Reinterpreting Tradition: The Role of Myths in Shaping Indian English Drama Post-Independence

Nidhi Verma, Research Scholar, English, The Glocal University Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh
Dr. Vandana Srivastava, Associate Professor, Research Supervisor Glocal School of Art & Social Science, The Glocal University, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh

ABSTRACT

The transformation of old myths and the way in which they played a significant part in the development of Indian English drama after independence is the subject of this study. Through an examination of a wide range of plays and dramatic works, it reveals the ways in which playwrights have utilised mythical myths to confront modern socio-political challenges. This is a reflection of the shifting identity of a post-colonial India. Based on the findings of the investigation, it is clear that these reinterpreted myths not only act as a connection between the past and the present, but they also function as a means of criticising and criticising the standards that are currently in place in society. This combination of ancient myth with contemporary themes has resulted in a type of play that is both distinctive and vibrant, and it has the ability to resonate with audiences on a national as well as a worldwide scale. In addition to highlighting the transformational potential of myths in communicating a nation's cultural and ideological transitions, the findings illustrate the lasting importance of myths in Indian English drama.

Keywords: Myths, Post-Independence, Indian English Drama, Reinterpreting Tradition.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Indian Drama and Myths

Indian playwrights frequently include customs, myths, legends, and folklore into their English-language works of Indian drama. Plays by Girish Karnad are a striking example of this movement. Major dramatist Girish Karnad has recreated for us the rich and colorful image of Indian society, culture, and people by delving deeply into the traditions, myths, and culture of India. He faithfully captures the Indian way of life in all of his plays, with all of its good and bad parts, its traditions, and its relative relevance and relationship to modern society.

Figure 1: Indian Drama

Society is characterized by its culture. Each culture has a particular cultural ethos that typifies the nature of its kin, their encounters, and their convictions. In actuality, fantasies, legends, and fables are the encapsulations of these cultural ethos, which represent the fundamental ethics and values of life, the racial experience all in all, and the regulations and standards of society. Girish Karnad has frequently returned to the ageless foundations of his cultural legacy, drawing influence from folklore and fables.

1.2. Myths, Folk Lore and Legends in Karnad's Plays

Karnad makes his own accounts by integrating the rich practices of old India into his own inventive stories. Yayati, Karnad's debut show, depends on a Mahabharata story. The legendary story is one of accountability, self-revelation, and penance. One more play that is drawn from the Mahabharata's Backwoods Canto is The Fire and the Downpour. It depends on the Yavakiri story and features the fight between Vishwarupa, Vritra, and Indra.

In Bali - The Penance and Flowers: A Sensational Monologue, two of Karnad's plays, legendary stories from a Kannada and a Sanskrit epic, are told.

Karnad's plays can promptly profit from Rangan's portrayal of society creative mind, people theater, and its association with sorcery:

Society creative mind is mysterious and mythopoeic simultaneously. Society astuteness holds that one engulfs the other. As well as being guileless, society conviction has a graceful quality that contributes to a mental adjustment. Because the crude creative mind extends its view from the natural, where it is doused and saturated, to the supernatural, which to the society mind is just an augmentation of the previous, all old stories is religious and frequently founded on animism.

India's legends culture is the source of Girish Karnad's Hayavadana and Nagamandala. The foundation of Hayavadana is Thomas Mann's interpretation of the Sanskrit text "Vetal Panchavimashati," which shows up in both Somadeva's Kathasaritsagara and Kshemendra's Brihat Katha Manjari. South Indian snake folklore filled in as the motivation for Karnad's Nagamandala. It's a play in light of two Karnataka folktales. Actually, Naga Cult is somewhat normal in various locales of India.

1.3. Historical Plays of Girish Karnad

Plays by Girish Karnad likewise draw inspiration from Indian history. Karnad has given a cutting edge understanding by putting together his accounts with respect to legendary characters from different periods of Indian history. That's what nietzsche composed "History is important to the living man in three different ways: comparable to his activity and struggle, his traditionalism and respect, his suffering and his longing for redemption". Put differently, understanding the previous guides in understanding the present. The authentic figure of Muhammad-receptacle Tughlaq, the Delhi sultan of the fourteenth century, filled in as the model for Karnad's Tughlaq.

Karnad draws motivation for Story Danda from a verifiable development that occurred in Kalyan, Karnataka, in 1168 A.D. The play's focal subject is the eminent Sharana writer holy person Basavananna and his endeavors to end standing qualifications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Shende, Y. T., & Wagh, M. R. (2022) After independence, Indian English drama is examined in this research. Its second phase started in the first part of the 1800s. The 1947 Indian celebration of freedom and Gandhian idealism are reflected in the playwrights' works. They conveyed their empathy for the disadvantaged by performing historical stories and folktales from India. Theatre did, however, increase social consciousness. 1948 saw the start of Indian post-independence theatre. Following independence, many plays were written in English. The majority of them depict Indian situations after independence. Indian hope and melancholy are reflected in Indian English drama. The modern experiences of post-independence playwrights are what make them successful. Native American social evils like child marriage, sati, and dowries were addressed by the playwrights. Indian playwrights were highly influenced by Western dramatists.

Wale, N. G. (2018) This article traces the history and evolution of Indian English drama back to the classical Sanskrit plays that served as its inspiration. The Ramayana and Mahabharata, the nation's epics, served as centuries-long sources of inspiration for several authors. There are two distinct periods of Indian English plays: pre-independence and post-independence. Playwrights such as Sri Aurobindo, Mahesh Dattani, and Tagore made major contributions to the development of Indian English drama. Plays written after independence are intricate, fascinating, and rich. Leading writers such Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, and Girish Karnad anticipate that contemporary Indian theatre in English will continue to flourish and take on a unique personality.

Giri, D. (2018) Research papers on modern Indian dramatists, including Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, Badal Sirkar, Habib Tanvir, Utpal Dutt, Mahasweta Devi, Usha Ganguli, Manjula Padmanabhan, Mahesh Elkunchwar, and Manoj Mitra, are included in Themes & Techniques. The study will shed light on the technique and vision of contemporary Indian dramatists, both thematically and technically. The study's introduction

clarifies the evolution of Indian English play. Almost every aspect of dramatic arts, as well as subjects and methods connected to Indian playwrights and their works, have been the subject of critical assessments. The study provides scholars and students with a wealth of novel insights regarding Indian English theatre.

Rao, A. S. (2000) This study uses current Indian literature to examine the cultural heritage of modern Hinduism. The primary focus is on Mahābhārata literary adaptations in Bengali, Hindi, and English. The Hindu epic has been extensively reinterpreted in popular culture and literature because of its opulent scale, which fits the Indian national ideal. Epic adaptations have the potential to strengthen orthodox Hindu nationalism by promoting patriotism. The technique of this study incorporates gender studies, literary theory, history, and religious studies. Comparing Indian Anglophone literatures to other literary traditions has not received much attention. To fill this vacuum, I examine the literary and cultural exchanges that have taken place between India and Britain as well as between India's various vernacular, classical, and Anglophone traditions. By analyzing caste, gender, and cultural hegemony, I show how Indian nation-building is shaped and challenged by epic adaptations.

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3. CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL CONTEXT OF POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF MYTHS IN INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

3.1. Transition Period: Socio-political and Cultural Shifts

Following its independence in 1947, India saw a number of significant changes in its socio-political and cultural landscape. On the political front, Jawaharlal Nehru led India on a path of democracy and nation-building, emphasizing social justice, secularism, and economic development. On the cultural front, there was a resurgence of interest in India's rich mythological heritage as a way to assert cultural identity and unite a diverse nation.

Table 1: Influence Level on Cultural and Societal Factors

Cultural and Societal Factors	Influence Level (%)
Colonial Legacy	80
National Identity	75
Social Hierarchies	65
Modernization	70
Globalization	60

- 23% Colonial Legacy
- 21% National Identity
- 19% Social Hierarchies
- 20% Modernization
- 17% Globalization
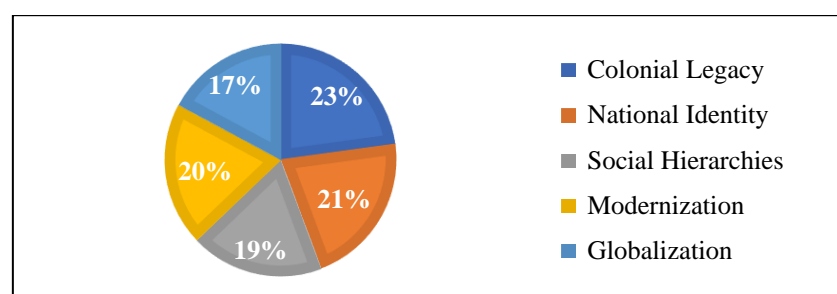
Figure 2: Influence Level

Following independence Indian English play has become an important medium for examining and reworking mythology in modern settings. Through dramatic storytelling laced with mythological motifs, playwrights aimed to counter colonial narratives and communicate indigenous perspectives. In addition to tackling urgent societal challenges, this cultural revival sought to reclaim and celebrate India's cultural richness.

3.2. Emergence of Indian English Literature: Role in Cultural Reflection and Critique

Drama in particular, written in Indian English, was essential in reflecting and analyzing the changing socio-political landscape of post-independence India. Through the prism of mythical tales, writers and playwrights explored topics of identity, tradition, and modernity in literature as a tool for cultural reflection. Playwrights aimed to provide insights into the intricacies of Indian civilization by bridging the gap between tradition and modern life by including myths into their works.

Playwrights tackled issues including caste relations, gender inequality, community tensions, and the impact of globalization on traditional values through their examination of mythical themes. This literary engagement deepened our grasp of India's socio-cultural complexity while also enriching the conversation on cultural heritage.

4. REINTERPRETATION OF MYTHS IN INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

4.1. Definition of Reinterpretation: Role in Evolving Narratives

Reinterpreting myths in Indian English theatre entails bringing old tales up to date while adding new meaning and resonance. Playwrights modify themes from mythology to explore universal human experiences and speak to contemporary social issues. This artistic approach offers fresh viewpoints on ageless concepts like bravery, love, sacrifice, and morality while preserving cultural legacy.

4.2. Evolution of Mythological Themes in Indian English Drama

Indian English drama's treatment of mythology has developed over time from simple retellings to complex examinations of cultural identity and social change. Playwrights now retell stories in a way that questions and subverts common wisdom, going beyond just reproducing myths. Dramatic adaptations of modern myths frequently function as allegories for current problems, offering insights into the intricacies of Indian society and the human condition.

Mythological narratives have been employed by playwrights such as Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani, and Vijay Tendulkar to scrutinize political ideas, probe societal standards, and contemplate individual and communal histories. Their creations have added colour to the rich tapestry of Indian English drama, where myths are used to examine social fairness, cultural memory, and the lasting value of tradition in a world changing quickly.

5. CONCLUSION

Indian English drama has evolved significantly since the nation's independence thanks in large part to the reworking of ancient mythology. As a result, a complex tapestry has been created that playwrights can utilise to explore India's evolving identity and address contemporary challenges. Repurposing and reimagining these myths offers a significant method of examining social norms and bridging the gap between the past and present. This dynamic interplay between modernity and myth not only makes Indian English drama's plot more complicated, but it also makes sure that the genre will always be relevant and appealing to viewers. What gives these myths their enduring power is their ability to change and adapt. They add to a unique and vibrant theatrical heritage while also being able to depict the cultural and ideological changes that have taken place in a post-colonial society.
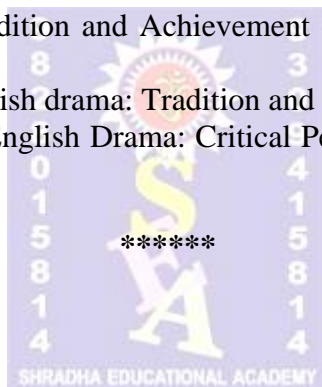
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