

ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND POST COLONIAL TRENDS IN INDIAN DRAMA

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Abstract:

Drama is one of the artistic forms which have more visualistic and audio-lingual appeals. As Aristotle opined that purgation is an important factor in Drama which creates more powerful effect upon a viewer. Indian Drama can be categorized as drama that follows the traditions of Bharata Muni and the dramas that follow the traditions of Western theatre. In this paper, it is explored that how Indian drama originated, nourished and how it deviated from the origin and again developed into a separate entity. Lastly, what are the limitations for Indian English Dramatist and how to overcome those limitations?

Key Words: *Drama, Origin, Artistic form, Aristotle, and Western theatre.*

Drama is one of the important genres of literature. It is one of the powerful medium of expression as it has audio-video impact upon its viewers. Drama is in combination with prose and poetry. In the sense it is a visual narrative. Indian drama has rich tradition. The origin of India drama starts with Sanskrit language. *Natyasastra* is the primo geniture for the Indian drama. Origins of Indian English Drama can also be traced to one of the Upa Vedas i.e. 'Gandharva Veda'. The initial dramatic performances are derived mainly from the day to day incidents, accompanied by music. Some of the tribal members were enacted as animals and some of them are acted as men who are slaying them. It was nothing but mock hunting. Later on many episodes from the epics Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata are enacted as dramas. There are many references in Patanjali's 'Mahabhashya', Vatsyana's 'Kamasutra', as well as Panini's 'Ashtadhyayi'. Literature in Sanskrit can be classified as 'Drushya', a visible one and 'Sravya', which can be audible one. Drama can be covered under Rupaka or Drusya, which can be enacted or visible. In the classification of Rupakas, Drama is one among them.

Natyasastra delineates that when the world reached from Golden age to silver age it was inhabited by Rakshas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Demons and Nagas. As their hearts are filled with anger, lust, filthiness, and sensual pleasures, Gods led by Indra pleaded Lord Brahma to bless them with not only teach us but be pleasing to both eyes and ears. Bharata ascribed the origin of drama to divinity. According to Bharata, poetry (kavya), dance (nritta), mime (nritya) in life is lila (play) and produces emotion (bhava), but only drama (natya) produces flavor (rasa). Drama uses the Navarasas to produce the reality effect for viewers i.e. love, joy (humour), anger, fear, pride, sadness, wonder, aversion and peace.

The most renowned play wrights and plays of ancient India are Aswaghosh's 'Buddhcharita', Bhasa's 'Swapna Vasavadattam', 'Pancharātra', and 'Pratijna Yaugandharayana', Sudraka's 'Mruchhakatika', Kalidasa's 'Vikramorvasiyam', 'Malavikagnimitram' and 'Abhigyanasakuntalam', Harsha's 'Ratnavali', 'Nagananda', and 'Priyadarsika', Bhavabhuti's 'Uttara Ramacharita', Visakhadatta's 'Mudra Rakshasa' etc enriched the ancient Indian Dramas with their writings. In the dramas of Sanskrit the chief characters are allowed to speak Sanskrit and the unimportant characters are allowed to pronounce dialogues in Prakrit language only.

Origin of Indian Drama:

The rise of the modern Indian drama originates with the advent of British Rule and their consolidation of British Empire in India. In the year 1765, the Russian Drama lover Horasin Lebdef and Bengali drama lover Quloknath had staged two English dramas 'Disgaig' and 'The Love is the Best Doctor'. But the real beginning starts with when Prasanna Kumar established 'Hindu Rangmanch' in 1831 at Calcutta and enacted Wilson's English translation of Bhavabhuti's Uttara Ramacharitam. Social Dramas of Girish Chandra Ghosh, historical dramas of D.L. Roy and Artistic dramas of Rabindranath Tagore's 'Mukthadhara' and Chandalika are the initial dramas in Indian English Literature.

Pre-Independence Era:

Postagi Pharmji is pioneer in launching Parsi Theatre in Bombay. The amateur theater enacted the plays of Bharatendu Harishchandra (father of Hindi drama). The Indian English drama started with 'The Persecuted' by Krishna Mohan Banerji. The real travel starts with Michael Madhusudan Dutt's 'Is this Called Civilization'. He wrote 'Ratnavali', a translation of Harsha's play in English. 'Sermishta' is another play of him published in 1859. Another play 'Nation Builders' was published posthumously. With Ramkinoo Dutt's 'Manipura Tragedy', Indian English plays from Bengal will be completed in the 19th century.

In Mumbai the first theatre, The Bombay Amateur Theatre was built in 1776 exclusively for the purpose of European communities. Marathi Theatre emerged from this itself. Vishnudas Bhav's 'Sitasvayamvara' was produced in 1843 and the Parsi Natak Mandal was established in the year 1880. The Eliphinstone Dramatic Club and Victoria Natak Mandal followed Parsi Natak Mandal. The initial plays are verse dramas. 'The First Parsi Baronet' by C.S. Nazir was produced in 1866. The plays survived were D.M. Wadia's 'The Indian Heroine' and P.P. Meherjee's 'Dolly Parsen'.

In Chennai, the Madras Dramatic Society was founded in 1875 and the Oriental Drama Club was established in the year 1882. The Sarasa Vinodini Sabha an amateur dramatic society was founded by Krishnamacharya in 1895. These playwrights wrote on social, historical and mythological themes. Dasaratha or the Fatal Promise by Krishnamacharya, Harishchandra or The Martyr to Truth by A. Srinivasacharya, Lord Clive by Krishna Iyer, Nurjahan by T.B. Krishnaswamy are important among the earlier plays. V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar's plays entitled 'Dramatic Divertissements' appeared in 1921. The collection includes 'Blessed in a Wife', 'The Surgeon-General's Prescription', 'The Point of View' and 'Wait for the stroke'.

Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo are two prominent writers in Indian English. Even though Rabindranath Tagore write in Bengali all his plays are translated into English and exhibited as dramas like 'Chitra', 'The Post Office', 'Sacrifice', 'Chandalika', 'Mukthadhara', and the 'King of Dark Chamber'. Aurobindo is the major voice in Indian English Theatre. He wrote six complex blank verse dramas. His complete plays are 'Perseus the Deliverer', 'VasavaDutta', 'Radoguna', 'The Viziers of Bassora' and 'Eric'. All these plays are in five acts. He took inspiration from Elizabethean drama in his construction of characters and plot. His Perseus the Deliver is based on the myth of Perseus, Vasavadutta is a romantic tale of ancient India. Radoguna is a romance of Syria; The Viziers of Bassora is a romantic comedy. Eric is a tale from Norse mythology of son and father, Thor and Odin. His usage of blank verse is flawless.

Another remarkable playwright, brother of Sarojini Naidu is Harindranath Chattopadhyay. He started his career as play wright with Abu Hasan. His seven verse plays are based on the lives of Indian saints i.e. 'Pundalik', 'Saku Bai', 'Jayadeva', 'Choka Mela', 'Eknath', 'Raidas' and 'Tukaram'. His plays reflect his bent of socialist mind. 'Siddhartha: a Man of Peace is life story of Buddha'. As a socialist in his outlook he wrote five social plays 'The Window', 'The Parrot', 'The Sentry's Lantern', 'The Coffin' and 'The Evening Lamp'. The next great name come across is A.S.P Ayyar who wrote six plays. Ayyar used drama as a presentation of common life and realities. Another remarkable person is T.P. Kailsam, who wrote both in Kanada and

English. Even though he is pioneer of Kanada drama, his true genius emerges in his English plays 'The Burden', 'Fullfilment', 'Karna', and 'Keechaka'. The contribution of women began with Bharati Sarabai with her plays 'The well of the People' and 'Two Women'. These plays are inspired by Gandhian ideology and Principles. J.M Lobo Prabhu is the last play wright of Pre-independence era. He contributed immensely to the literature of pre-independence era. He wrote 12 dramas in number. His collection of plays appeared in 1956. His important plays are 'Mother of New India: A Play of Indian Village' and 'Death Abdicates'. His characters are more appalling and realistic. The Indian dramatists like Sanskrit dramatists have not achieved remarkable success in their construction of drama, plots, and variety etc. Majority of dramas concentrated on Gandhian ideology, independence movement, and oppression of English over Indians. So, the variety of themes is very limited. They want to show an ideal India in their plays.

Post-Independence Era:

Unlike poetry and fiction, the drama is unable to produce its remarkable impression upon the readers after independence. During this period the poetic drama as inaugurated by T.S. Eliot in his 'The Murder in the Cathedral' continued even after independence. The first major Indian English Dramatist after the independence is Asif Currimbhoy who wrote more than 30 plays. Currimbhoy's 'The Doldrummers' is banned for a while and is about hippy culture of Anglo Indians. 'Goa' is about a symbolic representation of invasion and liberation of Goa by India. 'Monsoon' is about colonization and 'An Experiment with Truth' is about freedom struggle and assassination of Gandhi. 'Inquillab' is about Naxalite Movement while 'The Refugee and Sonar Bangla' is about conflict between Eastern Pakistan and Western counterpart. 'Om Mani Padmeham' is about China's occupation of Tibet. Currimbhoy is a playwright of great potential and his production of literature is enormous. But his later plays are just like T.V. scripts which are not appropriate for theatrical presentation.

Manjari Isvaran, G. V. Desani, Lakhan Dev and Pretish Nandy are important persons. Lakhan Dev's 'Tiger Claw' is a historical play of Sivaji killing Afzal Khan with iron claws. P.A. Krishna swamy's 'The Flute of Krishna', M. Krishnamurthy's 'The Cloth of Gold', S.D. Rawoot's 'Immortal Song', Satya Dev Jaggi's 'The Point of Light', and Pritish Nandy's 'Rites for a Plebian Salute' are important plays of this period. Nissim Ezekiel's plays includes 'Nalini: A Comedy', 'Marriage Poem: A Tragi Comedy' and 'The Sleep Walkers: An Indo American Farce'. Guru Charan's 'Larins Sahib', a historical play deals with the Lawrences of Punjab.

Contemporary Indian drama is more deviated from the typical western influence and has developed its own theatrical values. Even though earlier it borrowed some traditions from the westerners it is not a hybrid system. It has its own thematic concern. It is more Indian than western. It reinvestigated history, myth, legend, and religion, folk and also touched the contemporary issues. Kendriya Natak Sangeet Academy was started in 1953 and National School of Drama was set up in 1959. By 1960 new energy was boosted up with the mixture of Eastern and Western synthesis. A separate theatre was started with the advent of Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sirkar, Vijay Sirkar and Girish Karnad.

Girish Karnad, a director, artist and writer substantially increased the richness of Indian theatre. These themes are mainly inspired by the art form of Yaksha Gana, but in those days it is not considered a purest form of art. His famous plays are 'Yayati', 'Tughlaq', 'Hayavadana', and 'Nagmandala'. The sources of his plays are puranas and myths but he tried to establish the connections with contemporary socio-political aspects. In Tughlaq he mixes facts with fiction. The plot of Yayathi is derived from Kadhasarita sagaara of Somadeva suri. His use of myth with present conditions mixes with ancient order with modern incongruity. Even though Karnad dramatic technique has no stability his success lied in his integration with technical aspects with indigenous dramatic forms.

Vijay Tendulkar symbolizes new awareness. He depicts the moorings of a common man, his suffocations and cries. All his plays surrounds with common man, his isolation and his confrontation with

surroundings. While depicting the truths and bitter episodes Vijay Tendulkar has not dressed up them with articulations to palate but presented them in a natural manner. His important plays 'Silence! The Court is in Session' and 'Ghasiram Kotwal' explores the theme of oppression. 'Kamala' and 'Kanyadan' are written on the naturalistic traditions. Kamala is the study of marital status and oppression. Kanyadan is an emotional upheaval of a family. His name is associated with theatrical movement associated in Maharashtra.

Badal Sircar is one of the prestigious names of modern theatre. He represents new Theatrical movement in India. He created a new theatre called 'Puples Theatre'. His career began with 'Solution X'. His earlier plays like 'Evan Inderjit', 'That Other History', and 'There is No End' deal with the socio, political and psychological aspects. His second series of play starts with 'Pary Konodin', 'Jad Ek Aur Bar', and 'Pagla Ghoda'. His later plays 'Procession', 'Bhoma' and 'Stale News'. The play procession is based on a search for a real home in a new society. Bhoma is dramatization of struggles of peasant in sexual India. His contacts with Grotowski's 'Poor Theatre' influenced him greatly and inspired him in creation of 'New Theatre'

The feminine playwrights theatre is 'Theatre of protest' as many of the writers wrote against the sexual oppression of women in India. They began to take up the myths and rewrite them in a new perspective. Usha Ganguli and Mahasweta Devi are giants among women writers. Mahasweta Devi's 'Mother of 1084', is an account of a political mother who witnessed the horrifying aspects of Naxalite movement. In Aajir, she deals with fast deteriorating moral values in illiterate people. Urvashy O'Johnny is a play of a love of a young man towards a talking doll. The play Bayen represents an account of harsh realities in a woman life.

Challenges for an Indian English Playwright:

If we observe that numerically Indian English dramas are less compared to Novels and Poems. The main challenge for a playwright faced is Language constraint. As English not a regular language in our daily usage, creating dialogues in English language is difficult and is not easily comprehensible to viewers. So, whenever situation arises then only the dialogues will be written in English language. The audience is not enough to substantiate to establish a separate theatre in English. One of the practical difficulties is to train up the artists in this medium of expression.

After the colonial rule of British English became a lingua franca not only in India but in the whole world. The common colloquial terms are replaced with the English words in many languages. Many of the hurdles can be easily overcome. As Girish Karnad expressed that the language in the drama is not at all a hurdle it can be easily overcome with the expressions of the artists. Many of his original Kanada dramas are translated into English and some alterations are made in the translating period and again he made the alterations in the originals also. By creating tours of drama one can attract the audience. The plot shall be an attractive factor and it shall be more relevant. If, the writer has no command over the plot and characterization whether the drama performed in colloquial language or in English medium the impact will be nothing but vain.

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