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# Role of Theatricality in Samuel Fyzee-Rahamin's Play Daughter of Ind

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**Abstract:** *This study aims at investigating the theatrical aspects of Samuel Fyzee-Rahamin's play text Daughter of Ind. The playwright's theatricality comprises of a variety of distancing devices that are artistically positioned to realize the intended sociopolitical goals. To pop up the spectacle dimension of the said text, various situations, episodes, and personages are shrewdly juxtaposed against each other. This phenomenon inevitably necessitates the sense of urgency, immediacy, and the unfolding of the dialogic filters. A paradigm of analogies is introduced intentionally to complement and reinforce the dialectical configurations. Histrionic expressions and actions push the characters and the discourses towards the stagy world of acting. Theatrical imagery, the intervention of supernatural elements, the polyphony of competitive ideologies, and the narrational voice are the other features of theatricality that smartly challenge the coercive structures like patriarchy, colonialism, and the marginalization of the weak sections of the Indian society. Naivety is a common technique used by political dramatists to successfully enlist the attention of the audience. A theoretical framework for this study consists of postmodern theories on theatre, especially Wladimir Krysinski's essay Changed Textual Signs in Modern Theatricality.*

**Key Words:** Daughter of Ind, Samuel Fyzee-Rahamin, Theatricality

## Introduction

All the aesthetics, sciences, disciplines, and knowledges that consisted of the complacent fixtures in the 19th century were revisited, recast, reformed, and revolutionized in the succeeding century. The boundaries of existing registers, genres, and jargon were being earmarked; the generation of new genres and the sub-genres was also on the up. Aristotelian grammar of literature that had been in vogue, with little fluctuation in the past, was coming under the contrapuntal microscope of the dynamic minds of the new authors and critics of drama and theatre. Saussure's inventory of semiology especially played a significant role in the defining characters of the sign, i.e., the material and the mental image of entities in the surrounding environment and milieu. If the previous times were stressing the traditionality of the tradition, the current epoch was sailing

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towards the poetics of the alternative. In this situation, new labels, new nodes, and new understandings of the sociopolitical spectacle were the focus. Dialectical of disciplines and thoughts and the discovery of the untapped sense was the fresh orientation of the new mind.

There is some type of fuzziness between the boundaries of drama and theatre was a new understanding that first, the relevant people felt and then started investigating the topic. Other disciplines like new cinema, movies with new themes and semiotics, etc., were providing an impetus to this experience. Criticism continued to move in 'to and fro' motion till the last decades of the previous century. Ultimately, Wladimir Krysinski (1982) wrote an essay entitled *Changed Textual Signs in Modern Theatricality* that ushered in a new era for the sense of theatre and theatricality. This scholar believes that every type of literature is composed under the spirit of theatricality. The theatrical is the name of the literary devices and formal elements of a text or a discourse that are the choice of every aesthetic writer to communicate effectively and in the specific modes to his/her targeted readers. Theatricality or the spectacular is an integral part of all genres of literature. Different genres demand different techniques of theatrics, and the writers, with their different temporal, sociopolitical, religious, cultural, and familial backdrops, go for the specific options of the strategies of their spectacle.

## Review of Literature

There are so many theoretical frameworks available for theatre and theatricality. Those who believe that theatricality is different from the stage of the building of a theatre where acting takes place also have differential opinions on the concept of this theory. Yes, they have a consensus on the idea that theatricality is limited to the play text only. To Roland Barthes, theatricality stands for whatever happens on the physical stage in a theatre building. He calls it 'theatre minus-text', but it is the soul of every text.

Paula Jayne Byrne (2000), in his DPhil dissertation *Jane Austen and the theatre,* says that Jane Austen is known for her negative attitude towards theatre, but the reality is quite the opposite. She makes use of various techniques of theatricality that tally her temperament plus her favorite genre of literature, i.e., novel. Farce, satire, and burlesque make the theatrical in her novels. Farce, whose sole purpose is to produce maximum laughter-based comedy, is easily available in all of her novels. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* is a specific example. The purpose of burlesque and satire is also the same. Allusions, juvenilia, and cross-fertilization of sentiments are the other characteristics of her theatrics. Sometimes, she makes very shrewd use of irony to turn her discourse spectacular and stagy. Alexandra Pappas (2019), in her DPhil thesis *Performance and Theatricality in the Poetry of C.P. Cavafy* argues that poetry and theatricality have been closely related to each other since ancient times. Memory, history, and artists are the main techniques that are employed by the researcher in her research projects. Historical figures usually carry a lot of luggage in terms of their myths, proverbial clout, and the reforms they are supposed to have made. These elements are already in the memory of the relevant reader to produce an impression of staginess all around. Artists are always the public property; therefore their contribution remains the pride of the concerned population. When this memorial material is aestheticized by a writer, it takes the form of the spectacular. A dramatic monologue is another salient feature of Cavafy's poetry. Soliloquy is used to complement the theatrical use of dramatic monologue. When, having studied the above- mentioned pieces of significant research, we come across Samuel Fyzee-Rahamin's play *Daughter of Ind,* it appears quite a suitable candidate for the application of theatricality. Hence the present research.

## Research Questions

1. What are the main theatrical techniques used by the author in the play text of *Daughter of Ind*?
2. What goals theatricality in Rahamin-Rahamin's present play text is intended to achieve?


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## Research Methodology

A theoretical framework for the present study is an essay Changed Textual Signs in Modern Theatricality by Wladimir Krysinski (1982) published in the journal Modern Drama. Help is also taken from the other scholars that belong to Krysinski's school of theatricality. He distinguishes theatricality from theatre: he posits that theatricality is the name of that dimension of the text which conjures up a sense of drama in the mind of the reader during its study. The range of the techniques of theatricality is not limited to a set of features; it has a wide variety of tools in its kit. The use of theatrical imagery frames a piece of literature into a dramatic mode. To create a sense of immediacy and urgency, the use of naivety is important. Naivety deals with a simpleton way of raising basic questions on a social theme. This way of queries enables the reader to understand various aspects of the theme that have been automatized by the operations of the ruling ideologies. The character of Graham is especially used for this purpose in *Daughter of Ind*. The narrator as the speaker of the text, is also used for delivering critical comments on the sociopolitical issues of the time.

Analogies are sometimes used to add to the theatrical aspect of literature. This technique of the spectacular brings two or more two different things close to each other in similarities. These similarities in the behaviours of various things are used to stress a theme in literature. For example, the exploitation of Malti, a poor woman, and the Indian masses at the hands of the male and the English colonial masters in their Indian colony indicates the author's intention to pinpoint the weak agency in the characters of *Daughter of Ind.* The introduction of the supernatural characters also plays a significant role in foregrounding the theme of literature. This phenomenon is often used to disclose some nefarious aspects of the theme of some piece of literature. The philosophy of dialectics has always been the cynosure of nearly all the disciplines of knowledge. It works as a very important pillar of theatricality. It has the same importance that semantic deviation bears among stylistic deviations. It single-handedly can mobilize the machine of the spectacle to expose the nexus of hegemonic ideologies that squeeze the vitals of the weak sections of the society like the female characters and the colonized masses.

## Data Analysis

Malti, in Samuel Fyzee-Rahamin's play *Daughter of Ind*, is the daughter of a poor gardener who works in the garden of Graham, an Englishman who has come from London to teach English to a local Indian prince. Colonel Mead does not like Graham as the latter preaches the right of democracy to the local people and further appreciates the broadmindedness of the prince, who always supports the weak. When Harnath, the fiancé of Malti, sees his would-be wife hand in hand with Graham, he decides to kill both the lovers. The moneylender and the priest both insult and monetarily exploit Sukhdev, the father of Malti, who borrows money on a very high interest.

The play under analysis is a significant example of the notion of metafiction. The playwright aestheticizes the exploitation of women and that of the Indian masses being ruled by the British masters. To successfully communicate his message to the reader, he makes use of some specific alienating devices. These distancing literary formal tools create a sense of the theatrical in the mind of the reader. Analogies, dialecticality of characters, episodes and situations, naivety and naïve discourse, dreams, monologues, soliloquies, supernatural elements, histrionic words and expressions, narrational moves, and memories are the main provisions of his aesthetics or theatricality.

Dialogues are always the spirit of a drama. Sometimes, a character gives human characteristics to an inanimate thing and starts symbolic interaction with it. This type of personification is usually termed as anthropomorphism. Malti one day sits near the Kamini flower and commences a dialogue. The white color of this flower is labelled as the sign of purity of heart. This abundantly fragrance producing plant could intoxicate anyone. On the demand of Malti, the said flower tells her painful story with agonizing details. In her last birth, she was a beautiful damsel who was the cynosure of all the lascivious males of the locality, especially the

priest. As she did not succumb to the sensual desires of the priest, he assassinated her character, and resultantly she could not enter the temple of God. Parbati, Chambelli, and rose are the other flowers growing in the house of Graham with whom she enters into the conversation and lets them disclose the secrets of their lives. Rose is called 'the soul of Mohini, the enchantress. This flower has been spreading fragrance since the times immemorial. All these flowers are, in fact, the incarnation of the female characters that have been under the thumb of the exploitative males. This episode of Malti's conversation with flowers turns it theatrical and spectacular. The purpose attained through anthropomorphism is to expose the fleecing tenor of the male and the irresistible beautiful makeup of the Indian female characters.

Naivety is another significant feature of the theatrical poetics of *Daughter of Ind*. A naïve character asks some basic questions on a sociopolitical phenomenon that releases a lot of information to wake up the political consciousness of the reader. Soma, the male servant at the house of Graham, provides very shocking information about the Indian masses and their religiosity. Soma tells his master that the Indians are very fond of bakshis from their masters, and usually, this gift is given to them on the eve of holidays. Then he tells Graham that the Indians, for the sake of bakshis, invent holidays. And if they do not get holidays during the day, they invent holidays at night. When the children have gone to sleep at night, the Indians drink a lot, and they also play music to make themselves happy. He further says that the music they play at night keeps the gods awake. Graham asks Soma why the Indians are carrying the elephant like the image on their head during the procession. Soma tells his master that Ganpati God is the deity of wisdom. The Hindus cannot keep this deity in their house for all the days of the year. They keep the statue of this god at their homes for some time; then they carry this image of the god, in the procession, to the river to drown it. The Indian Hindus cannot keep this god of wisdom in their house or life for a long time. This information raised as a response to the naïve question of Graham, creates a theatrical performance in the mind of the reader. The superstitious religiosity of the Hindus is dramatically revealed here.

Bakhtinian dialogism allows a group of characters with different points of view to interact with each other to let the dialectical encounters take place so that the spectacular is actualized. The moneylender called Sarkar, and the Hindu priest called Bhatji to assemble at a place to meet Sukhdev, the father of Malti. Sarkar agrees to lend an amount of Rs 300, on forty percent interest, to Sukhdev to meet the marriage expenditures of his daughter Malti. Out 300 hundred, the moneylender makes two deductions: one hundred and twenty as interest on three hundred and twenty as the first installment in advance. The moneylender, as a guarantee, gets the hold of Sukhdev's house, salary at the start of every month, and the jewelry of Malti. Even then, the moneylender is not happy. Bhaji is very anxious to get a heavy fee in advance for solemnizing the marriage of Malti. To satisfy the priest, Sukhdev must further borrow one hundred and fifty rupees from Sarkar. Out of this money, seventy rupees are grabbed by the priest. Like the moneylender, the priest is also not happy. He says that to be a priest, one must go through various births before coming to being. The dialogues of Sarkar and Bhatji theatricalize the play in the mind of the reader. He understands the ulterior motives of the two exploitative social institutions very well.

The use of the histrionic words and actions contribute richly to the theatricality of Samuel Fyzee-Rahamin's play *Daughter of Ind*. One day Harnath, the fiancé of Malti, comes to Sukhdev and pushes him by the neck. He calls the old man a 'bastard', the fox, and 'disgrace to humanity. He says that he would not marry his daughter as she, by falling in love with Graham did bring a black smudge to the face of the family. She is cast as 'a bad woman' and a 'thoroughly bad' female as she brought 'shame' to the father's name. He pledges to wipe out the bad Malti and her lover Graham from the face of the earth. He is even ready to advance Malti as an offering to the Kali Deity. Then they make a plan to kill both Malti and Graham at night. The father of Malti is not less user of histrionic words; he instigates Harnath to go for the intended killings essentially and successfully. Sukhdev regrets

the 'evil' doings of her daughter and wishes to have killed her in the womb of her mother. At last, he morally and logistically prepares Harnath to execute his 'grand' plan of killing Graham. As Malti has already made Graham leave the house and she herself has gone to his bed at night, therefore, Harnath, in darkness stabs her to death. This melodrama produces a lot of theatricalities. The 'pride' the senseless masculinity and patriarchy is well exposed.

Supernatural elements along with dreams and soliloquies also work as the techniques of artistic alienation. At a critical point in *Daughter of Ind*, suddenly, a spirit emerges in front of the narrator of the play. It presents itself as 'the destructive spirit' who has entered 'man's world' to cause miseries to the humans with evil thoughts and evil doings. The generation of this evil spirit is very dramatic. It says that it is not the creation of god rather it is the creature of man himself. The moment a human goes for evil thinking, it is automatically created. Then it turns into a shadow of the evil man. It instigates him to do some evil and when he performs the evil, it begins to target him for harm and destruction. The greater he grows in misdeeds, the bigger he becomes in miseries. The playwright, through the use of the character of the spirit, is basically theatricalizing before the imaginative eyes of the reader his own philosophy of evil. What he wants to communicate to his intended audience is a story of evil that dramatizes itself in a specific way.

Analogies can be used successfully to produce a sense of the theatrical in literature. First analogy aestheticized in the play under analysis is the sameness of agency between the Indian common masses and Malti. The British rulers exploit the Indians the way the male characters of the play colonize Malti. Colonel Mead does not like Graham as the latter symbolizes the eyeopener to the dormant people. The English want to keep the common Indians in the permanent mode of dormancy therefore they always like the local Maharaja who helps them fleece the poor people. On the other hand, Mead does not like the prince who goes for the freedoms and welfare of the common people. Graham is the teacher and helper of the prince; that is why he is hated by Mead. Mead gets him fired from the job and he sails back to England. Graham, the prince, and the common people of India all metaphorize obedience and loyalty to the authority. Same is true with reference to Malti who suffers in each way, but she never raises any voice against the males who never leave a moment to spare her. Sukhdev is the gardener in the house of Graham but all the work in the garden is accomplished by Malti. Sukhdev is desirous to live with her daughter, even after the marriage of Malti. Harnath tells Sukhdev that after marriage he would not allow his wife to care plants as she would have to perform other duties like taking care of his children, of earning money for his family. He wants to remain safe from any type of labor after marriage; he wants to be a full burden on his wife. In spite of all these problems and miseries, she does not raise any voice against tyranny. This analogy not only produces a spectacular scene, but it also foregrounds the bestiality of the colonizes and the voicelessness of the colonized.

There are so many theatrical images used by the playwright in *Daughter of Ind*. These images provide a frame of the theatrical to the text of the play. The title of the play is symbolic plus spectacular. Malti who is the referent to the title is the metaphor of the 'light of lights'. She stands for divine spirit that is just loveable and kind. That is why Malti reacts back harshly when she is under a severe grind of circumstances. She is kind, sympathetic and beautiful like fragrance. She is never to stink, she is always to refresh the surrounding with her fragrance. Graham often says that as an Indian woman she has no demands, complaints, and queries. She says that the Indian women have no demands, they are born only to give something to others. The character of the flower plants is in fact a great sign. All the types of flowers basically are the Indian women; they are supposed to spread beauty and fragrance everywhere. If some flower is not good looking or producer of good fragrance, it compensates in some other way to serve the environment. All these flowers are the sign of the female characters of India that were never justly understood in the male chauvinist world. Even in this dismal situation of existence, the female characters never abandoned

their natural, kind, nice, and great behaviors and ideals. The flood of fragrance that is observed everywhere in the play under analysis is the result of the sweetness of the daughter of India i.e., Malti.

## Conclusion

This study produced far reaching results and encouraging implications. Samuel Fyzee-Rahamin developed a network of alienating devices to aestheticize his artistic discourse in *Daughter of Ind*. Conceptualization of naive characters is a dominant distancing technique that helps the political sensibility of the playwright to expose the ugly aspects of the taxing hegemonic social institutions. The simpleton mode of asking basic questions concerning the routinized social myths, images and discourses lets the perceptive reader peep into their unnatural coercive poetics. For example, Graham's queries explain the futility of life and thoughts of Indian masses that instead of planning rebellion against the fleecing English rulers, tend to remain busy in playing truant from work and play music and resort to drinking at night. The use of histrionic words and actions lets the audience observe the aggressive idiom that turns handy for the actualization of the exploitation of Malti, Graham, the Indian subjects and Sukhdev. The dialectical juxtaposition of various personages uplinks the reader to the sense of immediacy and urgency that is in focus when the belligerent polyphonies are enacted. Colonel Mead versus Graham, Sukhdev versus Sarkar plus Bhatji, the English establishment versus the Indian populations, and Malti versus Harnath plus Sukhdev throw light on the criminal nexus of multiple sociopolitical structures, their struggle to legitimize their selfish filters, and the miserably poor agencies of the colonized. Analogies of Malti and the common Indian in terms of their modes of exploitation, and their lukewarm resistance, intervention of supernatural elements, dreams, theatrical imagery and popped up figurative expressions are the other key theatrical strategies that try to successfully expose the exploitation of the female, the common Indians, and the weak sections of the society in the play *Daughter of Ind* by Samuel Fyzee-Rahaman.

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