INTRODUCTION

Choice of the Topic with Reasoning

The world of 21st century is tainted with the hot and shocking happenings. The picture of bloodshed and anarchy permeated in the life of the people. Man’s cruelty, unkindness, meanness, nastiness, brutality, hatred and vindictiveness have been the headlines of every daily newspaper in last twenty years. The news of rape, assassination, loot, vulgarity and evil presentation of human life became common in the newspapers since 2000. As the literature is a reflection of human life, the plays written in the first decade of the 21st century manifest the same evils of human life. This life became the victim of the social and psychological disorder, and the present research intends to show this changed panorama through the select plays.

The plays written and staged before 1990 depict the picture of society which was living under the intoxication of freedom, yet there were many social ups and downs in the life of people. A good number of plays by Indian dramatists like Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Gurucharan Das, were successfully presented the post-independent India. The period from 1990s is called Neo-liberal era, and the plays written and staged in this period handled the new issues like privatization, liberation and globalization. The plays of 21st century gave these subjects remarkable height. Contemporary Indian English Drama is deviated from classical and European models. It is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical qualities. It is not borrowed from any specific tradition. It has laid the grounds of a distinguishing tradition in the history of Indian English drama by reinvestigating history, legend, myth, religion and folklore with context to modern socio-political issues. A collective theatrical tradition
unfolded by Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sirkar; Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad served the background of contemporary Indian English drama. The collective efforts of Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani and Karalam Narayana Pannikar are vital in their merging of the traditional forms of Indian drama with the modern. With this, the present generation of playwrights, has turned writer as well as directors. They are Zubin Driver, Ninaz Khodaiji, Ramu Ramanathan, Anosh Irani, Gautam Raja and Vikram Kapadia.

The present research work includes the dramatists like Gautam Raja, Anil Abraham, Anosh Irani, Ramu Ramanathan, Ninaz Khodaiji and Vikram Kapadia whose plays are not ever focused in any sense. Especially the plays, Gautam Raja’s *Pub Crawl, Shards* and *Damini, the Damager*, Anosh Irani’s *The Matka King* and *Bombay Black*, Ramu Ramanathan’s *Mahadevbhai* and *Collaborators*, Vikram Kapadia’s *Black with ‘Equals’*, Anil Abraham’s *The Gentlemen* and Nina Khodaiji’s *Insomnia*, have been published recently. The purpose of selecting *Pub Crawl, Shards* and *Damini, the Damager* is to show how the people destroy the rules and regulations of life and behave abnormally. Anosh Irani’s *The Matka King* and *Bombay Black*, manifest the infected artistic life defected normal life of people. The study of these plays aims to present the mentally and socially affected life in modern era. Though Ramu Ramanathan’s *Mahadevbhai* touches to Indian political leader Gandhiji and his contemporary Mahadevbhai, the miserable condition of the narrator leads the readers to look at him suspiciously. He attempts to establish his relationship with Gandhiji to prove him fine and good but he slightly suffers from psychological disorder. While *Collaborators* exposes how the different sections of the middle class are ingenious collaborating with those in power. The overall situation presented in this play proves that the characters are living in desolation. Vikram Kapadia’s *Black with
'Equals' refers to the coffee that members prefer to drink in the meetings. They gather to suffice their unwanted desires. Ninaz Khodaiji’s *Insomnia* is a fatalistic play. It highlights on the Bombay of a decade ago, when the city was devastated by religious riots and bombings. She focuses on the social disorder in Mumbai through this play.

The playwrights intend to expose how the community is living without moral values of life. They manifest the social and psychological disorder of young India living in an urban area. The black shadow of terrorism and its effects on common human life are also raised as a subject of drama by Ninaz Khotaiji in her only play *Insomnia*. It keys to the picture of bomb-blast in Pune on February 11, 2010 because an international attention is suddenly focused on the condition of Indian society in an ordinary world. I took this circumstance as an opportunity and hence proposed to study these dramatists.

**The Life and Work of the Playwrights**

1. **Gautam Raja**

   Gautam Raja is a brilliant journalist and photographer from Bangalore. He started writing in 1994, after attending a workshop by Indian playwright Mahesh Dattani. His one-act play *Admission* was selected as one of the two plays of the workshop to be exhibited at a performance at R&B Café in Bangalore. His plays have been presented in the US, the UK and India. His freelance accounts involve *Conde Nast Traveler, Time Out Dubai* and *beliefnet.org*, as well as several publications in India. He usually writes for the Dubai-based English daily Gulf News, notably for its op-ed column ‘*Off the Cuff*’ on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month, and has prepared so since 2005. The next play *Restless* was reproduced jointly with
Minakshi Menon, in 1994, for the launch of the youth wing of Artistes’ Repertory Theatre.

In 1996, he was the first playwright from India to attend the International Residency at the Royal Court Theatre in London. His full-length play *Pecking Orders* was first staged at the Asian Age Theatre Festival in Bangalore in 1998. It was followed by *Wood* and *Pub Crawl*, both which have seen multiple shows in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai. Gautam has worked in advertising and as a reporter. His work has been issued in Conde Nast Traveler, Time Out Dubai, Gulf News, Khaleej Times, The Hindu, PC Quest, Savvy Cook Book and Deccan Herald. He lives and works in Bangalore. The idea and theme of his plays have been focused in brief.

*Vaidehi* is his first play which is staged many times, but it didn’t get a publisher. The heroine of this play, Vaidehi fights against the established Indian system against common women. Her struggle to get equal value to women begins since her birth and ends with its conception. She proves herself to be a prisoner of social expectations, and she strives to show how she is similar to the men around her.

His next play is *Pub Crawl* written in 1999 and published in 2000, focuses on the absurd world of the protagonists of the play ‘He’ and ‘She.’ Their world is smeared with the hot events, which took place with them in the past and they, though living in the present, they believe in their nasty past rather than comfortable present. They share the incidents to one another, occurred with them in the past and try to comfort their souls exhuming their gutter of past. The play rightly comments on the postmodern scenario of the typical people living under the influence of alcohol.
His third play is *Shards* first staged in 1997, published in 2006 with many changes in the original script. It deals with the aspect of the women living in typical urban area to look at the outer world. The play deals with the two characters who are observing the people committing suicide. These women indirectly play the roles of wolves who patiently wait for their hunt and hastily devour its flesh.

His fourth play, *Damini, the Damager* written in 2005 and published at the same year, focuses on four female characters who are pursuing a different life from each other. They do not tie themselves to the restricted social rules and regulations. But they do not attempt to rescue themselves from this social bond of rules and regulations. The paly focuses on the changing scenario of the relationship between woman and woman, and at the same time, woman and the society. The protagonists prefer to destroy but not to yield to be the part of the society around them.

**2. Anosh Irani**

Anosh Irani was born in 1974. He is an Indian-Canadian novelist and playwright. He was born and raised in Mumbai. He has indicated that he prefers the city’s traditional English name, Bombay. After working in broadcasting in India, he went to Vancouver in 1998 to study and attempted writing. He is the writer of the famous novels *The Cripple and His Talismans* and *The Song of Kahunsha*. *The Song of Kahunsha* was selected for CBC Radio’s Canada Reads and the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize. It was issued in thirteen countries and became a bestseller in Canada and Italy. His play, *Bombay Black* was awarded a Dora Award as an Excellent New Play. Irani was specified for the Governor General’s Award for Drama for his compilation *The Bombay Plays: The Matka King & Bombay Black*. It has been attempted below to focus the brief ideas of each play.
Dahanu Road is his first novel, in which Zairos is a wicked young landowner’s son, residing in the town of Dahanu, just outward of Bombay. His life of indolent extravagance is brought up short by a strange death, the abrupt suicide of Ganpat, a tribular worker on his family’s farm. Soon Zairos falls in love with Ganpat’s daughter Kusum, and finds himself resisting laws with their relationship. At the same time his grandfather, Shapur, exposes to him the tale of their family and of the land that Zairos stands to obtain. Destruction and hatred echo through history and Zairos uncovers the terrible truth of his grandfather who has spent a lifetime hiding. The author depicts a courtship between a young Irani person and an even younger Warli woman with an exquisite touch. The virtue and innocence of their love linger even when it is violently mangled.

His second novel is The Cripple and His Talismans which deals with a story set in the chaos of Bombay. The novel traces the appearance of a unique, engaging voice. By turns profound, humorous, passionate, and warm, The Cripple and His Talismans tells the many layered, surreal story of a boy in search of his lost arm. Separated from his furnished upbringing by his handicap, the unnamed storyteller sets off on his quest. He encounters unusual and interesting characters. A beggar lives under an egg cart. An outcast slashes off his finger and offers it to the cripple. A lady sells rainbows. A blind man cannot go to the bathroom till he listens to the sound of a train. The cripple soon enhances himself as a riddle-solver. The trail of traces leads him to a godlike character named Baba Rakhu; a master of the underworld. He procures and sells lost limbs. From Baba, the storyteller uncovers the story of his lost arm and a new maxim that, ‘the world cannot be transformed by ending suffering’, but by a more reasonable allocation of it.
His third novel is *The Song of Kahunsha*, published in 1993 when Bombay was on the edge of being torn apart by communal violence. Chamdi, a boy of ten years old has rarely experimented outside his orphanage, and cherishes an idyllic allure of what the city is like beyond its garden walls, a paradise he calls Kahunsha, “the city of no sadness.” But when he runs away to search for his lost father, he finds himself transfixed into the turmoil of the streets, possessing only the blood-stained cloth, he was left in as a babe. There, Chamdi joins Sumdi and Guddi, brother and sister who beg in order to render for their ill mother, and the three grow fast friends. Fueled only by a desire to find his father and the dream that Bombay will eventually become Kahunsha, Chamdi strives for survival on its cruel streets. But when he is entangled up in the beginnings of the savage violence that will soon engulf the city, his dreams confront reality.

After the discussion of the brief ideas of his novels, it is better to know what the playwright shares with the audience, readers and researchers through his plays. His first play is *The Matka King*. It is a story of Top Rani, the eunuch. The story pits human nature against love and chance; a landscape of treachery and salvation come to life in the red-light district of Bombay, India. Top Rani operates an illegal lottery through his brothel, and when a gambler who is deeply in debt makes an accidental challenge, the stakes become life and death. He should be considered a monster simply because he differs from the usual course of nature. But what causes Top Rani to be a monster, is not his physical damage. It is his sagacity. Top Rani believes that his sterilization was predetermined, the act of a wicked God. He also forces everyone else to believe in, and operate under the rules of, that same God. He justifies his wrong doings by assuming to be an insignificant instrument in the fulfillment of fortune.
Irani’s second play, *Bombay Black* is a romantic story between a blind man and a dancer. In a seacoast flat, the strong-willed Padma accepts money from men so they may see her daughter, Apsara, who presents a hypnotizing dance. Apsara’s amazing beauty and erotically charged dancing cast spell over her rich and famous clients. The plot of the play is more complex than his previous play. The protagonist, Kamal doesn’t lose any chance to win the love of Apsara. He succeeds in his operation to win her at the end of the play.

His last play *My Granny the Goldfish* is a comedy. When Nico, a protagonist of the play and the young Indian student in Vancouver, is hospitalized, his grandmother arrives from Bombay. Despite Nico’s denials, she visits him. Her visit remains the best remedies of all his needs. *My Granny the Goldfish* is a story of exposing honesty and love in the midst of morphine and bedpans. The ideas granny prefers to cure her grandson are extraordinary which compel the audience and readers to laugh from heart and mind.

3. Ramu Ramanathan

Ramu Ramanathan, a young and yielding playwright, is connected with Prithvi Theatres in Bombay. He was also born and brought up in Mumbai. So he is familiar with the social atmosphere in Mumbai. As an artist and playwright, he performs various experiments in his plays. He has knowledge of Indian history. But he doesn’t believe in this history. As a scientist, he looks this phenomenon with different angles. He believes in original proofs and checks them through various social sciences like Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology and all other human sciences.

*Collaborators* is divided into sixteen scenes. There are four characters – the Husband, the Wife, the Man and the Woman – who meet
over a game of bridge every evening. There are frequent references to the Husband’s stay in prison. The play shows how the different sections of the middle class are constantly collaborating with those in power. The complex relationship between four characters exposes that how human beings are leading their common life from simplicity to complexity. They prove that they are haunted by their past, and they daily refresh their present with their soaking past. It deeply affects on their present life, so they remain just the toys in the hand of future.

*Mahadevbhai* (1892–1942) is about Mahadev H. Desai, who was Mahatma Gandhi’s secretary from 1917 till his death. He maintained a diary in which, he meticulously recorded Gandhi’s correspondence as well as conversations. Ramu Ramanathan makes full use of these diaries to present the history of India’s freedom struggle from a fresh perspective. Fragments of dialogue from other Indian languages like Gujarati and Hindi are employed in the play. It is a play of 21st century which indicates that the people of 21st century forgot their history and believe in the poisoned history which misguide whole human beings and distract them to materialist life. It is not only a story of master and disciple; it is a story of every human being who performs the role of sometimes master and sometimes disciple. The play tries to establish a belief in Indian history which is only a remedy on our problems. The play is translated in Marathi by a genuine English scholar, Maya Pandit.

**4. Vikram Kapadia**

Vikram Kapadia is one of the few contemporary playwrights who contributes original Indian English plays. He was encouraged by veteran theatre personality Pearl Padamsee in school since he was eight years old. He feels that the school creations that he shared in achieved greater
professional models when confronted to at least sixty percent of the city’s theatre results today.

He has an experience of twenty-five years as he has been with the theatre. He now consolidates the relevant roles of director, actor, writer and movie maker. He graduated from the Actors’ Studio in Bombay in 1981 which was managed by Roshan Taneja. He continued to obtain experience through workshops by overseas experts such as Peter Brook, Edward Argent, Janet Suzmann and others as well as from Indian vigorous personalities such as Habib Tanvir, Naseeruddin Shah, Satyadev Dubey and N. Muthuswamy.


His *Black with ‘Equal’*, is a naturalistic play in two acts. It was first staged in 2002. The title refers to the coffee that members prefer to drink in the meetings of the Jagruti Housing Society, a typical upper middle class residents’ association – some like it black, while others want it with ‘Equal’, a sugar substitute. People from different communities live in this apartment complex, and the meetings reveal the religious biases, hypocrisies and the self-centeredness of the middle class that is unmoved even as one of its members is assassinated. Vikram is also one of the few modern playwrights writing original Indian English plays.
5. Ninaz Khodaiji

Ninaz Khodaiji is one of the imminent writers who has had a love for the realm of theatre from the time she completed her graduation in English Literature from St Xavier’s College, Mumbai. Ninaz had an MA in Theatre Directing from Middlesex University and trained as an actor at the Herbert Bergh of Studio and Lee Strasberg Institute, New York. She has eight acknowledged directing credits and has written three plays, all of which have been presented. She first went on stage at age of sixteen and spent many years as a skilled actor, before realising she wanted to direct. She worked for almost twenty years in professional theatre as a director, writer, actress, programmer and producer. She was part of two foreign residencies with the Royal Court Theatre, through which she produced her play Insomnia. She was a writer in Residence at Oval House Theatre, where she produced and directed Strangers, as well as the London run of Insomnia. In 2007, she was a writer-director on the Jerwood Opera Writing Programme at Aldeburgh Music and has been involved with Visiting Arts’ Iran activity. She was Head of Asian Arts Development at Watermans, 2007-2012.

Insomnia, Ninaz Khodaiji’s first play, was staged by her through the Royal Court Theatre. The backdrop to this modern, pessimistic play is the Bombay of twenty years ago, when the town was devastated by religious riots and bombings. The play begins in January 1993 in Bombay, where Hindu-Muslim riots have broken out, and is structured as four monologues by the four main characters. Her Insomnia is an aspect of the drift into eternity as afterwards realized in her union with the country. As the characters in the play, cannot sleep, they can’t dream. Their decaying mind and listless hope in search of identity became a cause of their self-deception and destruction. The theme of the play proceeds both in symbolic and
genuine terms. Symbolically if they are living observers to the declines of the moral and political system of an anonymous country, they are aimlessly floating in a temporal world as their roots are only ostensible but not real in time.

6. Anil Abraham

Anil Abraham is an expert dermatologist and trichologist at the Abrahams Skin and Hair Clinic. He has been a Professor and Head of Dermatology at St. John’s Medical College Hospital for many years. He has brought up in the US and UK. He is an authority on Trichology and Aesthetic Dermatology. He is on the editorial board of national and international journals. He has written chapters in standard Dermatology and Trichology text books. He is a famous speaker world over and has delivered encouraging lectures at Stanford-USA, Birmingham, Beijing, Moscow, and Dubai among the other international dermatology organization. He is the only inclusive speaker called from India at the next World Legislature of Dermatology 2013. Anil Abraham has greeted with the Pope Paul Award for Best Outgoing Graduate, the Katariya Gold Medal for Best Postgraduate at PGI Chandigarh and the Patrick Yesudian Award and Oration from the Hair Society of India. His other hobbies include theatre and writing.

The play Gentlemen is written by Anil Abraham and published in 2008. It is divided into five monologues of different Gentlemen and a lady who try to expose which is not expected by the social system. They wish to break down the established social order and reestablish new order. The play focuses on the shy nature of human beings regarding their sexual organs. He expects from human beings that they should share their sexual problems openly so that they might not feel guilt about their problems. In this play, the playwright compels his protagonists to share their sexual ideas so freely that
they transgress the boundary. But the principal aim of the playwright is not about partaking ideas of sex freely; on the other hand, he concentrates on Freudian and Jungian concepts about sex and tries to convey the new ideas originated in the play.

Rationale and Significance of the Research Topic

As Indian English Drama is a neglected form of literature, it needs some special attention of the scholars and researchers. So the present research work deals with the study of the Indian English drama of 21st century which is the most neglected area. The other forms of literature are studied extensively in India and abroad as well as compared to the drama. The origin of Neo-liberal era in 1990 proved the life devoid with moral and philosophical values. The present work renders the new picture of changing India in the sense of social and psychological disorder. In this research work, almost all Indian English plays published after 2000 have been chosen so that it could be possible to communicate any clear judgement about the state of social and psychological situation of the society. The work intends to focus the contemporary dramatists and the subjects of their works so that the rising scholars may take interest in studying Indian English plays.

An Overview of the Relevant Literature

As all the playwrights and their plays are new and recently published, there are neither articles nor any critical reviews available on these works. Only few opinions are found on the internet about the nature, theme and subjects of the plays. They have been cited below in brief.

Regarding the plays by Anosh Irani, according to Jury of Governor General’s Award The Matka King and Bombay Black are at once poetic and theatrical, pulse with grit, humour and despair. The playwright made an
astonishing debut with these two plays. Globe and Mail think that Anosh Irani has crafted a romance as black and seductive as a desert night in both plays. The megazine, The Vernacular Sun expresses that, it is an excellent characterization and humor which brings cruel drama to life. The Westender feels that it is a raunchy, yet elegant an pleasant exploration of the darker side of human nature. According to Vancouver Courier Top Rani’s desire to understand his passion is very powerful. And this is perhaps where two ends meet in Irani’s intriguing play. A well known magazine from Canada, Canadian Literature states that Top Rani, in The Matka King, is a Barker much like Celestin in Jerome, the top eunuch in a whorehouse in the red light district, he has girls to betray and bets to take. The writing is deliciously biting. Every line is a chance to comment and satirize while the images are striking and stunning.

About Bombay Black Elite Magazine says that it is a play of affair, betrayal, love and rape. According to Time out Mumbai, Irani entwines fantasy with reality. The Hindu comments that it is a play that demonstrates the power of love over hate and the power of dreams over the passion for vengeance. Bombay Black deals with horrific facts and careful choices. The play results in being both grotesque and sarcastic. Another major magazine from Delhi, The Pioneer shares that Bombay Black has taken the sex war to where it should belong. It no longer examines femininity to be the amiable section of flesh for male aggression to knead, pound and mould into carnal subjugation. In contrast, delicacy here is a hissing serpent with pure anger, suffering and waiting to dive upon the sinning male for revenge. One more magazine from New Delhi, The Business Standard believes that it is a seizing tale about Apsara, a radiant and gorgeous dancer. She is forced to perform for men at the direction of her hardened by circumstances mother,
Padma. Padma’s dry taste of humour delivered matter of fact with perfect timing.

The next playwright is Gautam Raja whose plays have been reviewed by various persons and magazines. According to his publisher Gautam Raja’s plays are stimulating, disturbing, and a challenge for actors. With the theatre in his mind, greasepaint on his spirit, an ear for conversation and an eye for detail, Raja gives us three plays with memorable characters and metaphors that reverberate long after the curtain. Raja himself share his views on his plays that some people, when they read or watch work that features forthright Indian women, automatically reach for the word ‘feminism’. It is almost as if they have to use it as a shield to defend them from the revelations on stage. He used to be fond of it himself, until he realised that outside activist or academic frameworks, ‘feminism’ is an obscure, pretentious word. It is often used to give ineffectual ideas a mode of thrust. None of the pieces in this book was ever intended to be feminist writing. ‘Feminism’ as a legal has attendant vortices that only distract from the stories and their characters. Mahesh Dattani calls him an Indian voice and an Imaginative Mind. He further cites his view in detail. According to him, people who look for verisimilitude in Gautam Raja’s plays may be disappointed. Raja’s concerns are not with the day-to-day realities alone, although his plays and settings appear deceptively naturalistic. In fact, they carry far greater truths of our time than the ordinary realities that some contemporary playwrights are preoccupied with. As Gautam Raja avers in his introduction, he has his stories to tell, and his characters are firmly placed in them. He is not looking at representational figures, nor he draws his inspiration from feminism or other political trends, although Dattani
would disagree with him entirely and would dare to call him a true feminist. His plays are political, provocative, disturbing and a challenge for actors.

According to *The Times of India*, the play, *Damini*, *The Damager* comes across as surprisingly unstilted and non-simplistic. While *The Economic Times* shares that it is packed with a nervous energy, he has difficulty caging in. *The Hindu* comments that it has all the ingredients of a good playwright. *The Bangalore Monthly* thinks that it is irreverent but never irrelevant. *Asian Age* feels that it is a brilliant, satirical play.

The next playwright is Ramu Ramanathan on whose plays only two reviews are available. They have been cited below in brief. According to Deepa Punjani, *Collaborators* is a poisonous combination of dark humour and an internally seething apprehension waiting to blow up all the customs of polite society, ethical policy and civil order. Indeed, the twenty-first century Indian predicament is no less than an implicit time bomb. It is beating away quietly in the souls of all those who like Kranti, the play’s hero, are confronted with a community doing its balancing act amongst the rigours of communism, poverty, social inequality, dullness and the irregularity of perfect procedural equity.

And yet, the ‘word’ reigns supreme. The erudite playwright has once more after Mahadevbhai created a character, Kranti whose life will gain no sense if not seen from the panorama of history. Kranti is a character that makes you weep-weep for the misleading sensation of our security, our immunity at the comprehensive picture of reality, our mannerisms and more so for our conscious and unconscious confusion of the past.

This is not indeed a happy play; there is nothing in it to give you peace. Surely living room dramas are not meant to be like this but then who says this is? Everything in it reeks of a world whose order has been broken.
The other characters may seem to extend panaceas or moments of laughter in the face of affliction but the damage has been done.

Moreover, the play has a sub-text that is rich with symbolism and bygone cross-references that may seem overtly benign to begin with. For instance, the absent figure of Mr. Mahalanobis talks for both the past and the present state of circumstances. In fact, yet another bridge associate called Himanshu ever so often through his generous and baritone voice, communicates the underlying references as the very word, *Collaborators* implies varied meanings. In any case, the word has both a positive and a negative implication that the playwright has employed to the best in the story.

At one level, the play in its total breakaway from verisimilitude may be expressed as complex and yet the tale, which leads between the past and the present, is suggestive enough to keep one glued.

Laxmi Chandrashekar shares her view about *Mahadevbhai* that one would not have imagined a biographical play based on Gandhiji’s life, a two-hour monologue. The play, while examining the relevance of Gandhian principles and ideology to our times, sets the flashlight onto the little-known, modest, self-effacing scholar, *Mahadevbhai*. His diaries and translations of My Experiments with Truth have been so essential to our understanding of Gandhiji’s life and works. Mahadev Desai, chosen by the Mahatma to be his companion, served as his personal secretary from 1917 till his death in 1942. During these years, he maintained a diary in which he meticulously recorded all his conversations and correspondence with the Mahatma. The eight-volume diary is invaluable both as literature and history.

It is in these volumes that playwright-director Ramu Ramanathan has found the material for his play. *Mahadevbhai* is his attempt to set the
record straight. Through *Mahadevbhai*’s story, he leads us through various memorable acts and moments that decided the fate of the country, such as Dandi March, Champaran and Bardoli Satyagraha. He was a passionate believer in Gandhiji’s judgments on Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of untouchability, improving the lot of women, promotion of cottage industries, labour welfare, truth and non-violence. He articulates them with the conviction that touches the heart. His authentic account of Gandhiji’s interaction with leaders such as Ambedkar, Jinnah, Sardar Patel and the Nehru family helps clear several popular misconceptions. The play skillfully blends the historical narrative with *Mahadevbhai*’s personal life and the present moment. The humble, unassuming personality of *Mahadevbhai* brought out even in the way the actor introduces himself and in his highly ironical foreword of *Mahadevbhai*’s story being narrated to a Bollywood producer. This becomes particularly significant in the light of all the commercial hits based on the lives of freedom fighters that Bollywood has been churning out. Bits of drama and comedy, inserted now and then, break the monotony of the narrative.

Another thinker Rashmi Malapur shares her views about the play *Mahadevbhai*. She thinks that, we have either put Gandhiji on a foundation or critically judged his ideologies. Bringing his ideals into our life isn’t convenient nor comfortable for anyone today. That doesn’t mean they are inappropriate; it only shows we fail to understand and attempt to do so. The play *Mahadevbhai* asks us to reflect on this very fact. *Mahadevbhai* is presented by Aasakta Kalamancha, a theatre group that consistently transcends the hopes of its audiences by giving them a unique and memorable theatre experience. The play is written by Ramu Ramanathan and is based on the daily diary prepared by *Mahadevbhai* in which he jotted
down the incidents, lectures, conversations and letters exchanged with Gandhiji. *Mahadevbhai* was not only closely connected with Gandhiji but was rather his voice, because he put into words his philosophies, speeches, books, discourses, movement; his life.

It speaks about Gandhiji’s immense belief in the weapon of Satyagraha, despite facing innumerable challenges and his capacity to shake the British endowment with intelligence and non-violence. The extremists who didn’t quite believe in silent protest widely acknowledged ‘Dandi March’. Back then leaders had the ability to appreciate other leaders despite their differences. Gandhiji understood that with so many years of discrimination only disdain and hostility had raised in the hearts of ‘Harijans’ (untouchables). He knew Hindus should not expect them to forget it soon. The play focuses on Gandhiji’s relation with Ambedkar and the Poona Pact, which is also an eye opener. The ironic implication of Godhra meeting in 1917 and the Godhra slaughter in 2002 is highlighted by slight tonal distinction and repetition of the word Godhra. Thus, the play not only runs through past but, makes associates to India then and India now. Gandhiji was building a nation through modifying lives. Independence was not his only vision. *Mahadevbhai* was witness to his vision. The play resonates on how today’s youth is totally disassociated and disinterested with the freedom movement, our freedom fighters and the efforts put in by them so that we the tomorrow generations live in sovereign India. History loaded in the most ordinary manner in schools kills their curiosity.

Fourth playwright in this research work is Vikram Kapadia. On his *Black with ‘Equal’* only one review is available. Purva Desai in her review clears almost everything about the play. She thinks that the play’s neutrality sits on the fence. What appears is seemingly real. Love by religion is what
man preaches, although subtly in this 21st century. And the man can do nothing to break the dam of hatred. *Black with ‘Equal’* portrays contemporary society at its worst. Vikram Kapadia’s kaleidoscopic representation of human relations is accurate and thought provoking. A general meeting held at Jagruti Co-Operating Housing starts off well only to end in the unpredictable. *Black with ‘Equal’* seems to suggest that anything can start over a simple meeting, a simple conversation. The play depicts the human mind descending into evilness. As the play progresses, we realize that instead of the setting being in Jagruti Co-Operating Housing Society, it could be any society, yours or mine. Dialogue delivery is fantastic in this satirical play that is witty, humorous and mocking at the same time. As audiences, we laugh uncontrollably at the intended puns, but only to realize that we are laughing at ourselves. We as audiences are asked the meaning of our existence. Law, order and civility take a backseat when religious issues surface. And communal hatred becomes a frightening reality. Eight of the total characters sit in a semi-circle and discuss issues. Some apologise, some voice-unspoken thoughts and suddenly there is a deafening noise, and we realise that if it took six days to create the world, it takes only 6 minutes to destroy it. The theme of the play is extremely universal where issues are not confined within an Indian context only. The script has to be complimented for its originality.

Ninaz Khodaiji is fifth playwright in this research work. On her only published play *Insomnia*, only one review is available. Chris Bartlett, in his review, tries to explore the basic idea of the play. According to him, the play bestows the comfortable survivals of the people living in Mumbai. They are uplifted by setting the action against the backdrop of the profane riots. They ripped the city apart at the start of the decade. Ninaz Khodaiji’s choice to
mold white Europeans without a sign of Indian accent as the principals of well-heeled suburbanites, giving the consequence of a second generation of expats or rich overseas students, just highlights the gulf between their world and the ethereal and unspoken of life in the tenements beyond their uptown apartments. The only time these worlds smash is when one of their numbers is attacked by a street gang and the result from this one violent conflict, conveyed to the audience directly, confessional style, by each character in turn - prompts the principals to shift even deeper into their closeted lives of parties and joy riding. Although the visible match the mood totally, with Sophie Neil’s attic apartment set and Francis Watson’s subtle lighting, including a flickering TV set, hitting the right note of melodramatic evil; it is Khodaiji’s rich dialogue which involves most. Only Elliot Hill, leading an offering perfect cast as the slick but cowardly Hoham, is landed with the stylised salvo, his opening monologue sounding uncharacteristically synthetic compared to what follows.

The last playwright of this research work is Anil Abraham. The limited views are available about his play, Gentlemen. According to MTG editorial, in a short play that discusses issues that men normally do not talk about, five characters communicate and discuss their problems in a monologue form on a single stage. The play impacts on socially and emotionally embarrassing issues by camouflaging the message with humour and a humane touch. Music plays an integral role in the play. The play is a humorous take on men’s obsession with fallacies and phalluses.

Sravasti Datta is a friend of Anil Abraham. She tried to pick up what the playwright said about this play on various occasions. According to her, Gentlemen deals with issues that men debate to speak about. It is the weak, sensitive side of the male classes. Gentlemen strives to present the
male view-point. It’s chance that men had their say. Within *Gentlemen* are diminutive plays that comprise interesting characters and bizarre plots. The plots vary from a concerned teenager discovering the joys of life to a senior civilian giving us his take on social issues today. In between we have a Malyali software engineer with chamber blues and a Shivajinagar barber who grants us, have a glimpse at his life. And for a wonder gender bender, there’s a little twist at the end. Anil says that the response to *Gentlemen* has been huge across age groups and social strata. Taken at its simplest it has been apprehended as an entertaining comic theatrical piece. At another level, it deals with several issues with a huge dollop of humour.

**Objectives**

1. To study the select plays of the representative playwrights in the light of the theory of social and psychological disorder.
2. To compare the select playwrights’ views, vision and ideas regarding social and psychological disorders.
3. To make a comprehensive statement regarding the sociological and psychological disorder in the 21st century Indian English Drama.

**Hypothesis**

It seems that the plays of 21st century expose socially and psychologically disordered society.

**Scope and Limitations**

The scope of this study cannot be enlarged to accommodate the whole changed scenario of India after 20th century. Therefore, the objective of this study itself is limited one. It aims at finding dramatic visions of the playwrights in the terms of the themes of the social and psychological disorders reflected in their representative plays only. As there was no chance for selection because of less writing in 21st century Indian English Drama, it
has been selected all prominent English playwrights who contributed maximum three plays in English. Anosh Irani is the rising star whose three plays have been staged, and two of them are published. He wrote three novels, but they are not concerned with my topic, so they have been just exposed with major themes. His plays are related to the present research work. So his other forms of literary works have been neglected. It is the same case of Ramu Ramanathan and Gautam Raja who contributed many plays, but the present research is concerned with only five of their plays. This research work deals with other four playwrights such as Ninaz Khodaiji, Anil Abraham, Gautam Raja and Vikram Kapadia. At least, one play of each of them has been selected for my research, so their other works are slightly neglected. Naturally enough, the poetry, novels and short stories of the select playwrights do not come within the purview of the study. At the same time the issues like dramatic techniques, style, setting and other concerns are also out of the scope of the present study. Though this research work occupies a broad perspective, it slightly touches social and psychological theories and deeply concentrates on hidden disorders; which are concerned with social or psychological view of the society.

Actually both order and disorder are abstract terms. They lie in the observer’s eyes. The present research work doesn’t focus on mental or social illnesses; instead, it touches the disorders that are not available in written form. This work doesn’t blame ‘Shakespeare, who broke down the social order keeping illegal relationship with Mary Fitton when he was only eighteen and she was twenty six years old, nor would it abuse the great female characters like Juliet and Ophelia who committed suicide due to the failure in the love. Sometimes inner natural forces cause to break the social order as these characters attempt to establish natural order by either keeping
illegal relationship or committing suicide. Society calls it a disorder, but it is a kind of constructive disorder.

The philosophers and critics of modern and postmodern era are just talking about absurdity, hollowness, emptiness and cruelty of human life. The current research comments on their ‘medical madness’ to call such situation, a void situation. In this research, it has been attempted to focus on that order which Michel Angelo, Shakespeare, and Robert Frost preferred. They chose the different ways of life, but contemporary society and even individuals called it, disorder. This work comments on such systems, which are made up with bare rules and regulations; and force people to follow them. It is claimed that the idiots who follow it and intelligent who break it. But this work strictly prohibits the idea of thinking ‘the unnatural things carry the disorder.’ To do natural things means to follow the order and to follow the rules and regulations established by society means to insist for disorder. This research proves ‘the order’ to which people call disorder and ‘the disorder’ to which they call order. The present research prefers to disorder which is natural, free, and naked as a baby.

**Methodology**

The analytical, evaluative, interpretative and comparative methods have been used for this research. In order to state the critical views, the modern critical theories have been studied. Library method has been supplemented, and the interviews of Gautam Raja, Anosh Irani, Ramu Ramanathan, Vikram Kapadia, Anil Abraham, and Ninaz Khodaiji have been taken online and few of them by email. Qualitative Research has been used which aimed at finding out the quality of a particular phenomenon. The background, improvement, current conditions and environmental interactions of one or more individuals, groups, communities, businesses or
institutions have been perceived, recorded and analysed for stages of patterns in relation to internal and external influences.

**Chapter Scheme**

This research work has been classified into five chapters along with the introduction at the beginning. In ‘Introduction’, almost all topics have been covered in short. It gives us an idea of what the present research work includes. In the beginning, it has been explored the reasons of selecting the topic and its necessity to study. In it, the changed panorama of Indian social and psychological condition after the inclusion of neo-liberalism, privatization and globalization in the last decade of 20\textsuperscript{th} century has been discussed in short. In the second point, all the playwrights and their works have been introduced in short. In the third point, the rationale and significance of the research topic have been focused. In an overview of relevant literature, almost all reviews concerning to the select plays have been cited. Then, hypothesis, objectives and methodology have been explored. The last point includes the final chapter scheme which gives the overall idea of the present research work.

The first chapter deals with the theoretical perspectives of social and psychological disorder. In it, the definition, nature and scope of both social and psychological disorders have been explored in detail. Besides, various types of social and psychological disorders have been evaluated in detail. At last, the reasons of these disorders have been discussed.

The second chapter is the social and psychological disorder in the plays of Gautam Raja and Anil Abraham. It includes a discussion of social and psychological disorders in the select plays of Gautam Raja and Anil Abraham. Gautam Raja’s three plays; *Pub Crawl*, *Shards*, and *Damini the Damager* have been focused while Anil Abraham’s only play *Gentlemen* has
been focused through the social and psychological point of view. These four plays have some similarities; that is why, they have been included in this chapter.

Third chapter deals with the social and psychological disorder in the plays of Anosh Irani and Ninaz Khodaiji. It explores the discussion of social and psychological disorder in the plays of Anosh Irani and Ninaz Khodaiji. The plays select to discuss in this chapter set in the typical background of Mumbai; so they have been taken together for discussion. Irani’s *The Matka King* and *Bombay Black* highlight on that class of society which is subaltern and neglected from the spectacle of government. Khodaji’s *Insomnia* portrays the communal riots, took place in 1991 in Mumbai and how they affected the social and psychological life of the middle-class artists living in Mumbai.

Fourth chapter is the social and psychological disorder in the plays of Ramu Ramanathan and Vikram Kapadia. It includes three plays by two playwrights. Ramunathan’s *Collaborators* and *Mahadevbhai*, and Vikram Kapadia’s *Black with ‘Equal’* have been focused through social and psychological perspectives. *Collaborators* and Black with Equal set in the typical atmosphere of Mumbai. These plays focus on the family in the social contact and, *Mahadevbhai* comments on the family in the national contact. All these plays portray the social and psychological disorders of the characters. These characters are representatives of those living in the society and disturbing a personal and social health.

The concluding chapter deals with the comparative perspectives of the playwrights and their plays along with their innovative visions applied in these plays. The second half of the chapter converges on the findings and exposes if the objectives of the present research work have been fulfilled or not.