RECENT INDIAN DRAMA: A SURVEY

If poetry is a by-product of imagination, drama is a by-product of visibility and audibility on a theatrical stage. The very origin of drama in ancient India is steeped in myth, which is defined as a story that narrates in an imaginative and symbolic manner the total and basic structure upon which a culture rests. It is mentioned in the first chapter of the Natyasastra that the Creator of the Universe, Brahma, wished to perform a drama in heaven, but sensing some foreseeable trouble from the demons, he entrusted the task to Bharata, who along with his hundred sons, enacted it to the delight and blessings of the Gods. The title of the play was The Defeat of Demons. The demons could not relish it and indulged in destructive activities.

The dramatic tradition of the ancient Hindus may be said to have been fully formed even before Greek dramas came to their knowledge. It is clear that the Hindus of over 2000 years ago had their own theory of drama and that their dramatic practice avoided both the sever austerity of Greek tragedy and the opulent extravagance of the ancient Chinese drama. Bharata’s Natyashastra in Sanskrit is extensive display of the ancient stagecraft. All aspects of the drama-stage-setting, music, plot-construction, characterization, dialogue and acting-have borne the close critical scrutiny of the author, and a set of rules to guide the conduct of the stage has been elaborately worked out. The text also embodies factors involved in plot, characters and emotions bringing out the charismatic significance of ‘rasa.’

Sanskrit drama, in its long history, has throughout conformed to the classical norms prescribed by Bharata. While being committed to the highest principles of Indian aesthetic, Sanskrit drama reflects the essential and eternal India much to the profit and delight of the audience, India and abroad The best Sanskrit drama had
been intimately associated with the stir and manifoldness of the life of a cultured
class of people. The works of Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidasa, Harsha, Bhavabhuti, and
Vishakhadatta are the products of vigorous creative energy as well as sustained
technical excellence. *(Indian Literature, 36)*

The origin of Sanskrit Drama dates back to 1000 B.C. all literature in Sanskrit is classified into Drishya (that can be seen or exhibited) and the Sravya (that can be heard or recited). Drama in Sanskrit Literature is covered under the broad umbrella of ‘rupaka’ which means the depiction of life in its various aspects respected in forms by actors who assumes various roles. A ‘rupaka’ has ten classifications of which ‘Nataka’ (drama), the most important one has come to mean all dramatic presentations. The Sanskrit drama grows around three primary constituents namely vastu (plot), Neta (hero) and Rasa (sentiment) The plot could be either principal (adhikarika) or accessory (prasangika). This makes ‘natya’ a mixture of rasa, bhavas, vrittis, pravrittis, siddhi, svaros, abhinayas, dharmis, instruments, sing and theatre –house.

Bhasa is the oldest known dramatist who richly contributed sometime between 500BC and 50 BC, a period certainly earlier than that of the celebrated grammarian, Panini. Of the thirty-five plays he is said to have written not only seven-act and ten-act plays but also one-act plays and one-scene plays. Many of these abound in soliloquies, thus blazing a trail for later playwrights. His masterpieces-*Urubhanga, Dutavakya* and *Karna-* are known for their tragic intensity and dramatic style playwrights like Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti distinctly bear the imprint of Bhasa’s dramatic style.

The supreme achievement of Indian drama is undoubtedly in Kalidasa who is often called the Shakespeare of India. Though he does not have the range and
variety of Shakespeare, he has given the world a profounder spiritual vision of life. His magnum opus, *Abhijnana Shakuntala*, is said to be the richest and most completely satisfying romantic drama. Bhavabhuti turned out dramatic poems rather than stage plays. His *Mahaviracharita, Malatimadhava* and *Uttararamacharita*, reveal the poet’s maturity of mind, a sense of workmanship, an acute understanding of human mind, and some of the deep values of life. *(Bhavabhuti, 34)*

The Sanskrit drama flourished in its glory under the patron-age of the court and the aristocracy till the 12th century when the Mohammedan intrusion shifted the Sanskrit stage. The glory of Sanskrit drama became a thing of the past in the period of decline when it was divorced gradually from the stage. Instead of poets, ‘pandits’ took to playwriting and produced works on the stock epic themes in a conventional way. The decadent drama distanced itself from life in its sophisticated setting, stereotyped characters and artificial diction. Vidyanatha’s play, *Prataparu-drakalyana*, provides a patent example of the virtual death of the ancient Indian drama. It was only after the British set up their regime in India that the crippled Indian drama received new strength and witnessed a revival.

Thus, the beginning of Indian drama has been fraught with dangers and challenges. The dramatic writings of Bhasa, Kalidas and Bhavabhuti and a few others put it on a high pedestal, reminding us of the flowering of drama in ancient Greece, in the hands of Aeschylus, Euripedes and Sophocles. But the Greek drama followed the tradition of Tragedy and the Indian drama the tradition of Comedy (for instance, Kalidas’s *Abhijnanasakuntalam*).

Indian English drama has been indigenous in content but alien in expression. It is a literary variety of transplantation in expression. That’s why Indian drama
mostly flourished in regional languages like Marathi, Bengali, Tamil and Kannad. Usually, the participation of the audience is made possible through the mother tongue, not through a foreign tongue. Evidently, drama is a “composite art involving the playwright, the actor and the audience in a commonly shared, and even created, artistic experience”(*Perspectives on Indian Drama in English*, ix), and hence calls for a total commitment of these various persons to create a desired lasting impact. Indian English drama is, however, deprived of this privilege.

Indian English drama, by its very nature, could not plant itself in the Indian ethos. (*Studies in Contemporary Indian English Drama*, 1). Indian has been a rich storehouse of myths and legends, of folktales and oral customs, of historical events and cultural heritage, but most of the Indian English dramatists, barring possibly Girish Karnad and Asif Currimbhoy, have failed to make use of them. Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, who were deeply lured by in Indian culture, mythology and history, tried their hands at them but could not resolve the dilemma or conflict between the inner and outer worlds. But Karnad in his *Yayati, Tughlaq, Hayavadana* and *Nagamandala* and Currimbhoy in his *Goa, Inquilab* and *The Hungry Ones* have achieved this difficult task.

A third reason for the paucity of Indian English drama is its unsuitability in performing on the stage. Because of this deficiency, it has suffered immensely in producing the impressive theatrical effects. This fact has impelled K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar to remark: “Modern Indian dramatic writing in English is neither rich in quantity, nor, on the whole, of high quality(*Indian writing in English*, 226). M.K. Naik holds same opinion when he states that “A play, in order to communicate fully and become living dramatic experience… needs a real theatre and a live audience… It is precisely the lack of these essentials that has hamstrung Indian drama in English all along.” One must mention here that English drama flourished
so luxuriantly during the Elizabeth age become a number of talented writers, including William Shakespeare (1564-1616), were busy in producing their delightful play for a real theatre and a live audience.

But the above –stated condition does not imply that Indian English drama has remained dormant and has become incurably crippled. Right from the early nineteenth century, with the publication of Krishna Mohan Banerji’s *The Persecuted of Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta* 1831; (the first Indian play in English), interesting plays have been written by a number of gifted writers, like R.N. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, T.P. Kailasam, A.S.P. Ayyar, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Bharati Sarabhai in the pre-independence era and Asif Currimbhoy, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Lakhan Deb, Gurcharan Das, Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh, Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan in the post-independence era. The real journey of Indian English Drama begins with Michael Madhusudhan Dutt’s *Is this called civilization* which appeared on the literary horizon in 1871.

In the nineteenth century, Michael MadhusudenDutt wrote such plays as *Ratnavali* (1858), and *Sarmista* (1859), and first in Bengali and then translated them into English. Ram KinooDutt also produced his *Manipura Tragedy* in 1839.

The Pre-independence period was made a fertile ground for Indian English Drama with outstanding contributions by Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), T.P. Kailasam (1885-1946), and ASP Ayyar (1899-1963). Those who are interested in them should read their plays for pleasure and profit. Tagore has written more than a dozen plays, and his *Muktadhara* (The Waterfall), *The Post Office* and *The King of the Dark Chamber* have earned great popularity.
Similarly, some of the plays of Sri Aurobindo like *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadatt*, *Rodogune*, *The Viziers of Bassora* and *Eric the King of Norway* have become quite famous. T.P. Kailasam is well-known for his play like *The Burden* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *The Curse of Karma* (1946) and *Keechaka* (1949). S.K. Bhatta informs us that Kailasam has written more English plays, unfinished and unpublished (*Perspectives on Indian Drama in English*, 86). And A.S.P. Ayyar has also made substantial contributions to drama with his *In the Clutch of the Devil* (1926), *Sita’s Choice and Other Plays* (1935), *The Slave of Ideas and Other Plays* (1941), and *The Trial of Science and Murder of Humanity* (1942), and these plays deal with contemporary problems and situations, holding a mirror to prevailing life.

Two names must be mentioned here as recognized writers of Indian English drama before India’s independence; those of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Bharti Sarabhai. While Chattopadhyaya’s was a prolific writer, Sarabhai has produced just two plays-*The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952). With considerable measure of success most of Chattopadhyaya’s plays expose the evils in Indian society, but they lack “suspense and concentration.” And Sarabhai’s plays present different facets of Indian womanhood in a forceful manner along with unorthodox viewpoints projecting Gandhian social order in former and private world in the latter. English drama then became a typical art form in epitomizing the socio-political and economic status of independent India. The plays of Aurobindo contain enough evidence to show that they are first and foremost “stage plays”. Inspite of their being so remarkably stage worthy, the plays of Sri Aurobindo have never been staged by dramatic companies. This fact exposes them to the charge of being Closet dramas’ – “a drama designed for reading in the study (closet) or to small groups rather than performance on the public stage (*Princeton Encyclopedia*
of Poetry and Poetics, 142). The plays of Sri Aurobindo also satisfy the criteria of true drama which he himself established. As he states in The Future Poetry –“ … drama must have an interpretative vision: the vision must contain an explicit or implicit idea of life: the vision and the idea seen to arise out of the inner life of characters, and through an evolution of speech leading to an evolution of action; the true movement and result in all great drama is really psychological. Action and events in drama have to be cast into a close dramatic form; and the essential purpose of drama is the representation of the poet’s vision of some part of the world-act in the life of human soul: (The Future Poetry, 93)

Tagore’s contribution as a dramatist has varied evaluations. M.K. Naik Says:

Tagore is not a great dramatist, not even a second best. He himself used to say that future generations would remember him by his songs, his short stories and his paintings, the pride of his later years. He was right; if he is remembered today, it is for his poetry and not for his plays.

(Perspectives on Indian Drama in English, 72)

Commenting on the monotony of Tagore’s plays, J.C. Ghosh says:

A number of things repeat themselves monotonously in Tagore’s serious plays: Popular uprising (which are as serious as tempests in teacups); good kings who abdicate (in the manner of Kings in nursery Tales); and Stock characters (e.g., Thakurdada, Dada, Visu) through whom the author speaks and sings more than thorough the other characters. The emotional or spiritual crisis is almost always brought about by a young girl.

(Bengali Literature, 175)
Thompson has well summed up the rank of Tagore as – “They (His plays) fail to grip (Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist, 116) Similar view is remarked by M.M. Bhattacharya in Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Thinker who finds no reason to consider his plays great – “The plays were not the issue of his original creative impulse – most of them are dramatized versions of Tagore’s own stories or novels. It is only likely that they should have lost their freshness as the result of the recasting or refurbishing (119) Tyagraja Paramasiva Kailasam holds a secure place for projecting ancient Indian culture in modern contours of interpretation. He is memorable for his attempt to blend Indian and western traditions and “… captured the public imagination by the fresh breath of life and vitality. (Appendix to The Purpose,) Further as Indian-show, he ‘brought down drama from overdramatic heights”. (Foreword to Kailasama Avara Smaraone, vii)

The Post-independence scenario (after 1947) has been a bit more heartening. Asif Currimbhoy, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Lakhan Deb, Gurcharan Das and Vijay Tendulkar have shown greater control of the tool and skilled application of language and dialogue. Leaving aside G.V. Desani whose play Hali (1950) displays originality of approach, vividness of imagery and powerful portrayal of characters like Hali and Rooh (an evasive beauty), one directly comes to Asif Currimbhoy who has produced over two dozen plays to date on a variety of themes-social, political, religious, psychological, national and international. Like Hali, Currimbhoy’s plays have been staged in both India and abroad. They are of topical interest, and some of them like Goa (1964), Inquilab (1970), The Refugee (1971), Sonkar Bangla (1972), The Miracle Seed (1973) have become quite popular. Currimbhoy’s appeal lies in his use of natural and simple language, in keeping with the occasion and the character in a particular play. Faubion Bowers
judiciously suggests that “Currimbhoy is India’s authentic voice in the theatre” (*Asif Currimbhoy’s Plays*, xii)

History plays an important role in Currimbhoy’s dramas with Indian setting, for example in *The Captives* (1963), *Goa* (1964), *An Experiment with Truth* (1969), *Inquilab* (1970), *The Refugee* (1971), *Sonar Bangla* (1972) and *The Dissident MLA* (1974). So also it enacts a great part in Girish Karnad’s *Tughlaq* (1964) and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (2004). A highly gifted writer that Karnad is, he bases his *Tughlaq* on the history of Sultan Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq of the fourteenth century. This ruler of Delhi was, in reality, an idealist visionary and a demagogue, a farsighted man and an impartial ruler. Speaking of him, Karnad remarks that *Tughlaq* was “certainly the most brilliant individual ever to ascend the throne of Delhi and also one of the biggest failures.” (*Three Plays*, 27). The play is also an allegory of Nehru and the Nehruvian era. As regards *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, it represents the historical happenings during the reign of Tipu, the Tiger of Mysore, and the British colonial reflections on it. Tipu challenges the imperialist British on the battle-field, but is outmaneuvered and killed. However, as O.P. Budholia puts it, Karmad “succeeds in vindicating the character of Tipu as a soldier who fought and died for the sake of India as a nation….” (*Girish Karnad: History and Folklore*, 36)

Girish Karnad, a cultural administrator and renaissance figure contributed immensely to decolonize Indian English Drama. Thematic contents, use of Indian myths, legends, history, folk tales and contemporary issues, characters rooted in cultural soil of India, Indianised English and use of folk theatre convention definitely proved instrumental to advance the process of decolonizing the stage. Though Indian Classical and Modern theatre conventions are also practiced by Karnad, the emphasis is on revitalizing native themes and conventions.
In Karnad’s plays, the choice of indigenous subjects—myths, legends, history and folklore; characters rooted in Indian cultural soil, Yakshangana and Natak Company conventions fused with Indian Classical theatre techniques, Indianised English to suit the context and milieu definitely proved detrimental to colonial stereo-typed models, theories of drama and cultural hegemony. He not only reacted against colonialism but also constructed an ideal for writing; it is a brilliant instance to further the cause of intellectual and cultural independence and accomplish the process of “decanonization and decolonization” (Interventions.13). Karnad sets out to write plays with a definite purpose- to revitalize Indian history and culture and free them from Eurocentric domination and de-colonize Indian English Drama. Postcolonial dialectics, subalternization of Indian English Drama and nativism are the most important characteristics of Karnad’s plays.

Theatre personalities like Eugenio Barba, Jerzy Grotowski, Richard Schechner, and Peter Brooke and their emphasis on traditional theatre forms alarms Indian playwrights to continue their new enterprise. Suresh Awasthi observes: “theatre of roots has finally made its presence felt. It has compelling power, it thrills audience, and it is receiving institutional recognition. It is deeply rooted in regional theatre culture, but cuts across linguistic barriers, and has an all-India character in design” (48). Cultural renaissance after independence led Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Habib Tanvir, and Mudrarakshasa and directors like B.V. Karanth, RatanThiyam, and K.N. Panikkar to reject Western influences and created the space for indigenous culture and traditions of performing art.

Karnad’s plays from Yayati to Wedding Album are the testimony of innovative thematic as well as theatre techniques. His experiments with folk and Classical techniques are highly fruitful to create an effective and successful stage
production: The use of Sutradhara, Announcer of Song, the supernatural elements, play within the play, masks, mime, songs, half-curtain, dolls etc blend with modern devices such as sound, light, flash forward, flashback, rigging, conscience corridor, sound-scaping, role-on-the-wall, physical theatre, split focus, cross-cutting, tableaux, and teichoscopy (viewing from the wall).

Like Currimbhoy and Karnad, Lakhan Deb has also produced two memorable historical plays titled *Tiger’s Claw* (1967) and *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976). The play *Tiger’s Claw* is a historical play in three acts and powerfully portrays Shivaji’s killings of Afzal Khan. K.R.S. Iyengar remarks that the theme of the play has “elements of pure drama….” (*Indian Writing inEnglish*, 246), And the play *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* deals with the gruesome assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathu Ram Godse on 30th January 1948 when the former was coming out of his prayers in Delhi. In texture and technique, it is comparable to T.S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). O.P. Bhatnagar is of the view that the play provides “a better model of conduct in human values than *Murder in the Cathedral.*” (*Meerut Journal of Comparative Language and Literature*, 73)

Another dramatist, Gurcharan das, dwells on a historical event in his *Larins Sahib* (1970). This play highlights the happening in the Punjab of 1946-47 when Ranjit Singh, called Shere-Punjab, died and Lord Hardinge, the then Governor-General of India, appointed Henry Lawrence as the Resident in the court of Dalip Singh, the twelve-year-old son of Ranjit Singh. Lawrence nicknamed as Larins Sahib was initially soft to the subjects and to the Queen (who in good faith offered him the precious Koh-i-noor for safe-keeping), but became dictatorial and power-drunk later on. He even dared to kiss the Queen in a passionate mood, and refused to return her the crowned Koh-i-noor. Commenting on this play, C.V. Venugopal
writes: “Larins Sahib….can boast of enough elements that ensure great success on
the stage.” *(Perspective on Indian Drama in English, 179)*

Some other dramatists of historical and political import are: Santha Rama Rau (*A Passage to India*, a dramatized version of E.M. Forster’s novel published in 1960), Dalip Hero (*To Anchor a Cloud, 1972*), K.A. Abbas (*Barrister at Law, 1977*), and Manohar Malgonkar (*Lines of Mars, 1978*). There are a few notable dramatists who focused on the lives of the great father of nation Mahatma Gandhi, such as K.A. Abbas, Lakhan Deb, K.A. Rangappa (*Gandhi’s Sadhna, 1963*). M.V. Rama Sarma portrays the events leading to the assassination of Gandhi in his *The Mahatma*.

India’s struggle for freedom finds expansive space of significance in the plays of dramatists like V.K. Gohak’s *The Goddess Speaks* (1948), D.M. Borgaonkar’s *The Great Coward* and the *Refugee* (contained in *One-Act Plays 1957*), R. Javanthinathan’s *Guardianship of India* are all on political and social muddled on, loot and arson, bloodshed and butchery prevalent in the days of freedom struggle. And J.M. Billimoria’s *My Sons* (1963), Hussenali Chagla’s *The Mussulan* (1966), and Hushmat Sozrekashme’s *Vikramjeet* (1970) underline the importance of the Hindu-Muslim unity in the aftermath of partition.

M.V. Rama Sarma is a forceful voice to project hybridization of themes in Indian English drama. He combines eastern and western trends in his plays. While his *Shakuntla and Urvasi* are written in the Sanskrit tradition, his *Youth and Crabbed Age, Like to Like* and *The Busy World* are cast in the Western tradition. His play, included in *Collected Plays* (1982), recall Sir Aurobindo to our minds. The impact of G.B. Shaw is clearly felt upon him in his Western plays. He has
written eleven plays in total and some of them are “loose in structure and weak in characterization.” *(Studies in contemporary Indian English Drama, 1)*

Partap Sharma has produced two plays on the theme of sex and exploitation of woman. His first play, *The Professor Has a War Cry* (1970), highlights the desertion of a wife by a Professor and her successive rape by a Muslim and an Englishman. His second play, *A Touch of Brightness* (1973), portrays the red-light area in Bombay where the flesh trade is carried on. Moreover sex remains the prime theme of his plays, whereby his plays are known for its thematic boldness.

Tradition is defined as “the inherited past” or something that is “passed down from generation to generation through custom and practice.” In the Indian context, it is the Sanskrit tradition that has ever enlivened and enriched our arts and literature. T.S. Eliot thinks that a good and great tradition is never dead and that it lives in the present. As contrasted to tradition, modernity or modernism in literature marks “a breaking away from established rules, traditions and conventions, fresh ways of looking at man’s position and function in the universe, and many (in some cases remarkable experiments in form and style.” *(The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, 515)*

Indian tradition and culture have been carried forward in Indian English drama by Tagore, Aurobindo, Gokak and a few others like DD. Roy (*Sri Chaitanya*, 1950), V.V.S. Aiyangar (*Ramarajya*, 1952), *MathuramBoothalingam* (*Alone in Ayodhya*), Smt. K.B. Mathur (*Mother and Child*, 1960), and Sadar Joshi (*AcharyaDrona*, 1963). These playwrights have gone to the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* for their themes. As briefly mentioned earlier, the Indian tradition begins with the Sanskrit plays. The distinguished Sanskrit scholar, A.B. Keith rightly points out: “Indian tradition, preserved in the *Natyasastra*, the oldest of the
texts of the theory of drama, claims of the drama divine origin, and a choose connection with the sacred Vedas themselves.” (*The Sanskrit Drama, 12*) The noted historian, A.L. Basham, also expresses similar views: “The origin of the Indian theatre is still obscure. It is certain, however, that even in the Vedic period dramatic performances of some kind were given…” (*The Wonder that was India, 434*) Here it must be mentioned that several plays (running into ten Acts) and playlets (limited to only one Act) have survived in Sanskrit. The chief Sanskrit dramatists were: Ashvaghosha, Bhasha, Kalidas, Bhavabhuti and Sudrak. The plays of these celebrated writers have become an invaluable treasure of our literary heritage.

Modernity is reflected in the works of such writers as Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Mohan Rakesh and Vijay Tendulkar. Surprisingly, these writers are largely writing in their own languages; for example, Girish Karnad in Kannad, Badal Sircar in Bengali, Mohan Rakesh in Hindi and Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi. These playwrights are innovative and experimentalist to a great extent in their content and technique. Karnad is well-known as an explorer of myths and folklore in his plays like *Yayati* (1961; his first play), *Naga-Mandala* (1988), *The Fire and The Rain* (1995), and *Bali: The Sacrifice* (2004). Badal Sircar’s *Evam Indrajit* (1974), translated into English by GirishKarnad, is a remarkable work on human predicament. As we know, Badal is the founder of the Third Theatre, which steers itself clear of the theatre of an urban intelligentsia in Calcutta and the folk-theatre of the village. Rakesh Mohan’s writings in Hindi dwell on the impact of modernization on different human relationships. He is not a prolific writer, but his contributions are substantial. His full-length plays-*One Day in Ashadh* (1958), *The Great Swans of the Waves* (1962), and *Half-Way House* (1969)- and his short plays opened up new vistas for Hindi drama. His *One Day in Ashadh*, a historical
play, intensely explores man-woman relationship through the character of Kalidas and his beloved Mallika. As for Vijay Tendulkar, he is a social realist to the core. His play, *Shantata! Court ChaluAhe* (1970), in Marathi was later translated into English under the title *Silence! The Court Is In Session* (1978) and became immediately successful. Commenting on this play, Ramesh P. Panigrahi writes that it is “the first post-colonialist play in its implications. It presents a metaphorical trial between the modernists and post-modernists or between the humanists and the anti-humanists…” (*Studies in Comparative Indian English Drama, 124*)

Badal Sircar too is a prestigious name in the realm of contemporary theatre. He represents New Theatrical Movement in India. He has created an appropriate ‘People’s theatre’ a theatre supported and created by people. His dramatic career began with humorous play like solution X. His earlier plays are *Evan Indrajit* (1962) *That Other History* (1964) and *There is no End* (1971). All these plays are based on political, social, psychological and existential problems. *Evan Indrajit*, is a tale of a playwright who struggle in vain to write a play. In the play *There’s No Need*, Sircar develops the thesis that “We are all accused” and share the burden of guilt. Afterwards, he wrote *Pary Konodin, Jadi Aur Ek Baar, Palap and Pagla Ghoda*. His later plays *Procession, Bhoma and Stale News* are based on the concept of Third Theatre. The play *Procession* is about the search for a ‘real home’ in new society based on equality. It suggests a ‘real way’ to new way in which man does not have to live exploiting man but should work according to his own needs. *Bhoma* is a dramatization of the life of oppressed peasants in sexual India. The analysis of these three plays suggest remarkable changes in Sircar’s concept of a ‘real home’ a new society based on equality and free from the horrors of exploitation. Tendulkar in 1967, established his theatre group called ‘Satabdi.’
Sircar’s first contact with Grotowski’s ‘Poor Theatre’ influenced him greatly in formulating his Third Theatre.

Besides, women dramatists also tried to enrich the soil of Indian drama by projecting the inner world of feminine psyche in the theatre. Women’s theatre coalesces with Street Theatre movement, using the same technique in performance and production. It can be attributed as a ‘Theatre Of Protest’ because women writers expressed their resentment against the politics of exploitation on the basis of gender discrimination. They also revived the traditional myths of Sita and Savitri and tried to reinterpret the epics from women’s point of view. The dramatic work of Usha Ganguli and Mahasweta Devi can be placed in their category. Mahasweta Devi emerged as a dramatist having a quest to explore something challenging and new. His five plays are *Mother of 1084*, *Aajer Urvashi O’ Johnny*, *Byen and Water*. The play *Mother of 1084*, is a moving account of the anguish of an apolitical mother who had witnessed the horrors of Naxalite Movement. In *Aajer*, Mahasweta Devi deals with the issue of the fast deterioration of values and their effects on society, particularly on illiterate people. *Urvashi O’ Johnny* is a play written for emergency through the love affair of Johnny with Urvashi, a talking doll. The play *Bayen* presents a moving account of harsh reality of a woman’s life in rural India. The play *Water*, is the story of a professional water-diviner, Maghai Done who is an untouchable boy. Her plays represent a profound concern for human predicament and sincere hope for the better future of mankind.

was a “canny and facile writer…. And Manjula created a stir in the literary world with her *Harvest* (2003), which bagged the prestigious Onassis Award. This play deals with a miserable family dwelling in a single room in a chawl of Mumbai. Alongwith *Harvest* is accounted as first *Science Play* of its kind.

Incidentally, both Dattani and Padmanabhan do not write on the traditional subjects. Dattani writes about mean, ugly, unhappy things of life; Padmanabhan projects a dehumanized, terrifying world in which mother sell their sons for the price of rice. Her play *Harvest* is about an impoverished family living in a single room in a chawl of Bombay. Population explosion has rendered the city dwellers into helpless, poor dehumanized lot struggling for their survival. In this scenario, driven by hunger and unemployment, twenty-year-old Om Prakash decides to become an organ donor and mortgages his body to a white First World buyer. Padmanabhan Projects in her play a more serious, grim and unpalatable world than Dattani. But her play is rather intellectual and not suited for stage, unlike the plays of Dattani which have been quite successful on the stage and have captured the imagination of the middle-class audience.

There were several factors responsible for this stunted growth of drama and the foremost problem was the indissoluble relation between drama and the theatre. Drama, a mimetic representation of life, is a composite art in which the written word attains artistic realization when spoken by the actor on the stage and reciprocated by the audience. A play in order to communicate fully must become a living dramatic experience and so it needs a real theatre and a live audience. According to Naik, a true dramatist has to “communicate or he will die” (181). It was precisely the lack of these essentials that had hamstrung Indian drama in English along. Fortunately in the recent decades Indian drama in English language had “fared sumptuously and put on flesh”(155). The present generation
playwrights are noticeably dynamic and multifaceted. Most of them have turned writer-directors like Zubin Driver, Ninaz Khodaiji and Ramu Ramanathan. Being fascinated by Harold Pinter, Zubin, deftly showed his skill at absurd play with a masters in Literature and Aesthetics from Mumbai, Zubin also ventured into Advertising and Talk shows on channels like Sony and NDTV. His worth mentioning plays are Missing People and Worm play.

Ninaz like Zubin is into advertising and has founded “unknown waters –a London –based arts company. Trained by Pearl Padamasee she directed her plays titled – Insomania and recent work Strangers. Of the recent dramatists Ramu Ramanathan is the most prolific. He debates the present state of politics and deeply involved in rejigging Gandian philosophy and ideology. His play Mahadevbhai is a response to the politics of our times. It is an attempt to negate Gandhi and Ambedkar as foes in the light of wrongly interpreted ideology. Likewise 3Sakina Manzil questions the occurrence of Bombay harbor blast. Equally popular plays are Collaborators, Medha and Zoombish, Cotton 56 and Polyster 84, and Three Ladies of Ibsen.

This dramatic revival has brought in “… the archaic thrill of the stage “http://www.mumbaitheatreguide.com) with wide and extensive innovations “Indianness” is given new dimensions whereby a Hindi Play is titled A Perfect Wife and English – Muskan. Such fecundity promises much of thematic variety and technical excellence in distinctive Indian flavours.