indian English play struggled to keep up with poetry and fiction for a variety of reasons. In order to overcome these challenges and establish a new trend in the genre, some of the greatest dramatists, like Rabindranath Tagore, Shri Aurobindo, and Bharathi Sarabhai, gave it their all. The acceptance of their plays had not been given enough weight in their efforts to stay up with poetry and fiction. Drama in Indian English reflects the advancement and transformation of society over time.

Key Words: Indian English Drama, Natyashastra, Vedic Aryans, Indianism etc.

1. INTRODUCTION:

According to its use of the audiovisual medium of communication, drama is a very potent and significant literary form in English. Drama displays the images and characters within the dimensions of space and time and is a realistic and mimetic representation of human existence that combines actual, fictitious, artistic, and real elements. Additionally, it incorporates the positive aspects of both poetry and visual arts. It is a form of narrative that the audience is made to see. The term "Indian English Literature" refers to works of art created by Indian authors who use the English language and whose mother tongue is an Indian language. The first piece of English-language literature in India was created by Michel Madhusudan Dutt, who was followed by R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and Mulk Raj Anand in the 1930s. It is also connected to the writings of Indian-origin authors such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Kovid Gupta, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry, Agha Shahid, and Salman Rushdie.

The term "Indo-Anglican literature" is used to describe Indian English literature. This genre of literature is a subset of postcolonial literature, which includes works from nations that were once referred to as colonial, like India.

Indian English literature has a history of roughly two centuries. Travels of Dean Mahomet, a travelogue written in English, was released as Sake Dean Mahomet's debut book in England (1793). Western novels inspired Indian English literature. Indian words were employed by early Indian writers to describe their sentiments and thoughts in their writing. Rajmohan's Wife was written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894) and released in 1864. It is the English translation of an Indian novel. The Serpent and the Rope and Kanthapura are two works by Indian author and philosopher Raja Rao (1908–2006) that are distinctly Indian in terms of tone and storytelling abilities. The earliest English translation of the Mahabharata was done by Kisari Mohan Ganguli. Bengali and English were the two languages that Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) wrote in. He did an English translation of his own writing. In the United States, the first recipient of a literary award was Dhan Gopal Mukerji (1890–2010). Non-fiction author Nirad C. Chaudhari (1897–1999) is well known for his book The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian (1951). These writers, along with many more, began to appear over time. They made contributions to both international literature and Indian English literature in addition to the former. On the international literary stage, the authors and playwrights are portraying Indian English literature.

2. An Overview of Indian Drama

Indian drama has a rich history dating back to the past. It begins with the plays in Sanskrit. *Natyashastra*, the earliest books on the idea of drama, contain the Indian theory of drama. According to this, the drama has a divine origin and is associated with the revered Vedas. Thus, the Vedic era is when Indian theatre first emerged. Ashwagosh, Shudraka, Bhasa, Kalidasa, Bhavbhut, Harsha, Vishakhadatta, and others are well-known historical playwrights. The well-known plays from the Vedic era include the tragedies *Urubhanga*, romances *Abhijnana-sakuntalam*, and historical plays *Mudrarakshas*. Two categories of Sanskrit literature can be distinguished: *Drishya* (that which is visible) and *Sravya* (that can be heard). Drama falls under the *Drishya* genre. The broad definition of "Rupaka" in Sanskrit, which refers to the portrayal of human life in all of its manifestations through the use of actors, includes theatre.

When the British Empire arrived and increased its political influence in India in the 18th century, the Indian English Drama was born. It began with the 1813 release of *The Persecuted* by Krishna Mohan Banerjee. The author attempts to depict the battle between the East and the West in this social play. With the release of Madhusudan Dutt's *This Called Civilization* in 1871, the actual development of Indian English drama began. *Ratnavali* (1859) and *Sermista* (1859), which were initially written in Bangla, were also translated by him into English. After a protracted absence, Indian English Drama finally showed its sophistication and brilliance in the 20th century. Many important and influential playwrights, such as Rabindranath Tagore, T. P. Kailasam, Aurobindo Ghosh, A.S.P. Ayyar, Bharati Sarabhai, and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, emerged during the pre-independence era and contributed significantly to the growth of Indian English Drama. The first Indian playwrights to achieve literary success were poets Rabindranath Tagore and Sir Aurobindo Ghosh. All three of these individuals go by the name of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and are referred to as the "big three" due to their significant contributions to Indian English Drama.

As "the essence of Indian Spiritual Heritage," Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize for literature. His plays were initially written in Bengali, but they were then translated into English. While some of his plays were translated by him, others were done so by English and Indian translators. The best illustrations of Indian philosophy can be found in his well-known plays, including *Chitra*, *Sacrifice*, *The Post Office*, *Muktadhara*, *The Cycle of Spring*, and *The King of the Dark Chambers*. Tagore is one of those playwrights who heavily relied on symbolism and allegorical importance in their productions. Diana Devlin rightly says, "The philosopher, writer and teacher Rabindranath Tagore unifies Indian and western traditions creating plays which are the mixture of Bengali folk drama and Western medieval mystery plays". One of the most influential Indian playwrights of English was Sir Aurobindo. Between 1891 and 1916, he produced five complete and six unfinished poetry dramas. ancient Greece through mediaeval India, as well as diverse locations like Iraq, India, Syria, Britain, Spain, and Norway. All of his plays centre on poetry and love. *The Viziers of Bassora*, *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Price of Edur*, *Eric Savitri*, and *Vavadutta* are some of his well-known pieces. Sir Aurobindo drew parallels between old legends and the current desire for freedom, bringing out the heroic, mysterious, and adventurous aspects of his characters' deeds in his plays. His plays are driven by a powerful romantic passion that permeates every one of them. He has demonstrated the capacity to write dialogue in informal English. He does not restrict himself to a single nation or region.

Last but not least, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya is a brilliant Indian dramatist who gave Indian English drama new dimensions. The movement of progressive writers had a big impact on him. He shares Mulk Raj Anand's sympathy for the underdogs. As a poet, he is more well-known than as a playwright. His plays on society emphasise social protest and revolutionary ideas. Four groups—Social, Devotional, Historical, and Other—can be made up of his plays. *Five Dramas* (1937), which includes *The Windows*, *The Parrots*, *The Santry Lantern*, *The Coffin*, and *The Evening Lamps*, is a collection of his social plays. These plays are realistic and didactic in nature.

3. The Modern English Drama in India

Even though modern dramatic and theatrical texts do not adhere to the rules of ancient Sanskrit theatre, India is still the home of the drama genre. This type of Indian English literature carries this hybrid and distinctive identity. On the basis of hybridity, this genre progressively evolved into the current form of drama, which merges its own identity with the community to which it belongs.

The difficulties of the urban middle class, English-speaking society that is currently experiencing a notable cultural transformation are presented in contemporary Indian English theatre. Common play topics include marital adultery, homosexuality, and licentiousness, as shown in works like *Do the Needful*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, and *The Harvest*, among others. The colonial laws had a significant negative impact on India's sociocultural environment. The master and servant model of colonial power was further modified from the underlying hierarchy that existed in traditional Indian culture. As a result, new personality types were created and their distinguishing trait clusters, such as submissiveness, psych-fancy, dependence, and lack of self-confidence, were used to identify them. As a result of the blending of traditional Indian culture and British society, a person in post-independent India is sometimes caught in a difficult predicament. Urban Indian people's values are greatly influenced by their access to wealth. Other than

money, the Indian population lacks a defined ethos. The only heroes they have are Bollywood actors and cricket players. The middle class society in India has lost its former virtues, and the youthful idealism has been replaced by the aggressive capitalism.

In post-colonial India, issues connected to the aforementioned become the themes of the plays. The text's structure and plot are modelled around contemporary western drama, not traditional Indian drama. The people who play these roles are the characters' representations of the society. They are: regular Indian middle-class urban citizens. The cultural shifts are manifested in their body language and emotions in terms of beliefs, concepts, and ideals. Indian English drama's stage environment is currently evolving and changing. The setting of the stage has been impacted by technological advancements. The typical urban middle class and their residences on the stage would focus on the influence of the western culture in housekeeping in addition to lighting techniques, a sophisticated setting, and other advances.

The background music also demonstrates the presence of a fusion of western and Indian culture. The study of all of these plays' varied architectural designs are not entirely Indian or even Western. The distinctiveness of post-colonial culture in India is being expressed through the traditional Indian culture, which is heavily influenced by the west. Indian traditionalism appears to be lost under the influence of western modernism. Western modernism cannot be used to describe the peculiar urban culture. Yet it is Indian modernism that could influence Western modernism.

As a result, the current style of Indian drama—particularly English drama—was moulded by the changes that occurred in Indian society and differs significantly from its forerunner. Post-colonial thinking applies to modern Indian English play in terms of its cultural identity. This subgenre transforms Indian English drama significantly by adopting contemporary western culture. The features of art are subject to societal changes.

4. CONCLUSION:

India has a long history of play that has made a significant contribution to world literature. The qualities of Indian English drama have varied over time and in response to various contexts. The range of theatre produced by Indian playwrights is notable on a worldwide scale because it is distinctly and authentically Indian and accurately portrays Indian society and the changes that have taken place through time.

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