Chapter 1:
Indian English Drama, Drama in Translation and Women Playwrights
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The present chapter attempts a glimpse into the history of Indian English literature in general and the history of Indian English drama in particular.

The presence of the British in India made Indian English literature possible. K. R. Srinivas Iyengar quotes, "English and India had come together, or had been accidently thrown together; and of their intimacy - whether legitimate or illegitimate - had come this singular offspring that is Anglo-Indian literature" (Iyengar 1994 02). “The British impact in India has given rise, among other things, to an impressive mass of writing in English that could be conveniently described as ‘Indo-English Literature’.” (Iyengar 1981 35). Because of the quality of Indianess in the choice of subjects and the expression of thoughts and feelings, the Indian Literature in English has become purely an Indian literature and not an extension of English literature. The creative use of the English language by the Indian writers has enabled the diverse linguistic groups within and outside the country to understand the literature wholly. It has also led to the promotion of the sense of Indian identity.

The earliest writings of the Indians in English were in prose. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first great Indo-Anglian writer of prose. He wrote innumerable prose tracts and pamphlets including Precepts of Jesus (1820). Henry Derozio was Indian only on his mother’s side. His father was a Portuguese. As a poet he loved India and Indian nature. Kashiprasad Ghose is another pioneer poet. Journalism in English attracted men like Michael Madhusudan Dutt who besides editing an English newspaper at Madras wrote a narrative poem The Captive Lady (1849). In 1883, there appeared in Calcutta a book entitled Indo-Anglian Literature which included the writings of native students. Since then Indian English literature has been growing to greater heights.

Drawing upon the limited fund of their own experiences women too wrote and published. Toru Dutt wrote in French and in English before she died in 1877. Since then other women writers have been making their mark in Indian English literature.

History and Development of Indian English Drama

The Indian English drama has not been as fortunate as fiction and poetry. M. Subba Rao describes drama in Indian English literature as “The Neglected Area” (Rao
226) and in 2001 M. K. Naik concludes his article on recent Indian English drama with a question, "How long will Indian English drama remain a sad Cinderella? When will her Prince arrive?" (Naik 60). Naik has referred to the genre of drama as the sad Cinderella of Indian English literature waiting for a knight to give it an identity. Indian English drama no doubt took its birth much before the Indian English novel. The first Indian English novel appeared in 1864 with Rajmohan's Wife by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. The first Indian play in English was Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjee's (1813-1885) The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindu Society in Calcutta published in 1831. It is a social play that deals with the conflict between Indian regressive orthodoxy and the modern ideas. The play “seems to have inaugurated Indian English Drama” (George 109). He supported Raja Ram Mohan Roy's movement against Sati. He was interested in women's education and wrote an essay on “The Native Female Education” in 1841 which considerably affected the government education policy towards women.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote his plays in Bengali and translated them into English. His plays are Ratnavali (1858), Sarmista (1859) and Is This Called Civilisation? (1871). Ram Kinoo Dutt also contributed to the dramatic genre by writing his Manipura Tragedy (1893). In 1866, C. S. Nazir wrote what is perhaps the earliest verse-play in English, The First Parsi Baronet, but it was an isolated effort. These early plays are however of historical significance only.

Pre-Independence Drama:

In the Pre-Independence era, some talented and technically accomplished playwrights produced their works in English. Of such playwrights, Sri Aurobindo is an outstanding name. He has given five complete plays - Perseus the Deliverer, Vasavadatta, Rodogune, The Viziers of Bassora and Eric the King of Norway. He has also given a few unfinished plays. Besides he has translated Kalidasa’s famous play Vikramorvasiyam in English. He has also written two unfinished playlets. His plays are placed in numerous lands - India, Greece, Iraq, Spain, Britain and Norway.

Rabindranath Tagore enjoys great reputation as a towering literary personality. He is a greater poet than a dramatist and his plays are overshadowed by his poetry. He is the first and the only Indian so far to receive the highest award for literature i. e. the Nobel Prize. Most of his plays like his poetry were first written in Bengali and then translated into English. Speaking of some of the weaknesses of Tagore's plays Nirmal Mukherji writes, "Some of the charges usually levelled against him as a dramatist are that his
plays are mostly unactable that they have inadequate dramatic action that his plots are woefully weak in construction and are dramatically flawed . . .” (Mukherji 50). He wrote his first play Sanyashi or the Ascetic while holidaying at Karwar on the West Coast. His other plays are: The King and the Queen, Sacrifice, The King of the Dark Chamber (1910), The Post Office (1912), Mukta Dhara (1922), Red Orleanders (1925) and Chandalika (1933). Tagore wrote plays or playlets inspired by the Mahabharat. They are Chitra, Gandhari’s Prayer and Karna and Kunti.

In 1912 S. C. Bose published his Buddha which is a dramatised version of Sir Edwin Arnold’s The Light of Asia. Though T. P. Kailasm stayed long in England he always kept in mind the rich cultural heritage of ancient India. His important plays are The Burden and the Fulfilment (1933), Karna: The Brahmin’s Curse (1946) and Keechaka (1949). His plays are based on the Ramayan and the Mahabharat. The plays of A. S. P. Ayyar deal with contemporary problems and situations. They have overtones of didacticism in them. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya is a poet, musician and actor. G. S. Balaram Gupta rightly remarks that Chattopadhyaya’s “reputation as a poet has overshadowed his eminence as a playwright” (Gupta 15).

These second generation dramatists deserve more focused attention and analysis. Deeply rooted in Indian culture and Hindu religious thought and mythology these playwrights liberally borrowed their themes and characters from Indian mythology and ancient Indian literature like the Mahabharat, the Ramayan, the Puranas, the Upanishads and the Bhagawat Gita. These playwrights contributed plays with philosophical and moral concern by drawing from the Indian mythological and legendary repertoire.


Post-Independence Drama:

After India attained independence in August 1947, some truly talented playwrights appeared on her literary horizon. Of such playwrights Asif Currimbhoy is an outstanding name. Asif has produced over two dozen plays to date and they fall under
various categories. G. V. Desani is also a talented artist. He has written *Hali* (1950) an autobiographical play recording Desani's love affair leading to frustration and failure. A dramatist who specialises in historical themes is Lakhan Deb who has produced such plays as *Tiger's Claw* (1967) and *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976). The latter play highlights the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse when the former was coming out after his prayers in Delhi. It follows the Greek model in theme and technique, and aptly employs the classical unities of time, place and action as well as Prologue and Chorus. This play is comparable to T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) in texture and technique. O. P. Bhatnagar even goes to the extent of saying that Deb's play provides "a better model of conduct in human values than *Murder in the Cathedral*" (Bhatnagar 73) as the former maintains the dignity of action (Karma) unto the very end through the character of Mahatma.

It can be noticed that historical plays were not written much. T. S. Gill's *Asoka* (1983) deals with Asoka's conversion to Buddhism. Gurucharan Das has attained great success with his *Larins Sahib* (1970). It is about Punjab of 1946-47. It is a historical play of immense value. His *Mira* (1971) deals with Mira's unswerving faith in God.

Nissim Ezekiel is a greater poet than a playwright and has written quite a few plays like *Three Plays* (1969) which mostly concentrate on the hollow middle-class life in the cities and the social institution of marriage. More than two decades later he published his *Don't Call It Suicide* in 1993. An earlier title of the play was *Soft and Sad Music*.

Some other playwrights dwell on Gandhiji's life, character and achievements. K. A. Rangappa deals with Gandhiji's childhood and his practice of truth and non-violence in South Africa in his play *Gandhi's Sadhana* (1969). M. V. Rama Sarma in his work, *The Mahatma* highlights the events of 20th and 30th January 1948 resulting in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. His *Collected Plays* came out in 1982. He combines the eastern and the western trends of drama in his works. Many playwrights have written about the freedom struggle of India and its aftermath. V. K. Gokak in his *The Goddess Speaks* (1948) brings into sharp focus the confusion of the people towards freedom. Dattatreya Mahadev Borgaonkar's *The Great Coward and the Refugee* contained in *One-Act Plays* (1957) throws light on arson and loot, murder and bloodshed during the Partition days. R. Javanthinathan's *Guardianship of India* is a great satire on chaos and disorder, communalism and parochialism prevailing in Pre-Independent India.

Hussenali Chagla and Hushmat Sozrekashme wrote on the theme of national integration. V. S. Aiyangar wrote with a vital consciousness of the burning social issues.
He has written *The Jolly Club* (1950) on the subject of compulsory prohibition. It is a biting satire on drinking habits of the people. Murali Das Melwani’s *Deep Roots* (1970) brings to the fore the conflict of tradition and modernity in the upper middle-class of the Indian society. Rajinder Paul’s *Ashes above Fire* (1970) consists of four episodes. Shiv K. Kumar in his play, *The Last Wedding Anniversary* (1975) treats the theme of marriage. Deban Lala in his play *Naked in the Mirror* (1975) exposes the tension and hypocrisy of modern life. Pratap Sharma handles the theme of sex in his plays, *The Professor Has a War Cry* (1970) and *A Touch of Brightness* (1973). D. D. Roy, V. V. S. Aiyangar, Mathuram Boothlingam, Swami Anyaktananda and Sardar Joshi wrote on religious themes. Gautam Raja and K. P. Dasharve handled the theme of violence. Derek Antao has written as many as seven plays, of which only one has been published: *Give Us This Day Our Black Sheep* (1980). His *Acushla* is published in the journal *Enact*, in 1972. Gieve Patel, the poet, has written three plays: *Princes* (produced in 1970, but unpublished), *Savaksha* (unpublished) and *Mister Behram* (1998). The last play deals with Parsi life and character, and is a psychological play. It has ethnicity, class-consciousness and homosexuality as themes but they have failed to produce a unified effect. Shashi Tharoor’s *Twentytwo Months in the Life of a Dog: A Farce in Two Acts* is included in his *The Five Dollar Smile* (1990). It is a diverting take-off on the emergency of 1975. The play is based on Mikhail Bulgakov’s novella ‘Dog’s Heart’. Kushawant Singh’s play is included in his *Not A Nice Man To Know: The Best of Kushawant Singh* (1993). *Tyger, Tyger Burning Bright* presents a mixed group of tourists trapped in a guest house. S. Vasuki describes his play *Fresh Fruits* (1995) as ‘microwave mythology’. It is a series of discussions on the understanding of the past and the nature of future and thus has very little dramatic about it. G. prasanti’s *The Myth Resurrected* (1991) is a bold attempt to present the Oedipus myth from an Indian point of view. *The Mask of Death: The Final Days of John Keats* by Gopi Krishna Kottoor recaptures the last days in the life of Keats. P. Raja Rao has written notable one act plays and published in a collection *The Wisest Fool on Earth and Other Plays* (1996). Homosexuality is the theme of the title play. It is set in a toilet - an idea is borrowed from the Kitchen Sink School of British drama during the fifties. Leo Fredricks has been active in writing screen plays like *Story of the Kohinoor Diamond* (1993) and *Tit Bits: Television Screen Plays on Bernard Shaw* (1993). In 1992 he wrote radio plays: *Romeo and Juliet Jig Jig* and *Leo Tolstoy Sonata*. K. S. Duggal translated his six Punjabi radio plays in English *To Each a Window and Other Radio Plays* (1991). Saros Cowasjee wrote a screen play *The Last of the Maharajas*
(1980) based on Mulk Raj Anand's *Private Life of an Indian Prince*. *Purna Viram* is another screen play by Suraj Purohit and Bina Bhakta.


**Contemporary Indian English Drama:**

The contemporary Indian English Drama is getting richer day by day at the hands of playwrights like Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani, and women playwrights like Poile Sengupta, Uma Parmeshwaran, Manjula Padmanabhan, Tripurari Sharma and many others. These playwrights have grounded their plays in the contemporary problems while deriving their inspiration from their culture. In fact they have based their plays on the epics, legends and history along with contemporary socio-political issues. The major developments and experimentations are taking place by the creative efforts of these playwrights. In their hands Indian English Drama has become unique. They mainly concentrated on the family conflicts and presented a splendid study of the contemporary Indian society caught in the flux of globalisation and its consequences. The characters were drawn from the city-dwellers, mainly of middle-class type, so that the life they led gave ample scope regarding themes to structure a play. The peculiar ways of the living of urban middle-class, their insincerity in relationships, general focusing on identity crisis and moral dilemmas are the important themes. They also try to mirror the decadence of the social values in a satirical way.

Among the contemporary playwrights the name of Girish Karnad (b. 1938) stands significant. He is a playwright, screenwriter, actor and movie director in Kannada language. His rise as a prominent playwright in 1960s marked the coming of the age of modern Indian playwriting in Kannada, just as Badal Sircar did it in Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi and Mohan Rakesh in Hindi. He is a recipient of the Jnanpith and the Sahitya Akademi awards. He translated Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* in English. His *Tughlaq* is translated into Marathi by Vijay Tendulkar, in Hindi by B. V. Karanth and into English by himself. It has been the technique of the multifaceted innovative playwright Karnad to draw from history and mythology to tackle the contemporary themes, and the existential trends of modern men. He has adapted folklores, mythical and historical
material and has tried to provide a psychological interpretation of his themes. As a modern playwright, Karnad is always engaged in the act of “deconstructing myths ... and unfolds them in the light of modern sensibility. This deconstructing myth becomes an act of self-searching for the playwright ... he combines the past and the present into a unity that bespeaks of tradition and modernity in his art of playwriting” (Gill 8).

Karnad’s play Bali: The Sacrifice is published along with The Dreams of Tipu Sultan in 2004. Bali: The Sacrifice discusses conflicting mindsets with religious beliefs. It exposes the hollowness and futility of age-old rituals. Though it deals with the mythic theme, the novelty of the play lies in the unconventionality of its major characters, and the seriousness with which it evokes the intimate personal acts of religious belief and practice. The subaltern issue and the feminist study also make the play more valid in the present context of the twenty-first century. Mahout represents subaltern group. His anger, frustration and disgust are very much generic. The play implies deconstruction of the established beliefs. To Karnad the play is a tribute to the astuteness and sensitivity of Mahatma Gandhi that he saw so clearly the insistence of non-violence to the cultural and political survival of India. On the occasion of fiftieth anniversary of Indian Independence, the B.B.C. Radio broadcast Karnad’s play The Dreams of Tipu Sultan (2004) which is written keeping in mind the requirements of a Radio play; still the play has got all other qualities which are essential for staging the play.

The two short monologues Broken Images (2004) and Flowers (2004) mark a significant change in themes and techniques. Flowers is a narrative and Broken Images is dramatic in technique. Broken Images takes up a debate on the politics of language in Indian literary culture. It deals with problems of authenticity and bad faith created by globalisation. In his Flowers (2004) Karnad returns to the world of folktale and focuses on male rather than female desire. Both the monologues were originally written in English and later translated into Kannada which reversed the common feature of Karnad’s writing. The conflict between religious devotion and erotic love mingling of spiritual and carnal is central to the play. The legend of Veeranna on which the play is based belongs to the Chitradurg region, and became widely known when a Kannada writer T. R. Subbanna included it in his novel Hamsageete (1952). Sudhir K. Arora comments, “Thematically, both the monologues are sound and once again, Karnad has introduced his well-known confrontation - between love and duty in Flowers and authenticity and duplicity in Broken Images. Hence, Flowers spiritualises the aesthetics of flowers while
Broken Images breaks the ethics of pseudo-images regarding the questions related to languages and the originality in literary world” (Arora, 233).

Kamad’s latest play Wedding Album (2008) presents a contemporary Indian life with humorous insights into the country’s traditions and culture. It explores in nine scenes the traditional Indian wedding in a globalised and technologically advanced India. It deals with an event so common in the life of the urban middle class in India today. It presents the two different worlds i.e. the traditional and the modern cyber world. It is the story of an urban middle-class Saraswat Brahmin family. Kamad upholds not only the rich cultural heritage of India, the Indian values and cultural ethos but also does not lose sight of the contemporary happenings. His characters are deeply rooted in the native soil. He has Indianised the English language to suit the context of the themes.

Mahesh Dattani (b. 1958) is the first Indian dramatist in English to receive the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award for his contributions in the field of dramas in 1998. His drama complements Kamad’s. Mythology and history are Kamad’s favourite subjects whereas Dattani is preoccupied with social and political realities in India today. “He is the first Indian English playwright of note to deal with homosexuality - an explosive subject (for an Indian)” (Naik 49). His significant plays are Where There Is A Will (1988), Dance Like A Man (1989), Tara (1990), Bravely Fought The Queen (1991), Final Solutions (1992-3), On A Muggy Night In Mumbai (1998), Thirty Days In September (2001) and Brief Candle (2009). His two radio plays are: Do the Needful (broadcast in August, 1997 on BBC Radio 4) and Seven Steps Around the Fire (broadcast as Seven Circles Around the Fire on BBC Radio in January, 1999) He deals with the most serious problems prevailing in urban India. In his plays the marginalised sections of the society find their voice to express their sufferings. He depicts the forbidden issues innovatively, radically and very successfully. His Tara deals with gender discrimination; Seven Steps around the Fire with eunuchs; Bravely Fought the Queen with homosexuality and Final Solutions with the issues of communalism. His Thirty Days in September (2001), a play in three acts, is a tragic tale of a child’s sexual abuse. “It manages to bring home the horror and the pain within the framework of a very identifiable mother-daughter relationship” (Dubey 04). His latest play Brief Candle (2009) addresses mortality yet highlights life. It emphasises the importance of the quality of life rather than the length of it. The play presents a poignant tale which is a combination of tragedy and comedy.

However, compared to the plays belonging to the pre-Independence phase, those published during the post-Independence period show a greater influence of the West. One
comes across different kinds of experiments and also in employing new models and techniques including those of short plays. It can be concluded that the Indian drama in English is yet to be flourished but we can predict a rich and fertile soil for the blooming and blossoming of the drama. In fact, there have been serious and sincere efforts for the theatre-oriented plays. The women playwrights have something distinct to offer to the audience. They have given new dimensions by infusing new type into this genre. They focus the issues like violence: physical, mental and several other aspects of it. They have proved through their plays that they fulfil the specific demands of theatre also.

Women Playwrights:

Among the few women playwrights Bharati Sarabhai is outstanding. She is the author of two plays *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952). While traditional womanhood and Gandhian social doctrine form the theme of the former, the complex nature of the modern sophisticated woman and her private world are presented in the latter. Her plays deal with women characters. In her *The Well of the People* the inner life of a woman is projected. It depicts the synthesis of religion and social service. It is the indirect inspiration derived from Gandhiji that elevates the old woman’s mind from the personal plane to the universal. Anuradha in *Two Women* ultimately realises that God is within. In the three-act play, the conflict between tradition and modernity is shown.

Some women have tried their hands in hagiological and epic themes. Nalini Mohan Chakravarthty has been influenced by the *Bhagavat* in her play *Krishna* (1937) which deals with the miracles believed to have been performed by Lord Krishna. The theme is handled in a series of conversations about some episodes in Krishna’s life than a dramatic presentation. Mrinalini Sarabhai, a celebrated dancer and choreographer, wrote *Captive Soil* (1945), a powerful verse-play in two-acts with a Prologue and an Epilogue, presenting the action and reaction found among different sections in the country during the Freedom Movement.

In the pre-Independence phase of Indian English drama some women resorted to the allegorical technique in presenting issues like the struggle between good and evil, the educational system and the need of service to mankind. These plays are in the didactic tradition. Swarnakumari Devi Goshal is a sister of Rabindranath Tagore. Her *Princess Kalyani* (1930) is a full-fledged allegorical play in three-acts with a Prologue and an Epilogue. In the Prologue, the didactic author makes her intention clear to the audience by
way of a woman-devotee’s prayer to Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, to awaken in the hearts of men the supreme sense of truth and brotherhood.

Komoloni Sircar has written an introduction to a play called *Kailash* (1944) written by P. A. Krishnaswami. It is an allegorical verse-play in seven acts. Shanti Jhaveri’s *Deluge* (1944) is a stinging satire on the world-view of the modern man. It is a play in five-acts with a Prologue and an Epilogue. It deals with the ghastly tragedy of Man who has proclaimed death upon man and also the desired beautiful new life after the deluge. The action takes place throughout on an Arctic island thousands of years after the deluge. The women playwrights have made judicious use of the Prologue and the Epilogue techniques. Prema Sastri wrote a historical play *Gandhi: Man of the Millions* (1987). Zahida Zidi’s *Burning Desert* (1998) is a political play written during the Gulf War of 1991. Madhuri Kamat deals with Shakespeare in her play with an unusual title *Whose Father, What Goes* which is bad Marathi for ‘What do you lose? Does it belong to your father?’ The ghost of Hamlet’s father wears a dhoti-kurta and a Gandhi cap. On the whole, most of the women playwrights of the phase do not seem have the intention of staging of their plays. Their plays primarily are meant to be read.

Even after India became politically independent, there was no living theatre so far as the Indian English drama was concerned. Of course, in addition to the encouragement given to the performing arts in the first Five-Year plan, one does find many encouraging developments like the establishment of the National School of Drama, the Sangit-Natak Akademi, training centers like Kalakshetra in Madras and Darpana in Ahmedabad, Departments of Drama in some universities, the National Drama Festival organised by the Central Sangit-Natak Akademi and performances by some English and American troupes. These dramatic activities boosted up mostly plays in Indian languages, leaving the Indian English drama to suffer for want of a proper stage though the West paradoxically enough provided for successful staging of a few plays like Das’s *Mira*, Pratap Sharma’s *A Touch of Brightness* and Asif Czurimbhoy’s *The Dumb Dancer*.

As in the pre-Independence phase, the *Mahabharat* supplies the themes to some plays in this phase also. Smt. K. B. Thakur’s *Mother and Child* (1960), a Bhavan’s Journal’s competition prize-winner is a three-act play which deals with the tragic story of Karna. Unlike in the other works about the tragic hero, both Karna and Kunti are given importance in the play. A more ambitious attempt at hagiological drama is *The Beggar Princess* (1956), a play in five-acts, jointly written by Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi on the life of Mira - the mystic queen of Mewar. It brings out the paradox of the heroine
who, born a princess, becomes a beggar only in order to be a princess in the realm of spirit. One also comes across a few dramatic dialogues but not plays in the strict sense of the term. The dialogues imagined to have been held between two heroes or heroines of the epics and legends. Of such dialogues important are *Radha and Krishna: The Reunion* (1948) and *Bheesma and Drona* (1951) by Ketaki. Kamala Subramaniam's *Ghandharee and Kaikayee* (1962) has two characters, one each from the *Mahabharat* and the *Ramayana* respectively.

Like their predecessors, the women playwrights have failed to make use of the material available in the long history of the country. One could understand the risk these authors had to take to employ political themes during the British Rule. But they could not fully trap it even in the post-independence period. S. Janaki's three-act play *The Siege of Chittor* (1960), a Bhavan's Journal competition prize-winner, deals with Akbar's final and successful bid to conquer the formidable Chittor fort. The playwright tries to ennoble the character of Akbar.

Santha Rama Rau's *A Passage to India* (1960) is a dramatised version of E. M. Forster's novel bearing the same title. By dramatising its main episodes the playwright does justice to the novel. For the development of the plot, the playwright appears to have judiciously selected four scenes of dramatic and narrative interest and distributed these in the three-act structure. In her play *My Sons* (1963), Mrs. J. M. Billimoria presents a picture of five students of Bombay University who in spite of the sharp differences in their religion and language, live like real brothers. The playwright develops her plot round the nucleus of her ideal of national integration. It has five acts with many scenes. Arati Nagarwalla's *The Bait* (1969) is about a bereaved husband who makes his son a 'bait' to lure and kill the tiger that had killed his wife. *The Myth-Makers* (1969) a three-act play by Dina Mehta is a prize-winner in the Padamsee play-writing competition. It has a social theme which deals with the violent Maharastrian agitation in Bombay against the people that have come from other states and settled there. She portrays the foul politics played by selfish persons like Joglekar. Shree Devi Singh experiments with poetic drama in her *The Purple-Braided People* (1970). It is more a poem than a play. The decay of aristocracy being its theme, the play deals with two families, one of which is fast losing its status and fortune.

Women playwrights have also handled the theme of violence with a touch of feminine sensitivity. Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder* and *Brides Are Not for Burning*, demonstrate her endeavour to apply some female strategies for surviving
violence. Many women playwrights have dealt with miscellaneous themes. Mrinalini Sarabhai’s *Vichar* (1970) contains no plot as such. It is just a short conversation between a man and a woman about the philosophy of life, truth and existence of the Divine Principle. Whatever man states, is in turn contradicted by woman. They represent the two faces of one’s mental conflict. The conversation starts with the *Upishadic* saying “Satyameva Jayate” and ends with “God’s Lila”. Kamala Das wrote short play *A Mini Trilogy* (1971). Vera Sharma has two full-length plays to her credit apart from a number of one-act plays. *Life Is Like That* (1997) is a play about Lata, a middle-class young woman, without much education, who is compelled to take up a job when her husband and later her two sons die. The play is an exercise in social realism. *Reminiscenes* (1997) is concerned with a middle-aged and childless woman who is abandoned by her husband in favour of a Devdasi woman. *The Early Bird* (1983) contains five one-act plays and is about middle class life. *The Chameleon* (1991) is a collection of radio plays.

Poile (Ambica) Sengupta (b. 1948) is one of India’s foremost playwrights in English. She is the founder of “Theatre Club”, a Bangalore-based amateur theatre group. Her first full-length play, *Mangalam*, won the award for the most socially relevant theme in The Hindu-Madras Players playscripts competition in 1993. Since then she has written a number of plays for both adults and children including *Inner Laws* (1994), *A Pretty Business* (1995), *Keats Was a Tuber* (1996), *Collages* (1998), *Alipha* (2001) and *Thus Spake Shoorpanakha, So Said Shakuni* (2001). In 2007, *Samara’s Song* (1999) was shortlisted for the Hindu Metro Plus Playwright award. A collection of her one-act plays for children, *Good Heavens!* has been brought out in 2006. *Alipha* was performed at Akka, the national level women's theatre festival of Rangayana, Mysore. A humorous look at golf, a one-act *Sliced Balls*, was written in 2002. In 1999-2000, Sengupta received a senior fellowship of the Government of India to specially write plays for children in English. The result was seven plays for children, including one full length musical *Yavamajakkal*! Sengupta has transformed a four line Jataka tale into a brilliant full length play. Sengupta is a well known stage and film actor in Bangalore. Her one-act plays are *The Dream Makers of Calcutta* and *Monkey Chose the Black Pole*. An anthology of her plays, *Women Centre Stage*, is published in 2009. It includes a preface by noted novelist Shashi Deshpande. It is a strikingly original and contemporary collection of six plays, exploring a wide range of issues like familial, social, mythological and political through the voice of women. *Good Heavens!* (2006) is a collection of seven thought-provoking fun plays for children. Poile Sengupta discovers the wonders of the stage with *Good
Heavens! In the detailed introduction, she discusses the origin of theatre and how to prepare for a production. She acquaints with the stage and its requirements meticulously with step-by-step details on auditions, rehearsals, props, set design, sound, music, costumes and lighting. Written by one of India’s most exciting playwrights for children, Good Heavens! is invaluable for all who are interested in children’s plays, and especially those involved in children’s theatre productions.

Manjula Padmanabhan (b. 1953) is a powerful playwright and cartoonist living in New Delhi. Her play Harvest won the Onassis International Cultural Competition Prize for theatrical plays in 1997 in Greece. She is the first Indian English dramatist to earn international acclaim with her play Harvest that deals with the exploitation of human body in the twenty-first century. Driven by hunger and unemployment, twenty-year-old Om Prakash decides to become an organ donor and mortgages his body to a buyer. Her Lights Out published in 2000 draws attention to the heart rendering screams of a woman. It is based on an incident of gang rape that occurred in a compound amidst a middle class community in Santa Cruz, Mumbai, 1982. The play unveils the presence of crime in the society where the acts of sexual violence occur frequently and no one comes to the aid of victim. The people living in the neighbouring buildings, due to fear, keep their lights off as everyone with their lights on had their windows smashed. The title Lights Out is suggestive in itself; depicting the darkness of fear. Through her Hidden Fires (2003), Padmanabhan attempts to come to grips with the violence of our times. The play comprises of five powerful monologues in which the playwright brings out the issues of violence, intolerance to others and narrow concepts of community and nation. The five monologues are entitled Hidden Fires, Know the Truth, Famous Last Words, Points and Invocation. These monologues came after the 1992 Mumbai riots and the more recent Gujarat riots. The play is highly thought provoking.

Uma Parameswaran is an important name among Indian English dramatists. She is a poet, playwright and short story writer. While staying in India during 1960s she wrote Sons Must Die, a play based on the theme of the Partition. Soon after that, a series of renowned plays followed: Meera (1971), Dear Deedi (1980), Sita’s Promise (1981), My Sister (1989), Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees (1998). She published all her plays in her collection, Sons Must Die and Other Plays in 1998 as a part of South Asian Canadian Literature Series (SACLIT), of which Parameswaran is the general editor. She has been active in theatre in Canada, where she teaches. She founded The Performing Arts and Literature of India (PALI) in Winnipeg where she produces a weekly TV show.
Her *Sons Must Die* is a war play against the background of the Kashmir conflict in 1948. In *Dear Deedi* the scene shifts to Canada. It features ten women from ten different countries including India, Pakistan, China and others. *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees* is a social play with modern setting presenting different responses to the question of alienation and the problems of immigrants in Canada.

Tripurari Sharma (b. 1956) is graduated from the National School of Drama (NSD) in 1979 with a specialisation in direction. She has been at the forefront of theatre-based activism in India for almost thirty years. Apart from writing a number of plays in Hindi she has also written in English. Her play *The Gift* (2008) does not follow the traditional Act and Scene division but is a continuous one. She has brought a changed outlook towards gender discrimination. For Sharma, theatre is not just a stage but a means to share and talk about the lives of women and bring in the changes in the outlook of people. She threw herself wholeheartedly into the women’s movement and explored the potential of drama as a tool for discussion on the issues related to women. She appropriated the Street theatre which has emerged as a strong socio-political medium where women audiences could relate to various issues. She founded and set up a theatre company called *Alarippu* in 1983, an organisation that provided a formal base to her work. Her method is to deal with locally relevant social issues through the plays. Some of these experiences she has compiled in *Searching for a Voice*. Sharma’s approach of collectively evolving a play through group interaction has helped bring theatre out of the closed spaces it inhabited and into the lives of women in India. To those women, who had been denied the space to express themselves and had believed that the pain they carried was unique to them, these workshops were life-affirming. Sharma’s approach to the issues of peace, women’s rights, human rights, and the right to information have helped crack the traditional barrier between high art and grassroots communication. Sharma has also been associated from the very beginning with the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (Labourers and Farmers Power Collective) and its campaign on the right to information. Through her performances the public opinion was evolved at the grass roots level. The performances pressured the government to enact the Right To Information (RTI) Act, first in Rajasthan and then in several other states. This kind of theatre activity helps open up discussions on the issues that go, for various reasons, unaddressed.

Though there are many three-act plays, the five-act structure of the Elizabethan drama and the Western one-act structure have influenced some playwrights. Though in
The Beggar Princess, Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi use the Prologue and the Epilogue, they have not introduced the classical Sutradhara (stage-manager).

The vast history of India fascinated few playwrights of this phase. The analysis shows that the playwrights have tried the social problems like inter-caste marriage, untouchability, sex, power and wealth and the conflict between the old and the new trends. Among the miscellaneous experiments there is a noteworthy opera The Cloth of Gold by Krishnamurthi, and a striking poetic play The Purple-Braided People by Shree Devi Singh. The allegories and mini-plays were also popular. Many playwrights do not seem to have overcome the temptation of composing dialogue for mere discussion of topics of their interest. They have not aimed at the construction of a good plot imbued with suspense and action. The mini-plays and the brief presentation of a single situation are new experiments. On the whole the two phases of independence do not show any marked improvement so far as the stageability of plays is concerned.

Though the number of women playwrights is very less they have experimented with their themes. A new interpretation of the myths and legends has been successfully attempted by these women playwrights. Some have dramatised the epic themes emphasising the human element in them. They have also tapped the rich material from the ancient lore, history and legends of the country. There is a marked change in the outlook as regards the women playwrights whose works are not something to be read casually. A serious evaluation of their works has been going on. Great interest is being evinced by the reading and theatre-going public in the genre of drama. Women have been seizing this opportunity and making earnest qualitative efforts to win increasing attention from the public. They are taking up successful experiments by tapping the problems of contemporary society and politics.

A living theatre is a must for the art to flourish as the plays are entirely meant for performance. As a staged play can educate the people by enlightening them about the merits and drawbacks of the society and nation, greater encouragement is needed in this important aspect of plays by the reading public and other governmental agencies. On the whole, the prospect is certainly not bleak provided the playwrights ground in the Indian tradition and yet experiment and subject their art to the kind of tests which alone can prove the authenticity of their dramatic genius. The Indian English drama has achieved a considerable measure of success in the recent decades. Yet it has to go a long way to compete with the other literary genres in Indian English literature. It is making a faltering but steady march towards its destination. It has, of course, survived the test of time.
Woman in Indian History:

"Humanity recognizes no sex, mind recognizes no sex; life and death, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery recognize no sex. Like man, woman comes involuntarily into existence; like him she possesses physical and mental and moral powers; like him she has to pay the penalty for disobeying nature's laws,... like men she also enjoys or suffers with her country. Yet she is not recognized as his equal!" observes Rose L. Ernestine (quoted in Sree). Women who constitute half of the world's population are paradoxically not treated on par with men in all spheres of human activity. This is the predicament of women all over the world.

A brief survey shows that the image of Indian woman depends upon the mythic models from the Ramayan, the Mahabharat and the Puranas. The Indian woman has been asked to draw inspiration from the archetype women like Sita and Savitri. Often she is passive and accepts the given role in shaping her destiny. However, in the pre-historic period there was no gender-bias and women were not considered as separate entities. Women had a place of pride in the Vedic period when they were glorified.

Vedic Period:

During the Vedic period according to the historians like Altekar and Seshadri women were treated with dignity and respect in all matters - religious, social, political and economic. Seshadri explains that there was no discrimination and women were allowed to perform upanayana ceremony. Woman's education was encouraged. The wives of great rishis were encouraged to take part in intellectual discussions. Both man and wife together offered their worship testifying the fact that they were equal in status. Woman was honoured and termed as Grihalakshmi. "Women were honoured in ancient India, more perhaps than among any other ancient nation on the face of the globe. They were considered the intellectual companions of their husband... affectionate helpers in the journey of life, and... inseparable partners in their religious duties" (Dutt 67). Throughout the Vedic period, woman was given a status equal to that of man. She could fight wars, go to the battle field like Kaikayee, take part in philosophic discussions like Gargi and Maitreyi or even remain unmarried if she desired. Girls had the option of choosing their life partners through Swayamvara. Sati was not known.

Post-Vedic Period:

In the post-Vedic period there has been a gradual decline in the status of woman. The people were seen displaying a strong preference for boys. The common belief was
that a son would save his father from going to the hell. The position of girl worsened. Seshadri illustrates various hypotheses related to this decline. The Aryans as they moved from Punjab towards the Gangetic plains needed more and more warriors to fight the tribes they encountered and hence they preferred sons to girls. Another hypothesis points out that in the *Upanishad* there was emphasis upon celibacy and renunciation and women were regarded as impediments to the attainment of spiritual knowledge. As a consequence, no Sanskrit, no Vedic education, no religious duties were available for women. Manu abolished the practice of the *Upanayana* for women. He did not advocate equality of status between men and women. But Manu had also said that the gods are pleased where women are honoured. The double standard of morality set up by Manu worsened the position of women impinging on the social liberties of women.

**Advent of Buddhism and Jainism:**

Buddhism allowed women to be educated, to travel as missionaries and even to remain unmarried. Buddha’s compassion and respect for human beings served to raise the position of woman. As Buddhism believed in the individual independence and right to ultimate liberation, women became truly unshackled. Closely followed by it was Jainism which offered women the best opportunities for intellectual and aesthetic cultivation. Later, during the spread of Sikhism, men were exhorted to hold women in high esteem and to cherish them.

**The Mughal Period:**

The Muslim invasion started in the eleventh and twelfth centuries with the arrival of the Arabs and the Turks and with the Mughals in the sixteenth century. The incidence of Sati increased particularly in the warring regions of the North. During this time, widows were considered as an ill omen and they were reduced to beggars or prostitutes.

The coming of the Mughals in the sixteenth century consolidated Islamic power in India. The Mughal Empire lasted till the arrival of the Europeans in the eighteenth century. Purdah system ordained by Islam prevented women from participating in public affairs. During this period, the English missionaries, who were socially liberal, attempted social reforms. They were active in putting a stop to social evils like sati, infanticide, forced labour and slavery.

**The British Rule:**

At the dawn of the British rule, women were in a sorry state. The birth of two movements during the colonial rule in India - the Social Reform Movement and the Nationalist Movement - had deep impact on the status of women. The reformers like Raja
Ram Mohan Roy made efforts to bring about the legal abolition of certain customs and opened up opportunities of higher education for women. Consequently, women's education received an impetus in the nineteenth century. The Indian Nationalist Movement under the leadership of Gandhiji led to further emancipation by involving them in the struggle for political freedom of the country. Indira Kulashreshtha observes, "After centuries of social stagnation, the Indian woman was now encouraged to come back to the mainstream of social life and resume her rightful place" (Kulashreshtha 05).

Post-Independence Period:

The post-1947 period was a time of confusion and India had started searching its own identity as a nation. In 1951 the first elections based on universal suffrage were held. The Hindu Code Bill was passed to ensure women some rights such as property and succession and it also equalled women to men with regard to marriage and divorce. More and more educational opportunities and employment avenues were thrown open to women. Exposure to reformist movements, economic independence, influence of western feminist movements all helped women to go a long way in bringing about drastic changes in their aspiration for a new way of life. As Meena Shirwadkar observes, "As women received education they began to feel an increasing urge to voice their feelings. The awareness of individuality, the source of compatibility with their tradition-bound surroundings, resentment of male dominated ideas of morality and behaviour problems at home and at place of work or in society all come up in a welter of projection" (Shirwadker 201).

Woman in the Present Age:

The Indian women are now beginning to stir out of their passivity. Their political and social consciousness has prepared them to protest and march against discrimination and evils like dowry deaths, rape and exploitation. Impelled by an urge to seek a new and just way of life, women began to voice their feelings and experiences. The struggle to establish one's identity and to assert one's individuality led them to wage a desperate fight against the existing social order of the day. They learnt to resist the "multiple systems of oppressions which simultaneously corroborate marginalising ideological maneuvers that define 'otherness'" (Few 454). Rejecting the hegemony of male projections, they are crossing over to occupy a centrality ordinarily withheld from them.
Drama in India:

The term drama is derived from Greek word “drama” which means “do, act” (Soanes et al. 434). There are almost as many definitions of drama as there are critics of it. Drama is a prose or verse composition, especially one telling a serious story that is intended for representation by actors impersonating the characters, delivering the dialogue and performing the action. It can be considered a story told in dialogues through action. After poetry, drama is the second oldest literary form. Drama as a play written to be performed in a theatre is not the only definition of drama. It is also meant to be performed in the solitary theatre of the readers’ mind. Thus it has a double dimension of reading it and also watching it being performed. Whether one watches it as an active spectator or an imaginative reader, the fact is its writer is “engaged in more than an act of ‘let’s pretend’ ” (Charters 1143). Thus drama addresses a group of people in a particular place at a particular time. It grows directly out of the society.

“Drama is a story that people act out on a stage before spectators” (Tennyson 03). Eric Bentley remarks, “The theatrical situation, reduced to a minimum, in that A impersonates B while C looks on.” For Marjorie Boulton a play “is not really a piece of literature for reading. A true play is three dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes.” (These two definitions are quoted in G. J. Watson 01). Drama is an art which requires performance on a stage for its full effect. It involves real-life people pretending to be imagined people. It places particular emphasis on action of a concentrated, often intense kind. “Drama is . . . a powerful instrument for the conveyance of ideas” (Coggin 277). Drama is representation of carefully selected actions by living people on a stage in front of the audience. As Rice says, “The essence of drama is not words but action. Plays are written to be enacted. In Aristotle’s classic definition, a tragedy (that is, a play) is an imitation of an action” (Rice 14).

Drama in India has had a rich and glorious tradition. Drama can not be thought of without the possibility of its performance. The development of any dramatic art mainly depends upon the living theatre. In the words of Rice, “The word theatre, in its narrower sense, means a place for the performance of plays, literally of seeing place. At the very minimum, it contains two distinct and fairly large areas; one for the performers, the other for the spectators . . . both seeing and hearing are requisites to the enjoyment of a play” (Rice 24). This makes drama a social ritual in public.
The beginnings of drama are not clear as they are lost in the mist of antiquity. Suniti Kumar Chatterji opines that, “In India, from the earliest times in her history, at least more than 2000 years ago, the art of drama seems to have been well established . . . In Rig Veda, e. g. we find a very remarkable series of dialogue hymns in which two or more characters address each other in verses which are looked upon in orthodox Vedic tradition as having been composed by the characters or personages themselves, who are ordinarily superhuman or divine” (Chatterji 05). Like Greek and British drama, the Indian drama is originally connected with worship and in each case the drama was secularised quite rapidly. The stage conditions have altered over the centuries. The genre of novel can do certain things which are impossible to portray on the stage, but by the same token, the combination of actor, set, words and movement gives drama its special power, enabling it to work simultaneously on many aspects of audience’s sensibilities. The reader of the play-text performs the whole play in his imagination in order to experience it in all its fullness. Beginning with Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), the critics have stressed the primacy of action in drama. The dramatist can not intrude with explanatory, evaluative or descriptive passages of comment as the novelist may. A drama is something which exists in one’s study or a library. The reader will be able to activate his theatrical imagination. It is also something which achieves its fullest life on the stage.

The origin of the theatre in ancient India or rather the folk theatre and dramatics can be traced to the religious ritualism of the Vedic Aryans. This folk theatre of the misty past was mixed with dance, ritualism and the depiction of events from daily life. Many historians, notably D. D. Kosambi, Debiprasad Chattopadhaya and Adya Rangacharya have referred to the prevalence of ritualism amongst Indo-Aryan tribes in which some members acted as if they were wild animals and some others were the hunters. In such a simple and crude manner did the theatre originate in India years back in the Rig-Vedic times. Bharata Muni was an ancient Indian writer best known for his Natya Shastra of Bharata, a theoretical treatise on Indian performing arts, including theatre, dance, acting and music. It has been compared to Aristotle’s Poetics. Bharata is often known as the father of Indian theatrical art. His Natya Shastra is the first attempt to develop the techniques in a systematic manner. Drama as Bharata Muni says is the imitation of men and their doings (loka-vritti). Bharata sets out with a detailed theory of drama. According to him all modes of expression used by an individual such as speech, gestures, movements and intonation must be employed in drama.
The epics the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat* provided the inspiration to the earliest Indian dramatists as they do even today. The Indian dramatist Bhasa (second century B.C.) wrote plays that were heavily inspired by the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*. Kalidas is generally considered to be the greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist of India. In comparison to Bhasa who drew heavily from the epics, Kalidas can be considered an original playwright. The next great Indian dramatist is Bhavabhuti. The powerful Indian emperor Harsha is also credited with having written three plays. The dramas of later India were called Sangeets (Gargi 1966 37) which are the combination of comedy and music. However, Sangeets were not the only type of theatre in India. Puppetry started in the cradles of civilisation as an entire village event and is still popular today. The most popular form of puppetry in India is shadow puppetry which was invented even before the fifth century A. D. (Gargi 1966 36).

The development of theatre in India was slow (Gargi 1962 54). Much of the developments were changed and influenced by the countries that ruled India. Folk theatre was forgotten for years while freedom was the issue on the centre-stage of Indian culture. In India today, theatre in general is in a constant struggle against the ever changing technology. Despite, theatre is on the rise. Large theatre groups are popping up in the major cities of India and are popular. Theatre in India is not only used for entertainment but also to convey beliefs and thoughts about culture and politics. One of these important messages is the role of women in society. Theatre is an important part of culture in all lands. It is the medium that can attack the society and by doing so, it can bring issues into the public eye and also bring about a change. Theatre is a strong part of all cultures, though it is the thing that is often sacrificed in times of hardship.

**Women and Drama:**

*"The plays were basically of men, for men and by men. Women were there only as pretty diversions"* (Pande 100).

Drama as a genre and its performance offer women an extraordinary range of space and voice. It also offers them greater potential for effecting the social and attitudinal changes. Drama can orient towards change and produce feminine concerns. There is a distinctive woman's sensibility and that it reflects itself in their literature. Nabaneeta Dev Sen while speaking about the gender, genre and subject matter tells "... if go by the accepted definitions there are some genres which are women's - like social novels, lyrics, to write for children ... but epics? Historical novels? Plays? Criticism? Satire? Humour? ... But things have changed. After being informed by feminist
theories we can reclaim these forms, just as we are re-reading women’s writings. Now we see that the kind of history we write is what historians won’t write about. That which is not seen in the historical novels written by us. It fills that gap” (Menon 68).

The plays by women are the proofs of their enlightenment and rationality. Plays for women have become the transformational writing. The stage provides them the space where “a body transformed into a sign, signifying a thousand meanings, creating a thousand tests . . . and the meanings . . . descend like a giant mirror before people, reflecting their lives, their culture” (Lakshmi xiii). No longer content with the portrayal of women’s experiences created by the male imagination and being relegated to the few identified tasks or seeing their labour erased from the theatre history, women have started talking in their own voice and presenting their own spectacles. They have been making better use of the volatile space of the theatre to represent their issues by voicing the injustices meted to them. A woman playwright “is providing words, emotions, and an imaginative structure for others to inhabit and create anew onstage. A playwright - in this theoretical sense - thus makes other people speak and act. No wonder, then, that even the woman playwright with the mildest of messages is bound to be seen as an anomaly, if not an actual threat” (Wandor 128).

Reasons for Less Number of Women Playwrights:

None can fail to notice the paucity of women playwrights in the Indian English literature. The reasons for the conspicuous paucity are obvious enough and are not far to seek. The foremost reason is the want of a living theatre. The absence of a regular living theatre did not allow both men and women to pursue play-writing in a systematic and comprehensive way. As a result they took play-writing only as a hobby and not as a serious endeavour. Drama is much dependent on team work and its economic investment has not generally attracted the attention of women for their aesthetic self-expression.

While poetry, novels and non-fiction prose can be read in one’s own study, drama can come to life only on the stage. Women find it difficult to stage their dramas. The public nature of the genre and its complicated and male-dominated network of operation, along with its association with immorality (a taint that has lent a certain notoriety to the institution of the theatre), have discouraged many talented women writers from entering the field, forcing them to choose more “domestic” and “respectable” modes of writing, like poetry and fiction (Patsalidis 86). Of course, “going public” is considered perilous prospect for female intellectuals in any nation. Writing and thereby staging their plays
"involved a measure of transgression against social expectations of women's modesty, submission, and anonymity" (Ann Smith 119).

As drama is a "composite art involving the playwright, the actor and the audience in a commonly shared and even created, artistic experience" (Naik and Punekar ix), it calls for a total commitment of the persons concerned to create a lasting impact. Women find it difficult to devote much of their time for writing and thereby staging the drama. They need the co-operation of all concerned. Women are caught in the mesh of social taboos of all kinds and their subservience to men gives them very little freedom of action. The women playwright's task is not easy. It is due to socio-cultural conditions, attitudes and practices, some of which are typically conditioned. Theatre is a public sphere. To stage a drama women have to come out of the confines of domesticity. It demands more time and energy from them.

The playwright has a more public visibility compared to the novelist, the essayist, the short-story writer or the poet. Women have to appear along with their drama. They can not stay behind their plays. They have to come in the public gaze. The publicity of their drama goes along with their name which many women may not like and remain away from play writing.

The playwright is more vulnerable to risk than a novelist or a poet. As the play is performed, the content of it comes under more scrutiny, more so when it is written and staged by women. When women try to be heard in the theatre, they are open to more risks. When they speak in their voice about their experiences they are put to more risks and more scrutiny and this fact shuns them away from play writing. There is no denying the fact that a woman writer is reacted as woman more than as a writer.

Another reason for women not going for play-writing is that the drama is a performing art and women playwrights will have to work in close proximity with men. It is a collaborative work. The male performers of the play may not be ready to deliver the dialogues written by women. Women on the contrary, will be willing to perform the role allotted to them by men but this is not so with male members of the society. Their lack of confidence also contributes in not staging their plays. They feel incompetent to solve the problems outside the house. They have to survive in the male dominated society which may deter them from play-writing.

Women have limited experiences of closed door of domesticity. Women's relationships, their struggles and their journey towards emancipation constitute the themes that most of the women playwrights share. They may not deal with social and
political struggles. The audience of the drama expects the articulation of public and radical voice. They expect social comment, satire and criticism. Women's domestic conflicts behind the closed door may not fascinate the spectators. It is expected that women must also be able to interpret contemporary social and political situation.

The financiers may not come forward to invest in women's adventures. Lack of confidence in the capabilities of women's potential prevails everywhere. Above all it is the patriarchal attitude which prevails everywhere. Virginia Woolf has strongly challenged the male writers declaring that women can exhibit more writing ability than men if they can have the room of their own, free time and their own income like that of men. There are no theatrical troupes in India that are interested in promoting the plays of Indian women. There is the issue of patronage. The theatre needs support from enthusiastic, risk tolerant producers - first of all to take chances. That is largely missing as regards the plays written by women who do not see it as a primary activity to publish their plays. The publishers will be reluctant in issuing the plays by women.

Men dominate the economic and artistic decisions in the theatre. It is they who decide how women are to be presented on the stage. In such a situation, if women try to combat the dominant images of women in the theatre, the challenge demands immense investment of time as well as energy to fight relentlessly with courage and perseverance. Besides, women's experiences are less about public and social struggle and also of political power. Whatever women present are more often socio-domestic inter-personal conflicts which do not appear significant to men.

There are some other problems too. Language is a primary tool for the dramatist. The essentially masculine structure of language poses problems. However women have been slowly making inroads into the restricted field of play-writing. As theatre offers an extraordinary range of voice, women can bring in greater social and attitudinal changes. They will transform the received ideas about culture, creativity and representation, and will create a new set of social structures in which traditional male-female roles would be redefined. Sally Burke goes to the extent of asserting that the feminist playwrights "may also offer the alternative, even Utopian, visions or suggest how such a reformation, even revolution might occur. Each of their strategies threatens the dominant order"

(Burke viii).

It can be concluded that lack of encouragement and gender differences have led plays by women to remain quite limited and less grown unlike novels and poetry. Many issues that have barred women from writing plays are the gender differences, cultural
restrictions, religious barriers, lack of economic support, the prejudice against the women that women can not produce good plays, family responsibilities and above all lack of education. Despite these restraints, women playwrights have succeeded in their endeavours to write and produce plays in India and have been acclaimed internationally as well.

**Drama Translation:**

The available dramas in regional literatures have not received much awaited and serious attention of the scholars to translate them into predominant language as English. This section examines various principles underlying the translation of drama and the strategies that have been outlined by the scholars of drama translation. The simplest test of the translation is its approximation to the original. Etymologically translation is "carrying across" or "bringing across". The word derives from Latin "transferre", from *trans- 'across' + ferre 'to bear' (Soanes et al. 1531). Additionally, the Greek term for translation is "metaphrazein" meaning "word differently" (Soanes et al. 897). It has supplied English "metaphrase", a literal translation or word-for-word translation as contrasted with the Greek "paraphrase" - saying in other words. Translation consists in producing in the receptor or the target language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language. It demands grammatical accuracy and the idiomatic appropriateness along with fidelity to the original. In the absence of which the translated work is likely to be misrepresented. "It is a creative work to be restricted within the boundary of a given text which has its agenda the task of decoding from one language to another" (Sarkar 08). In its simplest definition, the Indo-English literature refers to the translation into English from the literature in Indian languages (Mukherjee 06).

According to Tirumalesh et al. "Important works in the regional languages are translated into English for two reasons: English is the language enabling one to reach an international audience, and it is also the literary lingua franca in India" (Tirumalesh et al. 1570). The primary objective of developing Indo-English literature is to introduce the writers of one region to the readers of another region as India is a multilingual country. Such translated works acquire an extra dimension. The translation of Indian regional literature into English dates to the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 by Sir William Jones. "Jones, a judge of the high court at Calcutta was a pioneer of the translation activity that attracted several British and Indian scholars" (Tirumalesh et al. 1569). He translated Kalidas's *Shakuntala* in English in 1789. According to Sujit Mukherjee the earliest makers of the Indo-English literature were
Englishmen and Americans. But the attraction of the foreign translators towards Indian literature is a by-product of their academic specialisation in some Indian languages.

Translations provide readers their first acquaintance with texts they would never otherwise know. The ambition of all Indian writers and translators was undoubtedly fired by the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. After 1947 the modern Indo-English literature grew rapidly. The reason for its growth has come from national literary awards. The Sahitya Akademi announces awards every year. Such national awards offer the kind of publicity that certainly creates market for the book to come. Several journals in India and abroad publish translations from Indian languages. They are \textit{Indian Literature} (New Delhi), \textit{The Indian PEN} (Bombay), \textit{Aniketana} (Bangalore), \textit{The Malayalam Literary Survey} (Trichur) and \textit{Journal of South Asian Literature} (Michigan, USA).

A second reason for the growth of Indo-English literature is the much-discussed films based on novels and stories by Indian writers. The practice began with Satyajit Ray's film version of \textit{Pather Panchal} which raised its author Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyaya out of minor status. The film also gained admittance for the book into UNESCO translation programme. Since then several works in regional languages achieved new forms in English version after being filmed. Mrinal Sen's \textit{Khandahar} is reconstructed into a film script and translated by Samik Bandopadhyay as \textit{The Ruins} (1984). The screenplay of Shyam Benegal's \textit{Manthana} is written by Vijay Tendulkar. It is reconstructed and translated by Samik Bandopadhya (1984).

Soon after 1947 the independent government of India set up a central academy of letters - i.e. the Sahitya Akademi at Delhi. Its main function was to foster and co-ordinate literary activities in all the Indian languages. Its annual awards publicise the outstanding books of each Indian language. Its publications make a particular work in one language available through translation in several other languages. The Sahitya Akademi publishes its reference-volumes in English language. Its literary periodical \textit{Indian Literature} is also in English. It acknowledges the fact that English continues to be the medium of widest literary exchange among Indians. To strengthen such an exchange, an adequate amount of Indian literature in translation into a single language is necessary and it seems logical that this language be English. One of the principle canons of translation is that the language of translation should be the translator's first language. The Indo-English practice reverses this basic condition.

A notable contribution to Indo-English drama has been made by Rajinder Paul. He is a founder-editor of \textit{Enact}, a monthly published from Delhi. He used to include a
play in translation in almost every issue. Among these were full-length plays such as Mohan Rakesh’s *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*. It was translated by Sarah K. Ensley (*Aug/Sept 1969*), Vijay Tendulkar’s *Shantata! Kort Chalu Ahey* translated by Priya Adarkar (*Jan/Feb 1971*), Girish Karnad’s *Hayavadana* translated by the playwright himself (*June 1971*) and Badal Sircar’s *Sesh nei* translated by Kironmoy Raha (*Nov 1971*). All these are now known all over India. Until the recent practice of publishing Indo-English plays in book-form the *Enact* was the only place where one could read plays in English translation from different Indian languages. Veena Noble Dass’s *Modern Indian Drama in English Translation* (1988) is another important work in this area. Seagull Publishers, Calcutta, has many translations of drama. G. P. Deshpande has edited an anthology *Modern Indian Drama: An Anthology* which consists of the translated plays of prominent playwrights like Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh, Shriranga, Chandrashekhar Kambar, Satish Alekar, Utpal Dutt, Mahasweta Devi, K. N. Pannikar, Indira Parthasarathi and others. Some women playwrights like Shanta Gokhale and Mrinal Pande have translated their own Marathi and Hindi plays into English. *Rudali* a short fiction in Bengali by Mahasweta Devi, was adapted and produced as a play in Hindi by the actor-director-playwright Usha Ganguli by her own theatre group “Rangakarmee” in Calcutta in 1992.

In 1886 a play *Go-sankat* in Hindi by Sahityacharya Pandit Ambika Dutt Vyas was translated into English by Shiva Nandan Suhai. A Bengali play *The Babu* a farce on Bengali society was translated by Nibaran Chandra Chatterji in 1911. A Tamil drama *Gnanavalli* by Venkateswar Ettapan translated into English as *Creeper of Wisdom* by S. A. T. in 1915. *Jaya and Jayant* is a Gujarati play by Nanalal Dalpatram Kavi. It is brought into English by U. K. Oza in 1929. *Saubhadra* - a Marathi play by B. P. Kirloskar (1843-1885) is translated into English by S. B. Talekar in 1944. A Telugu playwright A. S. Raman translated his own plays into English. They are *The Daughter* (1943), *The Gardner* (1943), *Drona* (1943) and *Charity Hospital* (1944). S. Gopala Murthy and K. Ramesh Babu have edited and translated a Telugu play by Gurujada Venkata Apparao (1861-1915) into English as *Bridal Bargain* in 1979. Bhisham Sahani’s Hindi play *Madhavi* is translated into English by Alok Bhalla. *Raja Harischandra* is a Hindi play by Bharatendu Harischandra (1850-1885). In 1988 it is translated into English by Madan Gopal. Madhu Rye a Gujarati playwright writes equally well in English. His Gujarati plays *Koi Pun Ek Phool Nu Naam Bolo Tho* and *Kumarni Agashi* are translated into English as *Tell Me the Name of a Flower* and *The Terrace* by Vijay Padki in 2000. The
celebrated Tamil play *Thaneer Thaneer* (1979) which was made into an award winning film is written by Komal Swaminathan. S. Shanker has translated it into English as *Water* (2001). C. P. Ravichandra *et al.* have brought an anthology *Mahacharitra, The Great Spring and Other Plays* originally written by H. S. Shiva Prakash.

Kusum Kumar’s (b. 1939) Hindi play *Dilli Uncha Sunati Hai* has been translated as *Madhosingh is Dead* by Sarla Jagmohan in 1984. Mrinal Pande has translated her own Hindi play *Jo Ram Rachi Rakha urf Kissa Manna Seth Ki* into English as *That Which Ram Hath Ordained or The Tale of Manna Seth* in 1992. Ismat Chughtai translated Madhu Rye’s *Kumarni Agashi* into Hindi/Urdu. A well-known Marathi playwright Shanta Gokhale has not only written plays in Marathi but translated plays by other playwrights into English. She is a leading theatre scholar, critic and translator. Her translated plays are *The Wada Trilogy* (Mahesh Elkunchwar), *Begum Barve* (Satish Alekar) and along with Arundhati Deosthale she translated *Political Plays* (G. P. Deshpande). Malini Bhattacharya’s three plays are translated into English by Sharmista Dutta Gupta and one play by Paramita Banerjee. They are published in an anthology titled *Giving Away the Girl and Other Plays* in 2003. Malini herself wrote *Jagaran*, a free translation of *Waking Up*, an English version of a monodrama by Franca Rame and Dario Fo. Kavita Nagpal has translated Ratan Thiyam’s play into English as *Chakravyuha*. Sangeeta and Rajan Ghosal have brought out Manoj Mitra’s plays into English *Banchharam’s Orchard* and *An Encounter with Royalty*. Samik Bandopadhyay has translated Mahasweta Devi’s five plays - *Mother of 1084, Aajir, Urvashi and Johnny, Bayen, and Water*.

In drama the quality of speech of each character invariably helps establish the identity of the characters. When a translator renders the speeches of characters into English, he will have to maintain the distinction between character and character. He has to maintain the consistency of each character’s speech. It poses problems to the translator because the dramatic device of revealing the character through the quality of speech is employed by the dramatist. It becomes more visible when the dramatist uses some contrast between the educated speech and colloquial speech in the original. The most difficult problem at this juncture is that in the English translation the contrast can never be reproduced to the same effect. The character’s modulations in tone indicate shifts in emphasis and these are embodied in the original language. A similar range of variations may not be available in English. Under such circumstances the translator has to compensate for this by some other linguistic means. Nabaneeta Dev Sen expresses the same view regarding translation of her Bengali work *Hemantalok* into Hindi and English.
when she says, "The problem is the language. I use different styles of speech for people from different cultural backgrounds, and I am told it gets steamrolled into one flat language in the translation" (Menon 66).

Sujit Mukherjee is of the opinion that a translator is a "parasite upon literature" and that he like a critic, is an "unsuccessful creative writer in hiding" (Mukherjee 30). But the literary criticism has attained an honoured function in literature. Similarly the Indo-English literature should be recognised and admired for its role in the advancement of India’s literary culture. A good translator responds to literature in the same way as does the critic. Initially most of the Indian English drama remained untranslated except for Michael Madhusudan’s three plays, two rendered into English by the author himself. He also translated Dinabandhu Mitra’s *Nil Darpan*. Thereafter the English versions of Rabindranath Tagore’s plays began to be published. An interesting development started in 1970s with the translation of modern Indian plays from one language into another as well as into English language for the enactment on stage. This trend was set up by the Bengali play *Evam Indrajit* by Badal Sircar. It was translated and preformed successfully in Hindi, Marathi and English. The plays from Indian languages were translated into several other Indian languages before translated into English. Thereby it became accessible to the drama reading enthusiasts in India. It is a remarkable achievement of an Indian translator that these plays stood up to stage performance in their English versions also. It has broken the language barrier of long standing.

Performability and speakability are the chief characteristics of the drama. These two notions are often regarded as fundamental to and characteristic of drama. Drama is an action and a spoken line. Therefore the drama translation must seem genuine and characterise the speaker. Time, place and social class must be characterised in drama translation. It should not lead to ambiguity. The drama translator should be able to give the right emphasis so that it leads the attention of the audience with the desired direction. Drama translator should opt for easy and natural dialogue which should not be stilted leading the actor to struggle with dialogue delivery. Drama translations should be such so as to enable the stage managers to know how a line is to be spoken. A drama translator must especially be careful with the entrance and the exit line, and must not forget that the words of the drama text when spoken at normal speed are captured only once by the audience. To sound natural a direct statement followed by a question can be used but the actor should pronounce it using appropriate intonation. Any word-for-word translation likely to provoke the laughter in the audience must obviously be avoided.
The drama translator must have a sense of the rhythm of speech-patterns, particularly colloquial ones. She/he should also recreate the tension of dramatic situations without falsifying the intention of the playwright. The dramatic translator should not lose the dramatic credibility within the new context. The translation must not cause difficulties in delivering the dialogues. It should sound easy and natural to the ears of the audience.

A drama should always be actable and speakable. It should also take into consideration the non-verbal and cultural aspects and the staging problems of the drama. The translator should possess the aptitudes in order to transfer the gestic or action and oral or acoustic aspects of the original to the translated text. The translator should appropriately analyse and interpret the playwright's indigenous thought patterns and linguistic features. Then only she/he can transfer them adequately. Sometimes it becomes difficult for a drama translator to translate certain sound effects which are intentionally introduced in the speech of some characters by the playwright who might use them for exotic effects or to preserve the local colour or for some other reasons. However, the issue of transferring sounds from one language to another could not ideally be handled.

While some texts follow their original text carefully and translate them in entirety, others involve degrees of divergence from them through omissions and additions. R. A. Merino in her Drama Translation Strategies (2000) has come up with a useful classification of the texts studied into “page” and “stage” translations and has been able to determine the main translation strategies used by the translator. She also discovered that these strategies co-relate directly with her dual classification of the texts studied into “page” and “stage” translations (quoted in Che 60). For the stage translations the strategies range from deletion, reduction, merging, omission, adaptation, to other manipulations to conform to specific acting fashions. It is worth noting however that these strategies identified by Merino are also used in page translations. In page translations the main strategy she identified is a very close, though not literal, translation of original, such that the target text when compared with its original every utterance of the original has its counterpart in the translation and this parallelism is found within each utterance. Page translations get the reader close to source author and play. Just as the case of the stage translations it is equally worth noting that the strategies for page translations identified and highlighted by Merino are also used in stage translations. Espara points out that performability is synonymous with and inter-changeable with theatricality, playability, actability and theatre specificity (Espara 49-50).
Drama translation provides women with a less risky, yet still effective way of transmitting their views into print and, by extension, into the arena of public debate through stage. It could also be a powerful tool for women to publicise their views to the wider range of reader/audience. The scholars have recognised the curious connection between the translation studies and the feminist theory as both have been assigned the secondary status. Women writers are evolving new strategies to challenge the dominant patriarchal ideology in order to represent the other sides of their personality. Translation is one such strategy that represents women’s experience. It opens up communication with other language community and helps to break the silence and begins to speak to others. As Brinda Bose observes the feminist translations attempt to map the “conversion of submission into resentment, resentment into resistance and resistance into representation” (Bose xix).

The translation of plays by women constitutes a meaningful contribution to the discussion of how women would participate in the empowerment of women. It also demonstrates how translation has been utilised as a vehicle for popularising the views of the women playwrights, their shared fundamental concerns about women’s social condition, including the inadequacies of female education and women’s loss of status in marriage. Their translated plays have become active participants in the creation of meaning. Their proper perspective of the subject becomes known to all other language readers. Their translations attempt all strategies to make language speak for them. They extend the process of interrogation of pattern and norm that have been traditionally patriarchal. Every translation of women’s plays recreates the images of women. It reinforces the history of resistance. It also recovers the drama of silenced voices. These translations make expressions of resistance available in readers outside one language. It helps women to reconstruct female tradition of their own. It acts as a message transmitter of women’s exploitation in the traditional Indian society. It also helps to reinforce the struggle against the mechanisms of patriarchy and make way for social awareness and change. The translations like the original writing join hands with the efforts to prioritise and promote gender equality. They become active participants in the creation of meaning. The translators’ interventions take many forms which Luise Von Flotow elaborates as “supplementing, prefacing, footnoting and hijacking” (quoted in Rahaman 37). Supplementing is a strategy to make the women visible. The interpretative prefaces and footnotes by the translators provide proper perspective of the subject. Hijacking is a term
which is being used for feminist translations. The feminist translators attempt all strategies to make language speak for them.

The translations of women's writing invest the text with a conscious feminist project, convey effectively the moments of shared communion characteristic of female experience, clearly project a feminist discourse right at the outset and contribute remarkably to the creation of a female tradition, and successfully represent the gestures of defiance and subversion implicit in it. They become the agent of voicing subaltern consciousness. They act as powerful agents in the task of deconstructing the predominantly male cultural paradigms and reconstructing a female perspective and experience enabling the marginalised voices to find utterance in other languages and take them to a wider public. By doing so, the translators not only underline the articulation of the implicit resistance but become participants in the creation of meanings.
References


