

Indian Drama in English

The Beginnings

The Persecuted ♦ Rizia ♦ Kaminee



Edited by Ananda Lal

From the beginning, Indian dramatists who chose to write in English made sociopolitical statements that resonate even today. The unavailability of their plays has resulted in little or no analysis other than secondary references, often inaccurate. For the first time, three of these texts have been unearthed and reprinted in this volume, enhanced by a general introduction, separate introductions to each play, and explanatory notes.

Krishna Mohana Banerjea based *The Persecuted, or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta* (1831), the first Indian drama in English, on his own experience of ostracism after his "Young Bengal" friends flouted the conservative codes at his home. Michael Madhusudan Dutt composed in Madras his first play, *Rizia: Empress of Inde* (1855), a tragedy about the 13th-century Sultana of Delhi who loved her Abyssinian slave. It has been reconstructed with the aid of a recently-discovered manuscript in Dutt's hand. The anonymously-published *Kaminee: The Virgin Widow* (1874) relates the fate of an accomplished teenage widow in Calcutta when the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act has become law yet most people pay no heed to it.

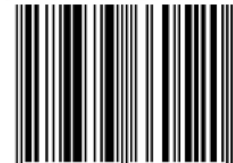


Ananda Lal retired as Professor of English, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He specializes in theatre, translation and Tagore. His most important books include *The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre* (OUP, 2004) and *Rabindranath Tagore: Three Plays* (revised ed., OUP, 2001).

Cover: Sketch of K. M. Banerjee's family home in north Kolkata, which still stands today.
Students used to meet in the front room on the ground floor.

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