

## POSTCOLONIAL DRAMA IN INDIA: A STUDY

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### Abstract

*Post-colonial modern drama in India emerged as a response to the country's colonial history and its aftermath. This genre of drama reflects the cultural, political, and social complexities of India's post-independence era. It addresses the impact of colonialism, the struggle for independence, and the subsequent challenges faced by the nation. India has the richest tradition in drama. Indian drama opened a new vista in both thematic and technical aspect. Before Independence, there were two great dramatists Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Rabindranath Tagore. In fact, drama for them had been a sort of left handwriting as either of them was great poet-saint-philosopher. The trend continued only in Girish Karnad who rejuvenated ancient myths and Asif Currimbhoy who wrote about the event and personalities in contemporary India. Indian drama after Independence has remained a neglected genre, oeuvre.*

**Key Words:** postcolonial, themes, genre, tradition etc.

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In defining "theatre and politics in colonial and postcolonial India" as her subject and in dealing with primary materials from Indian languages, such as Bengali, Marathi, and Hindi, in addition to English, Nandi Bhatia, therefore, breaks important new ground in both Indian and postcolonial theatre studies. The theoretical stimulus for the study comes mainly from the methodology of subaltern studies, the collective project in Indian historiography that aims to construct revisionary post/colonial histories by recovering the silenced but resistant subaltern voice from a variety of discourses and events. Bhatia acknowledges that "the representational project of theatre, through its fictional dramatization of events, is not identical to the historiographical project of these historians" but argues that "the project of recuperating alternative histories through cultural texts" is valid in itself and the "representational apparatus of theatre impart yet another layer to the cultural investments of colonial and postcolonial texts in framing, organizing, and presenting alternative stories" (3). She also regards these theoretical questions as equally relevant to other colonial societies and non-Indian materials. With specific reference to colonial Indian theatre, Bhatia's concern with resistance uncovers the paradoxical nature of an urban (and initially elite) institution that took shape as a result of Anglo-European influences in the mid-nineteenth century, assimilated both western and indigenous traditions of performance, and posed a sufficiently serious challenge to the Raj to invite censorship and suppression by the colonial government for several decades. Similarly, in relation to the period after independence (from 1947 on), the idea of resistance focuses attention on the problematic transition from colonialism to its aftermath and on the new political, economic, and cultural realities of the postcolonial Indian nation-state, especially for underprivileged groups. In both contexts, theatrical "acts of resistance" were aimed sometimes against forms of textual and cultural domination and at other times against structures of authority that had hardened into institutionalized forms of political repression, economic exploitation, and racial/ethnic injustice.

Postcolonial Literature in English has so many factors like novels, fiction, short stories, poems and dramas. Especially this article relates with the Postcolonial drama. When India became free in 1947 and the leftist's Third World Movement (1950) began developing and the neglected the third world scholars thought over literary injustice. Post-Colonialism is the most recent trend in literary theories. In fact, Modern theatre imagery, symbolism, rejuvenation of myth created new problems to the extent beyond understanding of simple normal readers and spectators. In the development of drama, it is a grave challenge as how the quantity of Drama increased.

Prominent playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, and others have contributed significantly to this genre. Their works serve as powerful reflections of India's journey through colonialism, independence, and its ongoing struggles and aspirations in the modern era. About Postcolonial Modern plays the great actor-director Vijaya Mehta thinks about the plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar as, "The Chekhovian impact of old stone mansion was made possible since Mahesh had by then enlarged his awareness of stage craft and incorporated in his text the use of light and darkness, of silences and sounds of movements, rhythm, and pace" (Vijaya Mehta: 2011: XXI). The Modern plays in Indian changed the course of drama with Asif Currimbhoy's Goa, Girish Karnad's Tughlay, Mahesh Elkunchwar's Wada Chirebandi, Mohan Rakesh's Half Way House and Vijay Tendulkar's Silence! The Court is in Session.

Before Independence, there were two great dramatists Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Rabindranath Tagore. In fact, drama for them had been a sort of left handwriting as either of them was great poet-saint-philosopher. Sri Aurobindo wrote about great historical heroes and Tagore about myths from the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. The trend continued only in Girish Karnad who rejuvenated ancient myths and Asif Currimbhoy who wrote about the events and personalities in the contemporary India Comme evaluating Mahesh Elkunchwar the scholar Anandab says, "He modified his methods, and ten years later produced his masterpiece of no-moral-judgment. Wala Chirebandi, about the Vidarbha community he knew from within" (Anand Lal:2011:XV) In fact Wada Chirebandi is related to the breakup of joint family as well as the orthodox egoism. In fact, it is a conflict between tradition and selfish motives of family members regarding

Elkunchwar's Holi he writes. "I first saw Holi much later, in Rangakarmee's Hindi production (September 1990), and I wondered then, could Elkunchwar ever have anticipated that the play would become so topical in 1990?" (Ibid XV).

Holi and Diwali happened to be significant festivals in Indian society, albeit for different reasons. Indian dramas especially postcolonial plays consist of the dramatists oeuvre or vision regarding dramas Elkunchwar says:

The personal, private metaphysical side of human life must not be eclipsed by the public and political imperatives of the day.... when I write, except a personal from my readers/viewer and not a conditioned reflex which is always a result of the preconceived condifications of life. (Mahesh Elkunchwar.2004). (Notes on Theatre: 2011:333)

Karnad, Elkunchwar, Currimbhoy in spite of being related to different vocations have major contribution in modern Indian drama. K.R.S Iyengar refers P.A. Krishnaswamy, Vasudeva Rao and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya.

A far more important writer than either Vasudeva Rao or Krishnaswamy, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya has always been noted for his fecundity and versatility, and he is not only a commendable poet, he has a number of plays and play lets also to his credit. (Iyengar: 1962:233)

The great genius Iyengar refers to the mythical themes from epics as well as the problems of poverty and labours for the composition of drama the enormous storage of ancient myths helps the dramatists to compose them in modern context, Girish Karnad happens to be the unique successful dramatist to use myths with variety of meanings. In fact, there is no complete absurd drama in Indian writing but there are stray references such as Karnad's game of chess in Tughlaq.

The element of absurdity finds deeper meaning in Karnad's dolls speaking about baby (Hayavadana) and the simple cry-song of the sparrow in the end of Tendulkar's Silence....session. In postcolonial drama unfortunately except a couple of dramatists like Karnad and Currimbhoy there are very few dramatists who composed more than ten plays.

Karnad wrote about a dozen plays and Currimbhoy nearly thirty plays. The world of drama in Indian English is a virgin field for creative writers as well as for critical evaluation the problem lies with the success and response of regional plays in state languages. The English reader in general, and English audience in particular, is comparatively negligible. These are some of facts that ought to be considered and it is my humble request to think over this serious problem of the scarcity of post-colonial Indian English drama.

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