

Myth in Indian English Dramas

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ABSTRACT: This present article presents a brief account of Indian English Dramas and also brings out various shades of meaning about Myth. Man creates literature and literature studies man-his origin and evaluation his interest and inclinations, his emotions and sentiments, his efforts, success, failures and frustrations, his feelings of love, hatred faith, devotion, loyalty and patriotism and above all his general behavior virtues and vices of all the four genres of literature poetry, prose, fiction and Drama – the last is audio visual medium of expression and is supposed to have been the most effective means of representing man's act and feelings on the stage.

I. INTRODUCTION

In its most general sense, the term is used to refer to any work designed to be represented on a stage by actors. More strictly a serious play (though it may end either happily or unhappily) deals with the problem of importance and does not aim at tragic exaltation. Drama, like other arts, is a representation of life in little. It doesn't promise to be entirely faithful to fact. It is a portrait not a photograph, a version, not a reproduction. It is the dramatist's criticism of life

Today Indian writing in English has gained not only momentum but also popularity. It is powerful enough to find a place in the syllabi of many universities all over the world, especially in India. Its contribution to world literature is so great that it has got a berth in the commonwealth literature. The term Indo-Anglian literature denotes original literary creation of Indians in English language as a medium of expression of their experience has been increasing day by day. Their writing has now acquired a status of independent literature and assumed due to importance in the growth of world literature.

Among the various genres, poetry and fiction have been flourishing fastly as many tried and have been trying their hands in them but only a few have ventured writing plays. So Indian Drama in English has not made headway as its counterparts. But now its status has changed greatly.

It is patronized in various ways. Drama troops are given financial assistance. The advent of mass media is the most important reason for its fast growth now-a-days. Moreover many enthusiastic writers have taken up writing drama as a challenge. It found little audience in the beginning because the dramatists could not reach the entire India for they were not polyglots. In a multilingual nation like India language is a barrier. But today the writers have overcome this and use the link language to the world. There is no proper record of all the plays. So it is very difficult to trace all of them. No systematic study has been made to assess the achievement or failure in the field. Fortunately S. Krishna Batta compiled a bibliography 'Perspectives', which includes many plays.

The Natya Sastra of Bharatha is one of the world's earliest treatises on theatre. A lot of information on the maintenance and working of Naga Mandalies is provided in the "Artha Sastra". It is alleged that the classical Sanskrit drama originated from the folk theatre of the country as a sophisticated form and in course of time both went borrowing

from each other and developed this form. The seventeenth century saw many transactions of Sanskrit plays into regional languages. At this time the establishment of the British rule in the country led to the desire of the educated Indians to imitate the west. This urge to find new theatre laid the foundations to the modern movement.

The nineteenth century was marked with the birth of plays expressing the contemporary “Urge of Freedom” as their central theme. There was also other plays marking the play wrights desire to give a modern interpretation to mythology.

Drama is the first and foremost, meant to be staged unless there is a professional stage and encouraging box office prospects there is no incentive to the playwright and in a country where English is practically confined to the academics and spoken as mother tongue by a microscopic minority one can never hope to find a play. However, it may be running shows on the stage in a regular ways. It is quite is the fitness of things to quote R.K. Dhawan.

“It is a well-Known fact that the real success of a play can be tested on stage. A play Wright need a living theatre to put his work on acid test, evaluate its total effect on the audience and thereby get a chance to improve upon his performance.”

The study of drama is half literary and half sociological because drama comes in direct connect with the people, literate as well as illiterate through stage production. The study of drama is a study of the audience too, and this poses a difficulty to the student of Indian drama as Indian people are as varied and diverse in character, culture, habit and custom as Indian nature itself.

The first Indian play in English the Persecuted was written in 1931. Perhaps the only solid contribution to Indian Drama in English is that of Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. But then their plays have certain drawbacks which prevent them being quite actable. The symbolism becomes excessive in Tagore’s plays; His main characters are not so much persons of blood. Any other aspects is the lyrical possibilities, for the musical that are mere appealing than actions, Idea and Story, Sri Aurobindo’s plays seem to have closely followed by Shakespeare and the Elizabethans both in verse and in the dramatic form . Current speech and hence lacking spontaneotly and dramatic quality. G.V. Desuri and Bharathi Sarabhani also tried their hands in drama but in vain.

After them Harindranath chatto Padhyaya, T.P kailasam emerged as dramatists but failed in making their dialogue speakable and graceful. A.S.P. Ayyar adorned the ideas but not much quality. There are many play wright who have translated their own works in English. To make a few R.S Dalal, M. Mujeeb, I.C.C metha and Girish Karnad.

The history of drama and the art of dramaturgy is as old as human beings themselves. The only distinction that becomes apartment at present in India English drama is the growth of its form. Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Girish Karned and Asif Currimbhoy represent for the form of India English drama, especially Girish Karned, is linked with the theatrical mode for its form and contents. The dramatic works of sri Aurobindo, and Tagore in the early part of the twentieth Century, and of Girish Karned and Vijay Tendulkar in more recent time constitute the peaks of achievement in Indian drama In English.

Indian drama written in English by Indian playwrights makes extensive use of tradition, myths, legends and folklore. Girish Karnad's plays vividly exemplify this trend. Girish Karnad is a major dramatist who has significantly gone back to the roots of Indian myth, tradition and culture and has re-created for us the rich and vibrant picture of Indian

society, culture and its people. In all his plays he genuinely portrays the Indian way of life with all its positive and negative aspects, its tradition and their relative contemporary importance and relation.

Culture defines society. The cultural ethos of every society is unique in its form and essence representing the character of its people, their experiences and beliefs. Myths, legends and folklore are in fact the embodiments of these cultural ethos that represent the underlying values and principles of life, the shared experience of the race, the rules and the codes of society. Girish Karnad has time and again returned to eternal roots of his cultural tradition, taking inspiration from mythology and folklore.

Folk imagination is at once mythopoeic and magical. In the folk mind, one subsumes the other. Folk belief, besides being naïve, has a touch of poetry about it which works towards a psychic adjustment. All folklore is religious, often based on animism because the primitive imagination extends its vision from the natural, in which it is steeped and with which it is saturated, to the supernatural, which to the folk mind is only an extension of the former.

India is a nation richly imbued with religious sentiment and belief. According to M. Rajeshwar, "Most Indians are at least in theory religious in outlook" (Rajeshwar 24). In Indian society one's faith is often more than just a personal inclination, for, it defines an individual's identity. Every aspect of life in India is associated with religion. Intertwined with religion are numerous rituals and superstitions. Forming a part of the cultural identity of India, religion shapes and constructs the distinct identity of the individual.

As per the traditional scales of social roles and culture, the individual holds a subordinate position to society, community or family.

Indian society is traditional and an individual is still governed by societal roles and norms that ensure a continuity and survival of its cultural mores. As Eric Fromm writes, 'We are what we believe in and where we live in.' Dramatists makes use of myths, mythologies and folklore as his source for their plays, not for the glorification of the chosen myths but to relate the myths to the present and to the past beliefs found in these myths. Readers and viewers instantly see how even with changed forms human values and behaviors seem to follow well set norms. Indian English Dramatists provides us with a glimpse of the past as well as its relevance to an understanding of the contemporary world.

While European theatre experimented with newer forms, Indian drama in English has always been occupying a back seat. The well-made realistic play yielded place to such avant-garde movements as the theatre of the absurd of the French, the epic theatre of the Germans, not to speak of the revival of poetic drama in the thirties of the last century by Eliot.

While drama took several avatars in the West, Indian drama stayed put. The reasons are not far to seek. India does not have audience on the scale necessary for sustaining this performing art form. While the theatres in London or the Broadway in New York always run to packed houses, the situation in India is hardly encouraging, if not totally depressing. Except in a few metropolitan centres, we do not possess an eager audience for plays in English. It is common knowledge that, for a play to become a living experience it needs a real theatre and a live (and lively) audience.

Despite all these constraints, the scene of post-Independence Indian drama bears witness to quite a few successful playwrights whose plays get top billing in metropolitan centres. Asif Currimbhoy, Gurucharan Das, Nissim Ezekiel, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, and Mahesh Dattani have all been popular, signalling in different ways the new era of the English

theatre. Among them, the pride of place naturally goes to Girish Karnad, the actor, director, and bilingual dramatist. He has carved a niche for himself. He is as productive as ever, after 50 years of sustained theatre activity.

Bhagabat Nayak's book under review is an exhaustive critique of 11— those available in English — of the 13 plays of Karnad. Set in six chapters, it holds up to scrutiny the entire corpus of his output, examining very closely his use of archetypes and ancient myths, national and regional folk myths, ancient, medieval and modern history, and contemporary social and political events. In other words, India's cultural heritage, religious beliefs, customs, and social values are all subjected to a close examination in this exhaustive study.

Yayati is examined as a play, using the Hindu myth that glorifies the philosophy of individual's performance of duty and acceptance of responsibilities, reinterpreting the ancient myth from the Mahabharata to suit the modern context. India's hoary tradition and rich culture serves as the basis for folk tales. Karnad draws from such rich sources, abundantly available in some of our regional and Sanskrit classics, and moulds them into the plays Hayavandana (adopted from Kathasaritsagar) and Nagamandala. He succeeds in making silken purses of sow's ears!

History is contextualised in Tuglaq that brings to mind the social and political compulsions during the Nehruvian era. In these plays, Karnad employs the indigenous dramatic form and Indian myths eschewing the western concept of the theatre and European lifestyle. For example, unlike the drawing room which is the centre of the western stage, the kitchen is where all intimate discussions are held and important decisions taken. For sure, with the arrival of Karnad, English drama in India acquired a typical Indian identity with the rejuvenation of Indian myths.

The last chapter 'Conclusion' ties up all threads and presents a synoptic view of Karnad's plays. In Nayak's view, "Apart from the Indian setting, culture, philosophical and religious beliefs, historical incidents, sociological and anthropological survey with the enunciation of contemporary realism, Karnad's plays appear to be monumental creations with rich and vibrant, multi-layered suggestive and ambivalent meanings".

Nayak's book offers a comprehensive treatment of Karnad's oeuvre. Almost every aspect of the plays is examined minutely, drawing support from all the criticism and scholarship available on the subject. It has a 12-page bibliography that is complete and up-to-date. With all the wealth of information and factual details usefully resurrected, the book is a sure guide to a study of Karnad and his works.

The present book is a scholarly estimate of the internationally famed Indian playwrights and of their critically acclaimed English plays. The playwrights under scrutiny are T.P.Kailasam, Asif Curreimhoy, Badal Sircar, Uma Parameswaran, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Girish Karnad. This article also reviews the Indian dramatic history and discusses the social and religious culture of the Indian masses in a new and refreshing light. All the plays discussed herein are based on the cultural and historical themes of the country's glorious past. They are a great source of entertainment and also of edification. The article throws a critical spotlight on these playwrights and points out to their literary zeal for reformation in the country's social, cultural and religious milieu of the present time.

Indian Writing in English is a relatively-recent phenomena, as far as literature goes. Through one can trace such writers in India to a century back, Indian Writing in English has come into force only in the last couple of decades or so. Some of these Writers have achieved worldwide fame, some national, and others perhaps have to be content with a more constricted circle. In these pages, I will collate information on this disparate group of India Writers in English.

The very definition of the adjectives “Indian” here is hazy. Many of these writers neither live in India, nor are Indian citizens. To get around this haziness, I will cast my net as wide as possible and include all those writers who are related to India be it by origin, or the subject of their writings-whether they admit it or not, whether they like it or not!

III.CONCLUSION

Thus Indian English drama derives its themes from the country’s glorious past and also from its epics – the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. A majority of the Indian English plays are based on the themes which are directly taken from or influenced by these epic myths. This Article throws a spotlight on those playwrights who visit and revisit these epics for their thematic material and re-live this past through their plays in contemporary time. It is a scholarly work on the individual plays by a host of Indian English playwrights - T.P. Kailasam, Rabindranath Tagore, Asif Currimbhoy, Badal Sircar, Uma Parmeswaran and Girish Karnad. It also highlights the dramatists’ social reformist attitude on the Indian stage in the garb of the epic myths. The enlightening Article thus presents an entertaining picture of the Indian English drama in a new light.

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