

The first Indian English Drama: Krishna Mohan Banerjea's *The Persecuted*

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Abstract

The essay discusses Krishna Mohan Banerjea's play *The Persecuted*, the first drama written in the Indian English language. Authored in 1831 by Krishna Mohan Banerjea of the Young Bengal Movement, the essay argues that a textual analysis of the play reveals the contradictory impact of 'modernity' upon the Indian mind. An autobiographical account by all reports, Krishna Mohan's play reveals how the ideals of modernity, despite being relegated to the public world, had an inescapable impact upon the private. With the discourse of modernity remaining at the level of the public discourse, the conflict between the home and the world, the private and the public, was bound to surface. The essay situates the play in its socio-cultural context of the tumultuous 1830s to explore the material/spiritual dichotomy that was to become so significant in the quest for the Indian identity and to locate the beginnings of the Indian nationalist discourse that was to be articulated about half a century later.

Keywords: Indian, postcolonial, nationalism, public-private, Krishna Mohan Banerjea, Young Bengal Movement.