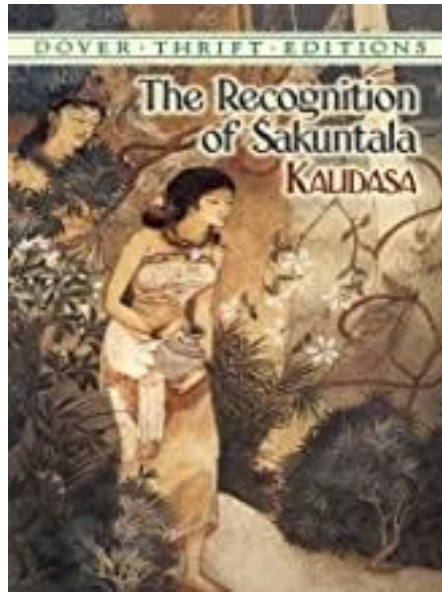


Growth and Development of Indian English Drama

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Abstract

Drama in India is a much older yet respected literary genre. In India the art of staging the plays began with Sanskrit language based on Bharat Muni's 'Natyashastra'. Sanskrit Drama flourished in India by length and breadth and became popular across the world. Before independence Drama in India became one of the most popular and powerful means of expressions. Dramatists of pre-independent India won world-wide commendation and recognition. After independence also India theatre writers and artists enjoyed much popularity and gifted India and the world with lot many classical plays which are still staged across the world. Though the shine of India drama faded a little due to smaller screen (TV and Mobiles), there is still a silver lining for this lively art form.

Keywords: Indian Drama, English Dramatist, Indian Playwrights, Theatre in India, Natyashastra

Man started learning the art of communication 500,000 BCE. Symbols were developed about 30,000 years ago. The very base of communication accompanied by gestures gave rise to the art of acting. Gradually man perfected this art and started giving presentation as a form of ritual or of entertainment. Drama as a literary genre is the most active of other genres of literature because of the immediate impact it has on the audience. Drama is the only branch of literature which tries to imitate life and presents it realistically to the people. It is said that drama is mimetic as it imitates and mirrors life. Lord Krishna also describes life as Leela—the Divine Play. In Bhagvatgita, He says, ‘Mayavidambanamavehe yatha natasya, i.e., consider all the deeds of Krishna as a drama played by the player. William Shakespeare too considers the world as a stage where all the men and women are merely players. These presentations became so popular means of entertainment and education that it soon achieved the status of a great culture and of art form called as theatrical art.

India is one of the oldest countries where drama flourished and blossomed in its fullest form. Drama in India has always remained as one of the most popular and effective means of entertainment and educating the masses. It has been used for the representation of the follies, foibles, feelings, anxiety and sufferings of human beings and for their amusement, moral teaching and social consciousness. The origin of Indian drama can be traced back to the Vedic period.

In India, the art of staging the plays began with the then prevailed Sanskrit language in first century CE. The Sanskrit drama flourished in India by length and breadth. With the passage of time, India witnessed kaleidoscopic changes in its culture and inhabitations which kept on reflecting in dramas. Sanskrit theatres were performed at religious places and at royal courts. In those days only men used to play all the characters. Even the female roles were played by the male characters only. Later female performers were included in the drama companies by the stage manager (sutradhar) for better and just presentation. Hereafter the art of Indian drama gained momentum resulting in the production of world class dramas. Indian Dramatic Art gained wide popularity. Being a live form of art, it soon won the hearts of masses. People used to throng to theatre with family, friends and in groups. The audience used to appreciate every aspect of drama. Seeing the response and appreciation of audience, the drama artists too got motivated to give the best. Thus history of Indian drama has glorified Indian art and tradition with all its hues and colours.

Bharat Muni is called as the pioneer of Indian theatre in Sanskrit. He sowed the seeds of drama in India through his world acclaimed treatise on theatre, ‘*Natyashastra*’. It is the oldest known work in Sanskrit drama ranging from 200 BCE to 200 CE. It is a theoretical treatise on

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Indian performing arts including theatre, dance, acting, music, make up, props, audience, competitors etc. The work describes all the essential details required for a drama to be successful. It is said that *Natyashastra* is the combination of four vedas composed by God Brahma. *Natyashastra* describes that drama uses eight basic emotions of man's life—love, joy, anger, sadness, pride, fear, aversion and wonder. Muni's *Natyashatra* remained an important text in fine arts for many centuries. The celebrated playwrights of ancient period such as Bhasa, Sudraka, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Harsha, Dandin and many others followed Bharat Muni's dramatic principles of *Natyashastra*. Mahakavi Bhasa is one of the earliest known Sanskrit dramatists of ancient India. He enjoyed great popularity through his thirteen plays in Sanskrit. The plots of Bhasa's plays are based upon the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Some of the most popular plays of Bhasa are '*Pratima-nataka, Druta Ghattotkacha, Druta Vakya, Urubhanga, Swapnavasavadatta, Pratijna-Yaugandharayana*'. After Bhasa, Sudraka, an Indian King further glorified Sanskrit drama through his three plays '*Mricchakatika, Vinavasavadatta and Padmaprabhritaka*'.

Then Kalidasa, the dramatist of 1st century BCE, took the genre of drama to its peak through his plays '*Vikramarvasiyam, Malavikagnimitram and Abhijnanasakuntalam*'. His magnum opus play '*Abhijnanasakuntalam*' became the most popular play staged across the world. It has been translated almost in all the Indian and foreign languages. Sir William Jones translated this play in English in 1789 and made it popular at European continent. Thus through Kalidasa, the world acknowledged the literary genre of India. Kalidasa's favourite part of speech was 'simile' which he used in most of his plays and hence he was also known as Upama Kalidasasya.

After Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti continued the tradition of Sanskrit plays. He wrote three plays '*Malati-Madhava, Mahaviracharita and Uttar Ramacharita*' in 7th century CE. presenting the popular episodes of 'Ramayana'. Sri Harsha, an Indian Emperor of 7th century was another playwright and epic poet who contributed a lot in enriching Sanskrit drama. His plays '*Ratnavali, Nagananda and Priyadarsika*' became so popular that epic based dramas became the trend of that time. Dandin was one more popular playwright who also registered his contribution to Indian drama through his works, mainly a handbook of classical Sanskrit poetics '*Kavyadarsa*' (Mirror of Poetry) and '*Dasakumaracarita*'. All these dramatists enriched the soil of classical theatre thereby making Indian drama popular across the world.

Theatre in India Before Independence

The advancement in technology and industrial revolution largely affected the staging of the plays of eighteenth century. With the help of electronic gadgets and advanced equipment, the dramatists could make the play livelier by introducing spectacular effects and scenic spectacle. It was now possible for the dramatists to present the three unities on stage flawlessly and with coherence. New technology facilitated the dramatists to bring many changes in the form, style

and techniques of presentation of plays on stage. When India was ruled by British Empire, English language started gaining wide acceptance by well-educated people. Also, the colonizers started staging English plays in India. They brought English drama in India that provided Indian writers far better platform not only for understanding Western drama but also for popularizing Indian drama in English. English and Italian troupe toured India and performed many English plays in cities like Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.

The first playwright of this revived art form was Krishna Mohan Banerjee whose Bengali plays were translated into English by the poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt. The first translated play '*Is this Civilization*' was staged in 1871. The new journey of English drama in India started with translations and adaptations of the plays written in regional languages. Later the playwrights Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Harindranath Chattopadhyay revolutionized Indian drama through their timeless classical works.

Sri Aurobindo, a sage poet and philosopher wrote many plays between 1891 and 1916. They are— *Perseus the Deliverer* (1955), *Vasavadutta* (1957), *Rodogune* (1958), *The Viziers of Bassora* (1959) and *Eric* (1960). The variety of themes in the plays of Aurobindo exhibits his wide range of knowledge and global consciousness. The Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore contributed a lot in strengthening the roots of literary art form in India. Though poetry dominated Tagore's literary reputation, he wrote many classical dramas which have been drawing the audience towards theatre even today. Some of the notable plays of Tagore are— *Valmiki Pratibha (The Genius of Valmiki)*, *Sannyasi or The Ascetic* (1884), *The King and The Queen* (1889), *Chitra* (1892), *Malini* (1895), *Sacrifice* (1895), *Gandhari's Prayer and Karna and Kunti* (1897), *The King of the Dark Chamber* (1910), *Dak Ghar (The Post Office)*, (1912), *The Cycle of Spring* (1916), *Mukta Dhara* (1922), *Raktakaravi (Red Oleanders)*, (1924), *Natir Puja* (1926), *Chandalika (Untouchable girl)*, (1933)' and others. Tagore touches upon a variety of themes in his dramas. Tagore's variety of themes, reflection of society, plight of the downtrodden and oppressed, music, lyrical touch, universality, closed knit plots all together gave new dimensions to drama. Because of his versatile genius, Tagore won world-wide commendation and recognition.

Another significant pre-independent dramatist and celebrated actor was Harindranath Chattopadhyay. His first play '*Abu Hassan*' (1918) is a light fantasy. He wrote seven plays on the lives of great Indian saints like Tukaram and Pundalik. His '*Five Plays* (1937)' written in prose are noteworthy for social vision and human sympathy. T.P. Kailasam is a seminal dramatist whose contribution to Indian theatre proved to be noteworthy. He wrote drama both in English as well as in Kannada. He took the popular episodes of Ramayana and Mahabharata as the themes of most of his dramas. His notable plays are— *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfillment*

(1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karna* (1946), and *Keechaka* (1949). Kailasam, being an actor, was fully aware of all the stage directions and hence his plays are actable on the stage.

The only woman playwright of colonial India who occupied her prominent place in Indian English drama was Bharati Sarabhai. She gave her contribution through her two plays namely: '*The Well of the People* (1943)' and '*Two Women* (1952)'. The first play, *The Well of the People* speaks for the sufferings of the people of India struggling to free herself from the shackles of old order of discrimination and caste system. Her second play '*Two Women*' dramatizes the two opposites— tradition and modernity, spiritual and material, eastern and western culture.

Another English dramatist of pre-independent period who nurtured Indian drama with his artistic skills is A.S.P. Ayyar. Some of his noteworthy plays are— *In the Clutches of the Devil* (1926), *Sita's Choice* (1935), *The Slave of Ideas* (1941), and *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* (1954). His plays are eye-openers and set morals against social evils like caste system, widow marriage, gender discrimination and the prevalent prejudices. After Ayyar, J.M. Lolo Prabhu further added essence to Indian English drama through his '*Collected plays*' which was published after independence in 1956.

All the above pre-independent dramatists of India experimented different forms of drama—romance, opera, comedy, farce, tragedy, melodrama and historical and mythological plays. With the efforts of these dramatists, drama in English established its strong root in Indian literature by the use of social, religious, historical, mythological and spiritual themes which were enjoyed by Indian audience in pre-independence era.

Theatre After Independence

The Indian playwrights who gave significant contribution in flourishing English drama after independence are Manjeri Isvaran [*Yama & Yami* (1948)], G.V. Desani [*Hali* (1950)], Lakhan Deb [*Tiger's claw* (1967), *Vivekananda* (1972) and *Murder at the Prayer Time* (1976)], Pritish Nandy [*Rites for a Plebeian Statute* (1969)], Dina Mehta [*Myth Makers* (1969)], Manohar Malgonkar [*Line of Mars* (1978)], Pratap Sharma [*A Touch of Brightness* (1968) and *The Professor has a War Cry* (1970)], Nissim Ezekiel [*Nalini* (1969), *Marriage Poem* (1969) and *The Sleep Walkers* (1969)] and Gurucharan Das [*Larins Sahib* (1970)]. These playwrights continued enriching the soil of Indian drama before and after independence thereby making the road wider for the next generation dramatists to launch their creative works. Due to globalization, increasing mobility of the people and the spread of English education, the post-independence English drama further enjoyed great success.

The prolific playwrights Asif Currimbhoy, Gurucharan Das and Pratap Sharma took the genre of theatrical art to its epitome. These playwrights dealt with contemporary subjects and

introduced new techniques in every aspect of drama viz. settings, style, appearance, music, light effects etc. Currimbhoy wrote nearly thirty plays of which a dozen plays are worth studying to know the depth and understanding of Currimbhoy towards the sufferers, the artists and the common men. His famous plays are *'The Doldrums' (1960)*, *'The Dumb Dancer' (1961)*, *'Thorns on a Canvas' (1962)*, *'The Captives' (1963)*, *'The Refugee' (1971)*, *'Om Mane Padme Hum!' (1972)*, *'Angkor' (1973)* and *'The dissident MLA' (1974)*.

Lakhan Deb and Gurucharan Das popularized historical plays in India. Lakhan Deb's play *'Tiger's Claw' (1967)* is a powerful dramatization of Shivaji's killing of Afzal Khan exhibiting Shivaji's heroism. His popular play *'Murder at the Prayer Meeting' (1976)* deals with the killing of Mahatma Gandhi while he was offering prayers. Gurucharan Das also wrote three successful plays— *'Larins Sahib'*, *'Meera'* and *'9 Jakhoo Hill'* which were published in 2003. *'Larin Sahib'*, a prize-winning play at the Edinburgh Festival, is about Henry Lawrence, a British Resident in Punjab of pre-independent India. We find similar theme of pre-independent India in Manohar Malgonkar's *'Line of Mars'*, in which a royal family resorts to immoral means to sustain its power that they lose because of Lord Dalhousie's cunning doctrine of lapse.

Gieve Patel and Pratap Sharma further enhanced Indian drama through their use of unique themes. Gieve Patel's play *'Princes' (1970)* is the first Parsi play focusing the conflicts of two Parsi families for the possession of a solo male child. Pratap Sharma, a bold writer, exposes the theme of sex in his two famous plays— *'The touch of Brightness' (1964)* and *'The Professor has a War Cry' (1970)*. With his two plays only he registered his remarkable contribution to English drama in India. His plays proved to be a trend-setter for future dramatists for discussing the sexual issues so boldly on the stage.

The above playwrights discussed various issues of ancient and modern era, of individual and society, of male domination and female suffering, of hypocrisy and honesty, of independence and partition, of problems and solutions and of penance and salvation. If we collectively take the works of the playwrights till 1970, we observe that almost all the contemporary issues of that time have been evenly touched upon by one or the other playwright. They elevated Indian drama in English to greater heights and provided a strong platform for further dramatists.

In spite of remarkable success, Indian drama, however, couldn't reach up to that height as Indian poetry and novels could. The Indian drama failed to attract a sizeable number of audiences. At the dismal sight of the progress of drama as compared to poetry and novel, R.K. Dhawan and V.K. Reddy analyze, "Unlike poetry and novel, drama is a composite art involving the playwright, the actor and the audience in a commonly shared artistic experience, calling for total commitment of the persons concerned to create a lasting impact. Moreover since the normal

medium of conversation in India is the mother tongue, it is difficult to make a dialogue between Indians in English sound natural and convincing.”

Martin Cobin, a dramatic critic opines that the lack of Indianness in English dramas is mainly responsible for the low and negative response of the audience. Realizing the faded status of Indian drama, some sensitive and influential dramatists like Prithviraj Kapoor, Bijon Bhattacharya, Ritwik Ghatak, Utpal Dutt, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, Salil Chowdhury, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Jyotirindra Moitra, Niranjana Singh Maan, S. Tera Singh Chan, Jagdish Faryadi, Khalili Faryadi, Rajendra Raghuvanshi, Safdar Mir and some more artists together formed an association in 1942 in Bombay under the banner of *Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA)*. Its goal was to bring cultural awakening among the people of India. This association provided a concrete platform to the emerging dramatists of the times. Since its inception, IPTA has been staging not only the plays of Indian dramatists but also of the renowned dramatists across the world.

The first staged play of IPTA was '*Yeh Kiska Khoon*' of Ali Sardar Jafri which was directed by Anil de Silva. The notable directors and prominent contributors of IPTA are Habib Tanvir, K.A. Abbas, R.M. Singh, Satyadev Dubey, Ramesh Talwar and Rakesh Bedi. Some of the well-known Indian writers adapted and translated the popular plays of foreign dramatists in Indian languages. The plays adapted by the directors of IPTA are George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* as '*Azar Ka Khwab*', Henrik Ibsen's *Ghost* as '*Ateet Ki Parchhaiyan*', and *Doll's House* as '*Gudiya Ghar*', Bertolt Brecht's *Exception and the Rule* as '*Dekha-Andekha*' and many more.

Despite growing popularity of drama, Indian drama in English couldn't achieve the expected success on stage till 1970. This decade didn't show much improvement in dramatic content. Most of the drama churned out in this decade proved to be larger than life, unrealistic and inane pot-boilers. The dramatists of late 1970 however, tried to catch the real pulse of the audience. They made fruitful attempts to depict Indian elements through their works. They either translated the plays written in regional languages into English language or adopted the local or regional themes in their English works to bring Indian touch in it. This translation method enjoyed huge success for its innovative concept and fruitful experiments in terms of both thematic concerns and technical virtuosity. Indian audience gave a rousing welcome to this new genre of drama. In this context the names of the dramatists Mohan Rakesh (Hindi), Badal Sircar (Bengali), Vijay Tendulkar (Marathi) and Girish Karnad (Kannada) are worth mentioning. These playwrights helped the Indian theatre to grow in its stature.

Mohan Rakesh came into limelight through his '*Nai Kahani*' movement after 1950 which became highly popular amongst the literally class. His first popular play is '*Ashadh Ka Ek Din*'

staged in 1958. In this play, Mohan Rakesh portrays the sufferings, struggle and helplessness of an Indian woman who is mostly used as a puppet by his counter male to fulfill his needs. Rakesh's play '*Lahron Ke Rajhans*' (1963) is based on the story of renunciation of Buddha and its effect on his own people. '*Aadhe Adhure*' (1969), an autobiographical play of Mohan Rakesh, is an insight into the dramatist's personal life. It depicts the complexity of a modern man, the conflicts of identity crises and the shattering of moral values and the family system. Through his plays, Mohan Rakesh examines man-woman relationship from different angles and portrays psychological dilemmas and emptiness of modern men and women. He brings the marital problems to the surface which is quite common in Indian families. Thus Mohan Rakesh attempted to change the face of Hindi drama by opening new vistas for it through the depiction of real modern India.

The next stalwart of Indian theatre in Bengali is the innovator of contemporary Indian theatre, Badal Sircar. He is the pioneer of street theatre and '*Third Theatre (Free Theatre)*', and hence is also popularly known as '*Barefoot playwright*'. He began his career with a humorous play '*Solution X*' but became popular through his first philosophical play '*Evam Indrajit*' in 1963 which exposes the hollowness of the middle class section of society. Later he gifted Indian theatre with his world class plays like *Baaki Itihas* (1965), *Pagla Ghoda* (1967), *Shesh Naai* (1969), *Procession* (1972), *Bhoma* (1974), *Basi Khabar* (1979) and many more. Overall he wrote more than fifty plays in Bengali of which most of them have been translated and staged into many Indian and international languages. Being known as the inventor of '*Third Theatre (Free Theatre)*', he made Indian theatre free from the restrictions and pressure of traditional methods of staging the plays. His dramatic style not only breaks the dichotomy between the actors and the audience but reduces drama to its barest by dispensing with conventional story, plot, characters and dialogue. Veena Noble Dass appreciates him, "If there is any playwright in the contemporary Bengali Theatre who is capable of creating a genuine people's theatre, a theatre supported and created by the people and not merely performed by the people, it is Badal Sircar."

The next towering figure in the field of theatre is Girish Karnad. He is a multi-dimensional personality who not only brought glory to Indian theatre but also proved his mettle in the field of literature, acting and academics. He is well-known for his indigenous use of history, myths and folktales to tackle the issues of contemporary socio-political conditions. Karnad has extensively used mythological stories thereby honing the rich cultural heritage of India. Karnad's first play '*Yayati (1961)*' has a mythological based story from Mahabharata. In this play, Karnad portrays a failed father who is left to face the consequences of shirking responsibility of his own actions. Karnad's most successful play '*Tughlaq (1964)*' is a historical play on the life of Sultan Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. Through this play, Karnad explores Tughlaq as an alienated personality who experiences social and interpersonal alienation and self-estrangement. Karnad's play '*Hayavadana (1971)*', is highly symbolic and spectacular and reveals the ambiguous nature

of human personality and the dichotomy of life. His other popular plays are '*Naga-Mandal (1988)*', '*Tale-Danda (1990)*', '*The Fire and the Rain (1995)*'. In order to project the world of uncertainties and to bring the mythological environment of the past on the stage, he aptly makes use of masks, curtains, puppets, music and chorus. Karnad's contribution to Indian theatre has brought him immense popularity and has enriched the Indian literary scene.

Vijay Tendulkar is another golden gem of Indian drama. He is one of the most prolific playwrights who epitomized Indian theatre with his Marathi dramatic hues (art). His plays are not restricted up to Marathi stage and Marathi knowing audience only but are popular worldwide. Though his domain of creativity includes articles, short stories, one act plays, dramas, screen plays, literary criticism and translation but his forte remains drama. His plays depict the agonies, suffocation and cries of middle class man. Through his most famous plays '*Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe (1967)*' and '*Sakharam Binder (1972)*', Tendulkar raises several questions on love, sex, marriage and false moral values advocated by the hypocrites of the society. He elevates the agonies of the wretched victims Miss Leela Benare and Laxmi in his plays by perfect use of irony, satire, pathos and even mock element. In '*Ghasiram Kotwal (1972)*' Tendulkar exposes the power politics of marginalization and subjugation on the basis of caste, class and gender. This play of Tendulkar won him international fame. It is one of the longest running plays in the world with over six thousand performances in India and abroad. In '*Dampadwipcha Mukabala (1968)*', Tendulkar, with his sharp sarcasm, attacks the political leaders and hypocrite people of society. Tendulkar's plays have been defined as '*Gynocentric*' as he depicts his women characters as bold and courageous who do not hesitate to raise their voice against the wrong done to them by the men.

Following Vijay Tendulkar's use of traditional folk forms in modern contemporary theatre, many playwrights and directors like B.V. Karanth, Habib Tanvir, Bansi Kaul and Rattan Thiyam took Indian drama to the level of Indian poetry and Indian novel. Feroz Khan is another accomplished playwright who has to his credit several outstanding plays like '*Tumhari Amrita*', '*Mahatma Vs. Gandhi*' and '*Salesman Ramlal*'. These playwrights together changed the concept of larger than life, formula oriented theatre to a more realistic and socially concerned type theatre. Besides, a few women playwrights too gave their noteworthy contribution in strengthening the roots of Indian drama. We cannot conclude the history of Indian theatre without registering the names of the female playwrights like Mahashweta Devi, Uma Parameswaran and Manjula Padmanabhan.

Mahashweta Devi emerged as a pioneering advocate for the weaker and oppressed section of society. Her major plays are '*Aajir*', '*Hazar Chaurashi Ma (1975)*', and '*Urvashi O' Johnny*', '*Byen*' and '*Water*'. The play '*Aajir*' deals with the issue of slavery in which a slave is denied the right to love and to live freely. The play '*Hazar Chaurashi Ma*' was written after the Naxalite

movements of West Bengal that proves her concern for Dalits. The play *'Water'* depicts the humiliation and sufferings of tribals of West Bengal when they were denied the basic right of collecting water from the public wells by the upper caste feudal. Through her works, Mahashweta Devi tries to awaken the suffering class against the atrocities of the dominants and also provides possible solutions to their problems.

Uma Parameswaran wrote the play *'Sons Must Die'* (1962) on the theme of partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. It depicts the pathetic story of three women of India who lose their sons during the riots of partition. Uma's other plays *'Meera'* (1971) and *'Sita's Promise'* (1981) are written with an aim to attract Canadian students towards Indian art tradition. Her play *'Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees'* (1998) centers around an East Indian family living in the suburbs of Winnipeg presenting three generations.

Manjula Padmanabhan's play *'Harvest'* (1997) fetched her first prize in the Onassis International Cultural Competitions. *'Harvest'* is the story of a miserable poor family living in a compact chawl of Mumbai. Padmanabhan brings forth the pangs of poverty and the countless sufferings of the poor. The play *'Lights Out'* (1986) reflects the plight of poor women who are molested everyday by the stone-heart men.

After Padmanabhan, Mahesh Dattani emerged as welcome shower of hopes for theatre lovers. He is the first Indian playwright writing in English to be honoured with the *Sahitya Academi Award* in 1998 for his creation *'Final Solutions and other plays'* published by East-West Books, Chennai. Alexander Viets praised Mahesh Dattani in the International Herald Tribune as "One of India's best and most serious contemporary playwrights writing in English". Dattani through his works enjoyed great popularity in and outside India. His plays *'Tara'*, *'Thirty Days in September'*, *'Dance Like a Man'* receive standing ovation from the audience. Dattani, in his creative canvas, covers varied themes reflecting urban Indian bourgeois, its double standard, religious prejudices, gender discrimination and homosexuality. His works secure unique and special room for him in the galaxy of international playwrights. Through the depiction of real problems of the marginalized in his plays, he has opened up a dialogue on certain key issues that have plagued mankind since primeval times. Because of his choice of universal themes, he has been winning international laurels for his creative art.

Future of Indian Theatre

If we give a cursory look to the creative works and achievements of Indian playwrights, our faces definitely have the right to shine in its pride. The Indian playwrights through their pain staking efforts in this genre have taken the theatrical art form to its culmination point. The Indian theatre resides on the world platform in parallel with the top most theatres of the world. However, the theatre in India is experiencing setback since last two decades. The exodus from

the theatre to films seems mainly responsible for this setback. Also due to wide popularity of Tele-serials, Mega-serials and Soap Operas, the theatre artists are attracted towards smaller screen. As compared to theatre, television and films provide more money, glamour and market opportunities to artists. Due to these reasons, the Indian theatre is gradually losing its grip and the theatrical art is fading away. However, there is a silver lining waiting ahead for the theatre artists as people are fed up of small and big screens and want to enjoy live performances of the artists.

Many leading companies, social and art promoting organizations, state and central government departments too are showing their concern not only to keep this art alive but also to flourish it worldwide. Apart from providing financial assistance to the leading theatres, these organizations arrange advertisement campaigns to promote aesthetic values and to attract more and more audience towards theatre. Theatre festivals and carnivals are also organized by these societies so that the theatre lovers can enjoy and discuss lot many plays on one platform.

The National School of Drama has been regularly organizing National Theatre Festival, '*Bharat Rang Mahotsav*' during second week of January every year. Till date 'Prithvi Theatre' has organized more than a dozen theatre festivals under the banner of '*Prithvi Festivals*'. It also organizes '*National Festival of Street Theatre*' in association with a social organization named *Child Relief and You (CRY)*. These kinds of festivals move from Mumbai to other big cities like Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai, Bangalore, Pune etc. On this line, Rudra Sengupta's Calcutta based theatre group '*Nandikar*' has also been organizing theatre festival every year across the country. Dramas organized by these theatre groups are performed each year with the sole objective of promoting Indian art. There is still a plethora of talent today for the theatre which would provide a wider scope for its development. Because of the incessant and collaborative efforts of contemporary theatre artists, the Indian theatre would certainly regain its lost glory and would re-enjoy the world-wide popularity.

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