

Core English 316

06'. Indian English Drama'

[1] Introduction:

△ The drama was performed in a very simple
Way in *Vedic Period.*

△ Different acts from

Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharat and Ramayan

Were enacted in front of the people.

△ They also give *entertainment, enthusiasm,
Happiness and advice to the people who
Are in need of them* .

△ The Indian theory of drama preserved in
*Bharata Muni's Natyashastra,
The oldest texts of the theory of drama.* It
Was connected to the *sacred Vedas.*

△ Some of the *ancient Indian dramatists
Were Kalidasa, Bhavbhuti, Harsha and Vishakhadatta who wrote during the
Ancient Period.* Different genres of dramas

Were performed during the ancient period

Like *Urubhanga which is a Tragedy,* *Abhijnanasakuntalam which was a Romance,* *Mudrarakshasa which was a Historical Play and so on.*

→>**Some of the most famous classical dramas were :***

(1) *Bhasa's Madhyama Vyayoga and Urubhanga*

(2) *Kalidasa's Vikramorvasiyam

Abhijnanasakuntalam*

(3) *Harsha's Nagananda and Priyadarsika*

(4) *Vishakhadatta's Mudrarakshasa, etc.*

The *Indian English Drama

Began in the 18th century when the British

Empire came and strengthened its political power in India.* The *first Indian English

Theater was opened in 1756 by the

Britishers named 'Play House' in Calcutta.*

After that, other theaters

Started to emerge all over the country, *like
'Bombay Theatre' (1770), 'Royal Theatre'
(1848), 'Parsi Theatre' (1850), and
Chowringhee Theatre.*

The *period (1850 to 1940) is called the
Golden Age of the Indian Theatre* in any

Language.

[2] Pre Independence Indian English Drama:

(Pre Colonial Indian English Drama)

△ It *started with the publication of Krishna
Mohan Banerjee's "The Persecuted" in 1831.*

It is a *social play in which the author tries
To present the conflict between the East
And the West.*

*The real development of Indian English
Drama is started with the publication of
Madhusudan Dutt's "Is This Called Civilization" in 1871.*

**△ *Most famous Indian English Dramatist of
Pre-Independence* Era were as follows:**

(1) Rabindranath Tagore,

(2) *Shri Aurobindo Ghosh* ,

(3) *Harindranath Chattopadhyaya* ,

(5) *T.P. Kailasam (Tyagraj Paramasiva Iyer Kailasam),*

(6) *Bharati Sarabhai,*

(7) *J. M. Lobo Prabhu* ,

(8) *A. S. Panchapakesa Ayyar* ,etc.

1. Rabindranath Tagore:

Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Primarily, he *wrote his plays in Bengali Language but his plays were translated into English.* Some of his plays were *translated By himself and others by the Indians and English translators.*

:His famous Dramas are:

1. *Chitra*
2. *_Sacrifice_*
3. *The King and the Queen
Autumn Festival* (1909)
4. *The King of the Dark Chamber* (1910)
5. *The Post Office* (1912)

6. *_The Cycle of Spring (1916)_*

7. *_Muktadhara* (1922)

8. *_Natir Puja* (1931)

9. *_Chandalika* (1938)

2. Shri Aurobindo Ghosh:

*He wrote five complete and six incomplete
Poetic plays during 1891-1916.*

*His famous

Dramas are:*

1. *_Perseus the Deliverer* (1907)

2. *_Vasavadatta* (1957)

3. *_Rodogune* (1958)

4. *The Viziers of Bassora* (1959)
5. *Eric* (1960)
6. *The Maid in the Mill* (1962)
7. *Savitri*

3. Harindranath Chattopadhyay:

His plays related to society highlight social Protest and the ideas related to revolution.

His writing *career started with the Publication of “Abu Hassan” in 1918.*

He wrote *seven verse plays which were Published in “Poems and Plays” (1927) based on the lives of Saints.*

△ His “ *Five Play” (1937) is a collection of Social Plays.* His five plays are:

1. *The Windows*
2. *The Parrots*
3. *The Windows*
4. *The Coffin*
5. *The Evening Lamp*

4. Tyagraj Paramasiva Iyer Kailasam (T.P. Kailasam):

He wrote plays both in English and Kannada. T.P. Kailasam has *very intelligently taken up his themes and characters from “The Ramayana” and “The Mahabharata”,* two great epics of India.

He *was influenced by the Greek and Elizabethan Model.*

Δ *His famous Indian
English Dramas are:*

1. *The Burden* (1933)
2. *Fulfillment* (1933)
3. *A Monologue* (1933)
4. *The purpose* (1944)
5. *The Curse of Karna* (1946)
6. *Keechaka* (1947)

5. Bharati Sarabhai:

*She has successfully written two plays,
“The Well of the People” (1943) which
Upholds Gandhi’s well known Doctrine “Daridra Naravana” (worship of the poor as
God).*

6. J. M. Lobo Prabhu:

His most famous Dramas are:

1. *Mother of New India*
2. *Death Abdicates*

7. A. S. Panchapakesa Ayyar's Famous works were:

1. *In the Clutch of the Devil*
2. *Sita's Choice and Other Plays*
3. *The Slave of Ideas and Other Plays*
4. *The trial of science for the murder of
Humanity*

6. *A Mother's Sacrifice*

****[3] Post independence Indian English Drama:****

△ *Most Post-Independence dramatists followed the tradition of Shakespeare's Writings and Elizabethan drama.*

△ The themes of Indian drama in English After Independence are *the hollowness of The society, the oppression of women, Oppression of the poor people, partition And its effect on the oppressed,* etc.

△ *During the Pre Independence Era drama did Not flourish well because of the lack of Regular Theatre.*

△ *Although some institutions like Sangeet Natak Akademi Was set up in New Delhi.*

△ The National School of Drama was *set up by the Sangeet Natak Akademi as one of its constituent Units in 1959.*

△ *Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, Girish Karnad in Kannada, Badal Sircar in Bengali and Vijay

Tendulkar in Marathi wrote a number of plays.*

△ *But Mahesh Dattani, born in Bangalore, wrote plays in English.*

However, *some theatre groups in Mumbai, Calcutta and New Delhi successfully staged Plays of these dramatists.*

△ *There are few organizations like Akshara Little theatre in New Delhi and Little theatre In Bangalore which are only meant for Drama in English.*

△ *Lakhan Deh's "Tiger's Claw" (1967) and "Murder at the Prayer Meeting" (1976)* are *notable contributions* To the historical drama.

-> ****Famous Indian English Dramatists Of the Post Independence Era:****

01. Asif Currimbhoy

Asif Currimbhoy deserves a special place In the history of Indian writing in English.

He is one of *the most prolific and

Successful dramatists who has written and
Published more than 30 plays.* Almost all

The dramatic forms *like farce, comedy, melodrama, tragedy, history and fantasy
Are handled by Currimbhoy with great ease.*

He has rightly been considered as *"India's
First authentic voice in the theater".*

*->His famous works:**

1. *The Tourist Mecca*
2. *The restaurant*
3. *The Doldrummers*
4. *The captive*
5. *Goa*
6. *Monsoon*
7. *Experiment With Truth*

02. Nissim Ezekiel:

*Nissim Ezekiel is regarded as one of the
Greatest poets of Post- Independence Era.*

He *wrote a number of poems.*

*His famous

Plays are:*

1. *Three Plays*
2. *Nalini: A Comedy*
3. *Marriage poem: A Tragic Comedy*
4. *The Sleepwalker: An Indo-American Farce*

03. Gurucharan Das:

Gurucharan Das's *Larins Sahib (1970) a
Historical play dealing with Henry Lawrence
Of the Punjab.* His other place are *Mira
(1971) and Jhakoo Hills.*

****04. Mohan Rakesh***

Mohan Rakesh is a *Hindi playwright
Dramatizing the suffering of people.*

-> His notable plays are:

1. *One day in Ashadha (Won Sahitya Akademi
Award)*
2. *The Great Swans of the Waves* (Lahron ke
Rajhans)
3. *Halfway house.*

****05. Badal Sircar:***

Badal Sircar *is a great Bengali Playwright, he is popularly known as “barefoot playwright”* who created a

tradition of “people theater”

A theatre can *bring about new awareness On socio-economic issues.*

-> His Famous Works:

1. Evam Indrajit (1963)
2. Baki Itihaas
3. Bagh
4. Pralap
3. *Pagla Ghoda* (Mad Horse)
4. *_There’s No End_*

06. Girish Karnad:

*He was also a very prominent Indian English
Dramatist.*

➔ His famous dramas are:

1. *Yayati*
2. *Tuqhlac*
3. *Hayavadana*
4. *Anjumallige*
5. *_The Dreams of Tipu Sultan_*
6. *Naga-Mandala*
8. *The Fire and the Rain*

07. Vijay Tendulkar

His notable plays are:

1. *Shantanta Court Challo Aahe* (Silence! The Court is in session)
2. *Giddh* (Vultures)
3. *Sakharam Binder*
4. *Ghasiram Kotwal*

08. Manjul Padmanabhan:

Manjula Padmanabhan is the first Indian to Earn International fame with her "Harvest".

Padmanabhan *projects a dehumanized

Terrifying world in which mothers sell their
Sons for the price of rice.* Her play

*"Harvest" won the "Onassis" award and
Helped her gain popularity throughout the
World.*

09. Mahashweta Devi

Mahashweta Devi, *basically Bengali
Dramatist is known as the innovator of
Contemporary Indian Street Theatre
Or Third Theatre.*

1. *The Queen of Jhansi Mother of 1084.*
2. *The Occupation of the forest
Womb of fire.*

10. Mahesh Dattani

He is the first Indian playwright in English
To *be awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award
For his play Final Solutions and other plays
In 1998.* He founded *”Play Pen” a theatre
Company in 1984* and wants a national
Identity of this new theatre. His *stories are
Reflection of a realistic society.*

[3] Challenges Faced by Indian English Dramatists:

△ *Though Indian fiction in English has a rich crop of writers, drama in English language is somewhat lagging behind.* India has *a number of regional languages and most of the people speak these languages.*

△ English *has a limited scope and it is the language of the upper, elite, educated, urban class.*

△ ****Srinivas Iyengar* attributes *”the failure to the fact that English is not a natural medium of conversation in India.”****

△ *Those who are not proficient in English do not prefer to watch English plays.* In such a scenario, *Indian English dramatist is faced with the challenge of creating convincing theatre.* *There is no accepted Indian English for the writers to use convincingly.* They are *faced with the problem of using what kind of Indian ways of speaking English.* Since playwrights write their plays to be staged, *the question before the writers is: how are they going to write credible dialogues?*

△ Another challenge faced by the playwrights *is the lack of trained actors who can perform the characters effectively.* Many *Indian English plays do not get staged due to the lack of living theatre in India.*

****Rama Sharma* observes:***

****_“Any play written in India in English has an inherent disadvantage in the sense that it does not very often get staged.”_****

****[4] Conclusion:****

△ In spite of these inhibiting challenges, Indian English drama has developed and evolved. There have

Been experiments in techniques, forms and styles.

△ There is an amalgamation of the traditional and the modern, the classical and the contemporary. The works of new and emerging writers as well as translations of the regional plays have gained popularity.

****R. K. Dhawan* observes:***

”Very recently an Indian English drama shot into prominence. Younger writers have infused new life into this branch of writing.”

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