



Evolutionary Trajectory of Indian Theatre: Tracing the Development from Sanskrit Drama to Contemporary Stage

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Abstract

Aim: *To trace the development of Modern Indian theater from the roots to the west including the origin of Natyashastra and Sanskrit Drama and the major changes that the theatre went through during the colonial times and the formation of new theatre after British Invasion. The paper includes the trace of major forms of theater in Sanskrit and also the new forms of theatres including IPTA and Parsi theatre developing into cinema with a brief discussion of the Pillars of Modern Theatrical Expression.*

Methodology and approach: *Comprehensive Approach Exploring the Historical context, literary criticism and sociocultural examination.*

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Outcome: *Theatre has existed in the Indian Subcontinent since the dawn of civilization. According to Bharata's Natyashastra, drama was considered a divine gift bestowed upon humans by the gods.*

Conclusion: *The legacy of modern Indian theatre draws inspiration and influences from varied sources the arrival of Western Proscenium-style theatre from the British Empire to India's own rich theatrical heritage encompassing indigenous folk traditions, or the cross-cultural influences brought by Indian playwrights and directors inspired by global theatrical traditions. The subsequent changes in technologies and the emergence of digital drama have now elevated the presence of theatre and thus its unwavering commitment to social engagement, contemporary Indian theatre will stand the test of time and will stand gracefully to shape and reflect the ever-evolving cultural fabric of the nation.*

Keywords: Modern Indian Theatre, Natyashastra, Sanskrit Theatre, Consequences of British Invasion in India, Western Proscenium-style theatre, Parsi Theatre, IPTA, Pillars of Modern Theatrical Expression.

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As all world's a stage therefore all the history of humans is a performance. Be it East or the West all human civilizations had rituals, song dance, stories for recreation. These forms crystallized over time into performances both sacred and secular thereby reflecting ample light upon various lifestyle and beliefs of the

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people. Theatrical expressions have been gestating from the primitive age and hence its roots are traced in myths and magic.

The modern Indian theatre, a product of colonial culture, felt an immense need to trace its roots to counteract its violent dislocation from tradition. "India has a long and rich tradition in theatre. It has a tradition tracing back to at least five thousand years" (The Cambridge Guide to Theatre, ed. By Martin Benham; page no. 471-482). The Indian theatre has its core firmly connected with the ancient rituals and seasonal festivities of the country. The customary record in 'Natya Shastra' (The grammar or the holy book of theatre by Bharat Muni) gives a heavenly beginning to Indian Sanskrit Theatre.

Together with the other gods, Indra requested Brahma, the universe's creator, for a kind of entertainment that would be available to people from all social groups. In response to this plead, Brahma made the decision to write a fifth Veda about Natya. He took the four components of speech, song, mime, and sentiment from the four Vedas and combined them to form the fifth veda- Natya Veda, the sacred text of dramaturgy. Thus, the first drama was performed in front of Indra when the dramatic art had been thoroughly understood. The Natya Shastra is the only source of guidance on a number of issues crucial to an in-depth comprehension of ancient Indian theatre. The significance of Natya Shastra is found in the fact that it gave Indian drama a set of rules and goals as well as a clear role in the social and cultural life of the populace.

Natya Sastra reveals a close connection between dance and dramatic depiction. Indian theatre developed in a significant way attributed to dance. In India, recitation, singing, and dancing were first used as narrative forms that later evolved into the theatre. "There will be no wise maxim, no learning, no art, nor craft, no device, nor action that is not found in the drama." (Natya Shastra: Bharat Muni; page no. 116). Because of this, Indian theatre incorporates all other literary genres and visual arts into its performances: literature, mime, music, dance,

movement, painting, sculpture, and architecture are all combined into one form of art known as "Natya" (theatre).

The Sanskrit theatre was practiced around 1000 AD and was almost based on rules, regulations and modifications prescribed by Natya Shastra (compiled probably between 2000 BCE and 2nd century CE). Playwrights such as Bhasa, Kalidasa, Shudraka, Vishakadutta and Bhavabhuti contributed to a great measure through their dramatic pieces in Sanskrit. Though it is difficult to affix an exact date or even the precise century of the origin of Sanskrit theatre. Fragments of the earliest known plays have been traced by the 1st century AD. It is considered that the Natya shashtra traces Natya to the Vedic scriptures:

It is described that Brahma created Natya by taking dialogue from the Rigveda, music from the Samaveda, acting from the Yajurveda and Rasas from the Atharvaveda. [...] Abhinavagupta, commenting on this portion of the Natyasastra brings forth the special significance of the various vedas in the evolution of Natya as an art. (The Traditional Sanskrit Theatre of Kerala by Dr. C. Rajendaran; page no. 3)

Classical Sanskrit drama reached its zenith during Gupta's golden age. The classical Sanskrit theatre was closely related to religion and in India, religion has been inseparable part of life. All the art forms-music, painting and literature in the past were dedicated to proclaiming the glory of God. Hence most of the plays had religious themes and plots, especially taken from two great epics the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Post 10th century, classical theatre began to decline and folk theatre of the masses in various regional languages showed a greater sign of prosperity.

Folk theatre, which was based on oral traditions, started to develop around 1000 AD and persisted until 1700 AD. It was associated with changes in India's political structure as well as the emergence of numerous regional languages across the nation. The Natyashastra based classical theatre had a far more refined

aesthetic. While the other components of folk theatre, such as the use of music, mime, movement, and dance changed the performance trajectory of Indian theatre. After the decline of Sanskrit Drama number of theatres resurfaced under the influence of the rural theatre (folk tradition), such as Bandinatta, Bharatlila, Dadanata, Naqal, Tamasha, Veedhinatakam, Yakshagana etc. each with its own unique way of presentation and more importantly, in the vernacular language of a particular region to serve the needs of the people of that region.

Bandi Nata was a regional theatre popular in the central and western Orissa, its name originated from Bandi, the sister of Chandrasena, Radha's husband in the mythological tales surrounding the life of Krishna. The literal meaning of this play is 'widow dance'. The stories of the plays revolved around the sacrifices made by Bandi for the love of Krishna and Radha. This form of drama was acted by the members of the untouchable community. They are accompanied with the rhythm of drum (dhol), and the performance usually lasted about three hours. Dances, songs, actions, and humour was used by the actors to keep the spectators entertained. This form is largely influenced from the Danda Nata prevalent among lower caste Hindus and tribal in some parts of northwestern Orissa. Danda Nata is considered as the oldest form of drama in the states of Orissa and northeast India. The evening performances used to begin in an open arena with dances, music, and dramatic episodes. Mythological and religious figures included gods such as Shiva and Krishna, were thus introduced through song and dance. The plays usually had a moral and religious tone which was reinforced by the exalted nature of the characters. Bharatlila which was also known as the Duari Nata or Subhadra Parinaya was another folk theatre of Orissa that dramatized the episodes from the epic Mahabharata, particularly those concerning Arjuna and his wife Subhadra. Each performance lasted for about three to four hours and only three actors used to play the main characters, exchanging remarks, and adding considerable humour to the event. Naqal was a

rural theatre which unfolded itself in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Kashmir in north India. These plays stressed on farce, mercilessly satirizing the audience. These plays were only acted by men and were usually fast paced. The actors used their witty words and actions to entertain the audience. Tamasha which developed in the 1600's as a court entertainment for the Peshwa rulers was played for inspiration of the soldiers. It was a major form of rural theatre in the state of Maharashtra, the West-Central India. It included Batavani jokes, which satirise and make fun of modern society, frequently at the expense of businesspeople, priests, and prophets, and disguise their jabs as historical or mythological tales. It comprised elements of kathak as well.

A series of plays with social, political, or religious themes are presented during Bhavai, an outdoor performance performed in Gujrat, dedicated to Goddess Amba. The performance starts with a Ganesha (sacred offerings to Lord Ganesha), followed by a dance by Goddess Kali and the appearance of a comic character who serves as society's conscience by pointing out social problems. While each individual play follows a plot and includes a great deal of text, the evening is a composite of multi generic experiences. Veedhi Natakam is another form of theatre which (Veedhi means 'street', Natakam, 'drama', hence called a street theatre) was once the most popular form of traditional theatre in Andhra Pradesh in South India. Artists moved freely among the people of the countryside where they found patronage. Though its roots are uncertain it is called a rural form of theatre. Scholars believe it was in vogue at the height of the Vijayanagar Empire during the 16th century. The stories performed in the Veedhi natakam were drawn from the epics and the Puranas.

The most well-known style of South Indian theatre is found in the South Kanara area of Karnataka, and it goes by the general name of "Yakshagana." Gana is a song, and Yaksha are the demigods connected to Kubera, the god of wealth. Therefore, Yakshagana in Sanskrit stands for "songs of the gods. It

originated in the 16th century and was popular in the rural audiences. Yakshagana is a fast-paced, lively form of drama which included songs, dances and improvised dialogues. Several directors have developed their own methods utilizing warm-up exercises and movement patterns from regional systems of the martial arts, gymnasium, acrobatics, theatrical forms, ritual performances, and oral forms of recitation and chant for training in body, voice, and speech

These traditional and devotional forms though contemporary to Sanskrit Drama, were largely ignored by the scholars for a long time considering them to be less sophisticated. These forms were often considered crude, degraded, and vulgar, and their importance and connection to classical theatre were ignored. This lack of recognition might be the reason why they remained invisible until the decline of Sanskrit drama.

The British colonisation in India left an indelible mark on the country's theatrical landscape, transforming it in profound ways and giving rise to a new era of cultural expression. Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay were the British-established colonial cities that served as the precursors of modern theatre in India. The theatres established by the Britishers brought innovations such as the proscenium arch, the drop-down curtain to the Indian Stage. The current modern theatre was born out of the rediscovery and reappraisal of indigenous traditions of literature and the performing arts. The British very tactically introduced the modern European theatre of the colonized cities in three ways: by supporting productions of English plays staged by the expatriates themselves in newly built British-style playhouses; by touring productions to entertain their expatriate communities; and by teaching English drama in Indian universities, where Shakespeare was presented as the pinnacle of British civilization. The dissemination of English play was a crucial stance in the colonisation of Indian culture; it served as a tool to not only influence artistic expression but also to impose on Indians a colonial-era mode of thinking and behaving in the world.

It was the 19th century which is said to be the developing period of the modern, reflecting upon the ideas and concerns of urban Indian audience. Which could be proved by the success of ticketed shows by the second half of the nineteenth century. Vishnudas Bhave is the one who introduced the first ticketed show that too in Marathi, a regional language for the Indian audiences at the Grant Road Theatre in Bombay, which was indeed an important landmark in Modern Indian Theatre.

After the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and Indigo Revolt of 1859, theatre started arising as a significant medium for protest and expressing anti-colonial sentiments. By the increase in availability of printed copies of plays, it was used for mobilizing people towards resistance. Theatre started to embrace a self-reflexive approach towards social and political critique. Examining and commenting on societal norms, values, and power structures became an important part of theatrical performances. Hemchandra Barua's *Kania Kirtan* (1861), Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Ekei ki Bale Sabhyata* (1865), Ramnarayan Tarakratna's *Naba Natak* (1867), and Buro Shaliker Ghare Ron (1867) are important plays in this regard.

Dinabandhu Mitra's *Neel Darpan* (Mirror of Indigo), is a great example of advent of anti-colonial theatre in India, concerned with the exploitation of Bengali indigo workers by the British planters. The play was originally written in Bengali and had its regional limitation but it became a political protest movement after the English translation by Reverend Long, who was even imprisoned for translating the play. Furthermore, *Neel Darpan* brought a surge in theatrical productions which sparked a series of other plays opposing other injustices, this included *Samudra Darpan*, (Mirror of the Sea) which protested the exploitation of seamen by British ship-owners. *Chakar Darpan* (Mirror to Tea) was a cry against the ill treatment of tea workers in Assam and other similar dramas. This led to strict censorship laws by the Britishers but the Indian playwrights started camouflaging

these protests under mythological drama, aiming to challenge colonialism and foster a sense of national identity in the audiences. However, its celebration as a Hindu national identity was deeply problematic. These continuous protest in different forms aggravated the government and they put a final stop to it:

Beginning with individual arrests of actors, the Government finally promulgated the Dramatic Performances Control Ordinance on 29 February 1876. It forbade dramatic performances which were scandalous, defamatory, seditious, obscene, or otherwise prejudicial to the public interest.” (Protest through theatre —The Indian experience, Pushpa Sundar; page no. 127-128)

This initiated protests all over the country. However, all the protests were ignored, and the government forcefully imposed the ordinance, solidifying it as an Act in the same year. Nonetheless the act didn't lead to end of protests, it merely led to more creative ways of conveying protest.

The advent of Parsi Theatre was a transformative force in Indian performing arts, serving as a powerful bridge between cultures and playing a pivotal role in advocating social change. Parsi Theatre flourished in India between 1850s to 1930s and starting from the two urban cities that brought forth present day Indian theatre, Calcutta, and Bombay. Calcutta had a more homogeneous crowd with a language that bound it together. Openness toward the West had really prompted a blossoming of new writing in Bengali. The language circumstance in Bombay was more complicated. The new theatre bunches had been begun by Parsi business people who spoke Gujarati at home. Parsi theatre, was a unique blend of traditional Indian music, dance, the indigenous forms like Nautanki and Tamasha and drama with Western-style theatre this made it emerge as a truly hybrid theatre.

Origin of the form can be traced back to the Parsi drama, which was a form of musical theatre that combined the themes and music of Persian and Indian

classical music. These companies were founded by Parsi businessmen who wanted to promote their community's culture and heritage:

An economically workable commercial stage in most urban centres fitted folk performance to the European proscenium, creating technical models and unexpected marvels; eventually, and paradoxically, these were put in the service of realism as being assembled at this time. Architectural and stage technologies allowed for vampire pits, flying beds, miraculous appearances and disappearances, best suited for romances and mythological tales. (The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre - Anand Lal; page no. 342)

Commencing with creations in English, they gradually changed to Gujarati, then, and lastly to Urdu while looking for more extensive crowds when the new century rolled over, to Hindi. Though the growing crowd mainly comprised of Hindus, a considerable lot of the journalists for the Parsi organizations were Muslims as Urdu writing had bloomed in Muslim courts. The first Parsi theatre company was established in 1853 by a Parsi businessman named Framjee Muncherjee. The company was named the Grant Road Theatrical Company, and it performed plays in both Gujarati and Urdu languages. The company's productions were a mix of social satire, historical epics, and romantic dramas.

Another important figure in the development of Parsi theatre was the playwright Bhau Daji Lad, who wrote and produced several successful plays in the late 19th century. His plays explored themes such as social injustice, family values, and the conflict between tradition and modernity. The Parsi entrepreneur had to make sure that the flavor catered to all tastes and communities, so he established a style that was virtually unaffected by racial and cultural distinctions. The plays covered a wide range of topics, including middle eastern romances, Hindu mythology, and Shakespearean adaptations, but they avoided any religious or moral nuances. Secularism was a trendy concept that in the hands of the Parsi

business visionaries, became yet another label for its idealistic followers. The plays were often humorous and light-hearted, which made them popular with audiences of all ages.

Parsi theatre also had an important social role in Indian society. It was a means of promoting social reform and addressing social issues. Many of the plays dealt with topics such as dowry, widow remarriage, and women's rights. By addressing these issues in a public forum, Parsi theatre helped to raise awareness and promote change. One of the most significant developments in Parsi theatre was the introduction of female actors. In the early days of Parsi theatre, female roles were played by men. However, in the late 19th century, female actors began to appear on stage. This was a significant development, as it allowed for greater realism in the portrayal of female characters and helped to broaden the range of stories that could be told.

During this period, notable theatrical productions included Amanat's *Indrasabha* (1853), Agha Hashr Kashmiri's *Yahudi ki Ladki* (1913) and *Rustom and Sohrab* (1929), Radheyshyam Kathavachak's *Vir Abhimanyu* (1914), *Shravan Kumar* (1916) and *Bharatmata* (1918). Adaptations of Shakespearean plays included Ahsan's *Khun-e-nahaq* (1898, based on Hamlet), *Shahid-e-wafa* (1898, based on Othello), Hashr's *Safed Khun* (1906, based on King Lear), and Betab's *Gorakhdhanda* (1909, based on Comedy of Errors).

The freedom struggle for independence in its late phase saw the foundation of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) a social association that began in India in 1943. IPTA was founded by a group of progressive writers, artists, and intellectuals who believed in using theatre as a tool for social and political change. The Progressive Writers' Association (formed in 1936) established IPTA as a theatrical and cultural branch of its own attempting it to be a potent weapon reaching out to the grassroots to mobilize the masses against colonialism and fascism. The aim was to make theatre reach the lowest sections.

Making theatre into an effective “People’s Theatre”. The main aim of the IPTA as contained in its Draft Resolution was to mobilize, “[...] a people's theatre movement throughout the whole of India as the means of revitalizing the stage and the traditional arts and making them at once the expression and organizer of our people's struggle for freedom, cultural progress and economic justice” (Modern Indian Theatre: A Reader by Nandi Bhatia page no. 485)

The association was laid out because of the inescapable destitution, imbalance, and social shamefulness looked by the Indian nation under English expansionism. IPTA's pioneers accepted that performance could be utilized as a strong medium to bring various social issues to light and prepare the majority to battle for their freedom. Renowned personalities such as Ali Sardar Jafri, Balraj Sahni, Balwant Gargi, Prithvi Raj Kapoor, Mulk Raj Anand, K.A. Abbas, Shombhu Mitra, Habib Tanvir, Anil de Silva, Utpal Dutt, Shiela Bhatia, Uma Chakravarty, Shanta Gandhi, Zohra Sehgal, and Rasheed Jahan were notable members of IPTA.

The early long periods of IPTA saw the association develop quickly, with branches laid out in a few urban communities across India. IPTA's individuals were engaged with composing, coordinating, and performing plays that zeroed in on friendly issues like destitution, abuse, and persecution. They likewise coordinated far-reaching developments, celebrations, and studios to advance moderate thoughts and empower creative articulation.

During the 1950s and 1960s, IPTA had split up and practically wounded up largely due to various elements, including government oversight, struggles under the surface, and the ascent of business theatre. IPTA’s decline left behind a legacy of radical political theatre and activism, that truly broke the traditions of stage and truly touched the lives of people. It truly served as “People’s Therewith the rise of Modern Theatre many new conventions, art forms had emerged with the gradual fading of the old conventions. Realism and experimental (hybrid)

theatre came up with many writers like Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad.

Realism emerged in the 1930s as a reaction to the vacuity of the natak organisations and as an answer to the challenge thrown by the movement's leaders: they had to demonstrate their worthiness of independence by ridding our society of its numerous flaws. Essentially, this was the playwright's theatre. The playwrights themselves frequently oversaw the productions. The rational auditorium was motivated by genuine vision, as opposed to the Parsi theatre, where every decision was limited by financial considerations. Concern for social reform and citizen independence brought together the writers, actors, and audience. College professors, their students, and white-collar workers who viewed this type of performance centre as a mission rather than a vocation frequently made up the entire group. They kept being newcomers. However, their incorporation and beauty provided many of these plays an immediacy and a keen edge that was not present in the early plays. The need for a person to be seen as a person, as unique in himself, has been the major concern of the realistic drama in the West, but in India, authenticity would never transcend beyond friendly issues.

Mohan Rakesh a prominent dramatist of post-independent India, was known for his utilization of reality in his plays. Rakesh's utilization of reality in his plays mirrors his obligation to portraying the lives and battles of normal individuals in an honest and significant manner. One of the key elements of Rakesh's realism is the use of dialogues. In his plays, characters communicate in ordinary language that mirrors their social and cultural backgrounds. This utilization of language makes the characters and their circumstances interesting and natural to the crowd, permitting them to interface with the play on a more profound level.

Another significant part of Rakesh's authenticity is his scrupulousness. In his plays, he meticulously depicts the physical and social environment where his

characters reside, making a distinctive and sensible depiction of their lives. This scrupulousness assists with making a feeling of genuineness and honesty in his work. Rakesh's realism is likewise portrayed by his investigation of social issues and subjects that are pertinent to his time. His plays frequently address subjects like identity, power, and social inequality, and his use of realism allows him to explore these themes in a nuanced and complex way.

Mohan Rakesh's utilization of reality in his plays is a demonstration of his obligation to portraying the lives and battles of conventional individuals in an honest and significant manner. His meticulousness, utilization of ordinary language, and investigation of applicable social issues have made him one of the most compelling writers of post-independence India, and his heritage proceeds to move and illuminate contemporary Indian theatre.

It was Vijay Tendulkar who introduced folk tradition in his plays. Vijay Tendulkar was an Indian dramatist who is known for his intense and provocative plays that arrangement with subjects of, gender, politics, and social issues. One of the critical highlights of Tendulkar's plays is his utilization of folk elements, which he integrates into his work to make a feeling of social credibility and to investigate the pressures among custom and innovation.

In Tendulkar's play, "Ghashiram Kotwal," for instance, he utilizes the conventional Marathi society type of Tamasha to make a gnawing study of power and corruption. The play's hero, Ghashiram, is a low-rank man who had risen to power by serving the bad leaders of a made-up city. The utilization of Tamasha components in the play, including songs, dance, and stylized acting, makes a feeling of social explicitness and adds profundity and surface to the play's investigation of force and defilement.

Likewise, in Tendulkar's play, "Sakharam Fastener," he utilizes the folk form of Bhavai to investigate subjects of gender and sexuality. The play's hero, Sakharam Cover, is a bookbinder who accepts in ladies as his "spouses" and treats

them as possessions. The utilization of Bhavai components in the play, including folk songs and dance, adds a layer of social particularity and makes a feeling of the play's provincial setting. Simultaneously, the utilization of Bhavai components additionally features the strains between traditional gender roles and the changing social scene of modern India. Tendulkar's use of folk elements in his plays makes a feeling of social explicitness and legitimacy, permitting him to investigate complex subjects and ideas in innovative and engaging ways.

Another prominent Indian playwright, theatre director and activist who made significant contribution to development of modern Indian theatre was Badal Sarkar. His plays frequently managed contemporary social and policy driven issues and utilized imaginative strategies to draw in the crowd. One of the key procedures utilized by Sarkar in his plays was "Third Theatre," which tried to split away from the customary types of theatre and make another sort of venue that was both important and open to the average citizens. This included making an immediate discourse between the entertainers and the crowd, with negligible utilization of props, lighting, and other dramatic gadgets. This procedure expected to make a feeling of promptness and closeness, permitting the crowd to interface more profoundly with the play.

Sarkar believed in minimalization, which meant stripping down the sets, outfits, and other dramatic components to their absolute minimum, permitting the emphasis to be on the entertainers and the discourse. This assisted in developing a feeling of crudeness and direness in his plays, underlining the social and policy driven issues at the core of the work.

Sarkar likewise involved non-straight account structures in his plays, frequently splitting away from the customary Aristotelian plot structure and consolidating components of oddity and absurdist theatre. This permitted him to investigate complex subjects and thoughts in a more trial and creative way. All in all, Badal Sarkar was a spearheading figure in present day Indian theatre, who

utilized imaginative methods to draw in the crowd and investigate contemporary social and policy driven issues. His utilization of Third Theatre, moderation, and non-straight story structures assisted with making another sort of performance centre that was both socially and creatively significant, and his inheritance proceeds to move and illuminate contemporary Indian theatre.

Theatre has existed in the Indian Subcontinent since the dawn of civilization. According to Bharata's *Natyashastra*, drama was considered a divine gift bestowed upon humans by the gods. The *Natyashastra* treatise served as the foundation for Sanskrit drama, which flourished for several centuries before its eventual decline. However, despite the decline of Sanskrit drama around the 5th century, the vibrant performance traditions of dance, music, storytelling, and folk forms continued to thrive, preserving the essence of Bharata's aesthetics through various adaptations.

The legacy of modern Indian theatre, as we know it today, draws inspiration and influences from varied sources that contribute to its overall development. Whether it's the arrival of Western Proscenium-style theatre from the British Empire, India's own rich theatrical heritage encompassing indigenous folk traditions, or the cross-cultural influences brought by Indian playwrights and directors inspired by global theatrical traditions. All these diverse influences have shaped the modern Indian theatre we know today.

The Contemporary Indian theatre scene, comprising of playwrights who are expressing themselves in English and the Indian languages. Notable playwrights like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan have made significant contribution to the English-language theatre of India. On the other hand, playwrights, and theatre practitioners like Ebrahim Alkazi, Satyadev Dubey, Usha Ganguly, Arvind Gaur and others have enriched Indian theatre in Indian languages through their seminal productions. Theatre practitioners of the contemporary India have given space to experimentation, innovation, and social

relevance, pushing the boundaries of traditional theatre forms. Theatre has become a vehicle to address and instigate difficult conversations on critical issues of identity, human rights, and social inequalities. Through relevant narratives and performances, contemporary Indian theatre is serving as a platform for protest and challenging societal norms, promoting inclusivity and sparking dialogues on important social concerns.

The emergence of technology and digital platforms like National Theatre at home, Zee Theatre and others have made theatre more accessible to audiences through teleplays. While it doesn't come close to replicating the live theatre experience, these platforms provide convenience and access at will ability for the audiences. They also help omit the geographical barriers and allow people to experience the beauty of stage designing, stage lighting, and stage acting from the comfort of their homes. Digital theatre cultivates an appreciation for theatre as an art form, inspiring audiences to engage with live theatre experiences. It serves as a valuable tool for democratizing theatre and fostering a broader engagement with the art form. This fusion of traditional elements of theatre and modern technology, along with a diverse range of artistic expression, has brought dynamism and vibrancy to the contemporary theatre scene.

As we look towards the future, the trajectory of Indian Theatre appears promising, with continuously evolving narratives, voices, and forms of expressions. The power of theatre as a medium to bring about change, through thought provoking and fostering a sense of collective consciousness is a testament of its enduring significance in Indian Society. Through its unwavering commitment to social engagement, contemporary Indian theatre will stand the test of time and will stand gracefully to shape and reflect the ever-evolving cultural fabric of the nation.

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