CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN DRAMA IN ENGLISH

The word drama comes from the Greek word 'dran' or 'drao' which means 'to do' or 'to act'. A play is a story acted out; it shows the people going through some eventful period in their lives, seriously or humorously. The speech and action recreate the flow of human life. A play comes to life only when it is enacted on the stage and it combines many arts those of the author, director, actor, designer and others. The dialogue occupies an important place in drama. A playwright may instruct or entertain or do both. His attitude towards his subject may be serious or light or a combination of the two.

A dramatist starts with characters and the characters must be full, rich, interesting and different enough from each other so that in one way or another they conflict. From this conflict comes out the drama. The conflict may or may not be resolved, but conflict must be there. Applied to the theatre, it embraces all works composed for performance and finds its most elementary expression in mime. The mimetic instinct is inherent in Man but it only dramatized when he invokes it to represent a spiritual or physical conflict, in short, when imitation becomes the action. Since the instinct itself is essentially a combination of the desires for self-expression and self-exploration, its fulfillment enables the imagination of actors and audience jointly to explore in terms of imitations which the actors
persuade the audience to believe as real, the mysterious of human behavior. The word drama, therefore as used of the theatre implies a cooperative act of make-believe, by which it becomes possible for an imitator to present and for a spectator to receive an explanatory image of those physical and spiritual conflicts which govern the humans.

Indian literature occupies a special place in contributing to world literature. It involves a variety of cultures and languages. Indian drama is an old custom which made its presence felt from the later Vedic period. The Indian culture, custom and mood are presented in Indian theatre through - natya, lasya, mudra, etc. Indian drama and Indian theatre had the base in the origin and development of Sanskrit literature. Indian drama has the longest and richest tradition. The origin of Sanskrit drama dates back to 1st AD. Indian drama became a means of exploring and communicating the truth of things and popularly known as “fifth Veda.”

According to the legend when the world passes from the Golden Age to the Silver Age the people started getting addicted to several sorts of sensual pleasure, jealous, anger and desire. Then, Lord Indra requests God Brahma: “Please give us something which would not only teach us but be pleasing both to eyes and ears.” God Brahma gives the pious idea of the Natya Veda. He combines the essence of the Natya Veda out of the four Vedas, dance from the Rig Veda, song from the Sama Veda, mimicry from the Yajur Veda and passion from the Athar Veda. Bharatha’s Natyashastra
is a treatise that deals with all aspects of the diverse arts and embodied in the classical Indian concept of drama including dance, music and poetics. Bharatha describes drama as mimicry of the actions and conduct of the people. It follows that only drama uses the eight basic emotions of love, joy, anger, sadness, pride, fear, aversion and wonder. It depicts different situations relating to men - good, bad and indifferent. It also gives courage, amusement, happiness and advices to all of them. Bharatha's *Natyashastra* is the most pioneering work on Indian dance. It displays consciousness of all major aspects of drama, namely stage - the setting, music, plot-construction, characterization, dialogue and acting.

Earlier drama was performed in a simple way of daily activities. Later some episodes from the *Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavat Gita* were acted on the public stage in front of people. Such type of performance is still very popular in India during the time of the Dussehera. The two great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are great influence on many writers of the next centuries. The important writers of classical Sanskrit drama are - Bhasa, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Sudraka, Visakhadatta and Harsha. The famous works of Bhasa are *Swapna-Vasavadattam* and *Pratijna- Yougandharayanam*. Kalidasa is the master of both poetry and drama. His plays *Abhijnana-Shakuntalam, Vikramorvasiyam, Malavikagnimitram* are great influence till today. Bhavabhuti's *Malati-Madhavan* has prologue which contains author's
information and his views about drama. Vishakhadatta wrote political play *Mudra-Raskshasam*. Sudraka wrote *Mrchakatika* proved another significant play. The period of these dramatist is considered as the Golden Age of Sanskrit drama.

Sanskrit drama flourished in its glory for a decade but after there the Indian drama declined in its popularity due to certain foreign invasion. When the British enter into India, the crippled Indian drama regained its strength. With the arrival of the English theatre in India the concept of heroes and celestial beings in drama faded away slowly as the English theatre brought realistic touch to the Indian drama. Drama selected the major events of individual life, socio-economic and political affairs of the society. The colonization did a play major role in influencing the Indian dramaturgy.

Drama, being a composite art, requires accessories as the stage, the actors and audience. Marjorie Boulton says:

"A true play is three dimensional: it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes. It is not intended that the eye shall perceive marks on paper and the imagination turn them into sights, sound and actions: the text of the play is meant to be translated into sights, sounds and actions, which occur literally and physically on the stage. Though in fact plays are
often read in silence, if we are to study drama at all intelligently we must always keep this in mind."

Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai were the three the important places to develop the Indian theatre as these places were the centers of the British East India Company. The dramatic activists were encouraged by the patrons. During the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, many of the intellectuals went abroad to study. Hence, they exposed to different places and different theatres and literature. The Indian English playwrights were encouraged to write their own dramas in their native language. The important dramatists, like Madhusudhan Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore and others wrote dramas also in English and vernacular languages and enacted theme before audience. The other dramatists tried to write scripts and enacted on the stage.

The National School of Drama was established in 1959 at Delhi. Some of the dramatic organizations like, the Parsi Natak Mandali, the Indian National Theatre, the Amateur Dramatic Association and Ebrahim Alkazi's Theatre Unit are established in different parts of the country. Institutions for training in dramatics were found in big cities; The departments of drama were established in the universities and the National Drama Festival was started in Delhi by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1954. But all these developments led to the growth of Regional
language theatre. Many of the Indian English plays had to remain satisfied with one or two performance in big cities.

It is important to study the role of street theatre in the contribution of the English theatre in India. Theatre was born before the birth of language that is theatre gives voice to the voiceless when state institutions have turned away from becoming the voice of the people then theatre has to fulfill its social responsibility. A living example of this is the birth of street theatre around 1967. Theatre is only relevant when it raises its voice against degeneration and decay. The street theatre made its effort to present socio-political and economic problems of society. The street theatre movement is not only an alternative in the field of drama. The street theatre having some ideology has faced several problems-the murder of theatre activist in Kerala, the killing by police in Bengal, murder of an activist in Andhra Pradesh which pressurized to ban street theatre. All these problems show us that whenever the voice rose against the injustice.

Comparing to other forms of literature like novel, poetry and prose, the drama writing has been slow. The reasons for lop-sided development of drama are many. Drama is an art which requires accessories like actor, stage, audience, director and so on. As M.K. Naik puts it, “A play in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience, needs a
real theater and a live audience. It is precisely the lack of these essentials that has hamstrung Indian drama in English all along”.\(^4\)

Indian drama in English has some problems i.e., poor stage worthiness, lack of theatres to stage dramas in English, inability of the dramatists to exploit the rich ancient Indian classical dramatic tradition, ancient lore, native folk — forms and above all the problem of evolving a language that would suit the Indian situation. The real success of a play can be tested only on stage. For this, a living theatre is necessary. The dramatists had to write plays which were stage worthy. The theatre staging English plays in India did not enjoy much popularity. Even with a rich and healthy background of ancient drama, Indian drama in English faced problems while finding its roots in the native soil. The earlier playwrights who wrote in English were not inspired by the classical Indian drama. Neither did they employ the rich folk forms and techniques of classical Sanskrit drama. The dramatists of the time were more interested in imitating the western models. K.R.S. Iyenger says:

"Modern Indian dramatic writing in English is neither rich in quantity nor, on the whole of high quality. Enterprising Indians have for nearly a century occasionally attempted drama in English - but seldom for actual stage production."\(^5\)
The playwrights did not give much attention to the use of language. English, being a foreign language, was not intelligible to the masses and the playwrights found it difficult to write crisp, natural and graceful dialogue in English, their dialogue was bound to be stilted and artificial. The English theatre had a limited appeal to the elite in big cities.

To make a thorough study of the progress of Indian English drama through the times one has to take a look into its history.

The saga of Indian drama in English began with K.M. Banergi’s *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindu Society in Calcutta* (1831) and with Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s *Is This Called Civilization?* (1871). The Indian English Drama has not yet achieved the height achieved by other genres of Indian English literature like novel and poetry. M.K. Naik remarks “The sad Cinderella of Indian English literature from the beginning, drama remains its Cinderella still, waiting for her prince.”

There are two major stages in the development of Indian drama in English- the first stage is Pre-Independence Indian drama in English and the second stage is Post-Independence Indian drama in English. The great dramatists like, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, A. S. P. Ayyar, T.P. Kailasam, Bharati Sarabhai and others come under Pre-Independence stage.
Rabindranath Tagore occupies the highest place as a dramatist in Indian English drama. Tagore was awarded with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for the poetic work *Gitanjali*. His plays are written in Bengali, later himself translated some of his plays into English. These translations are known as trans-creations. His famous plays translated into English are *Sanyasi* (1884), *Malini* (1895), *Sacrifice* (1892), *The King and Queen* (1889), *Karna and Kunti* (1897), etc. Some of the plays translated by others are *The Post Office* (1912), *The King of The Dark Chamber* (1910), *Muktadhara* (1922), *Natir Puja* (1926), and *Chandalika* (1933). These plays deal with the mystery of the human existence. He was greatly influenced by the regional Bengali Theatre. Like the classical drama of earlier times his plays are full of songs and showed other features like prelude, dialogue and Vidhushak. His plays have the loose Elizabethan dramatic model. The contribution of Rabindranath Tagore brought in a lot of changes in Indian English drama. These plays cannot be identified with Aristotle or Shakespeare as he has created a different pattern or model of his own.

The plays of Tagore deal with the themes of love, religion and faith which are essential for human life. There are conflicts, reflective of life and solutions are brought by life itself. *Sanyasi* (1923) is a symbolic play deals with the truth of finding infinite in finite. Sanyasi, the main character withdraws himself from outer world to realize the divine. Later he realizes that isolation cannot lead to infinite. He meets Vasanti pure incarnation of
love, nature and life but he rejects her. Nature takes revenge against him and Sanyasi seeks the path of village in search of Vasanti. The theme of the play is deliverance which can be achieved in the midst of the human bondage. Ego and possession degenerate the Man; Love is the only liberating and purifying force.

The play *Malini (1923)* deals with the conflict between Brahminism and Buddhism. The play focuses on the theme of the religion of love. Malini, the daughter of a king, supports Buddhism and she stands against orthodox Brahmines. Finally, she makes them to realize the importance of love and faith in humanity. Supriya and Kemankar stand against Malini. Later Supriya realises the importance of Buddhist doctrines and betrays Kemanker's treachery against the king. Malini pleads pardon Kemankar, let the criminal undergo suffering and the inner purgation.

*Sacrifice (1892)* deals with the hollowness of inhuman religious rituals. This play also focuses on significance of love and humanity. This play is dedicated to those heroes who bravely stood for peace when human sacrifice was claimed for the goddess of war. Its plot is remarkable for dramatic restraint and concentration. This play is suitable in the modern context and teaches the modern man the meaning and need of religion according to the present day requirements.
*Chandalika* (1933) depicts the victory of holiness over the lust. The untouchable girl Prakriti falls in love with Ananda, a Buddhist disciple. Prakriti's love is a devouring fever of desire. She asks her mother to cast a magic spell on Ananda so that he may return and quench the raging fever. The spell drags Ananda to Chandalika's hut. Prakriti's final victory is also her supreme defeat. Anand has come to the cottage but his face is agonised - not the face she has longed for, the face of beauty and holiness. She cries in despair and asks her mother to remove the spell. Anand is released from the spell. The mother dies of the wrong deed and Prakriti's spiritual rebirth is completed.

*The King of the Dark Chamber* (1910) is a symbolic play. The King symbolizes the God. He is everywhere and everything but only few can see the God. The play is rewarding in its spiritual insights. *The King of the Dark Chamber* is about a woman with sick soul; the King visits the Dark Chamber of the Queen's heart, and all is well.

*The Post Office* (1912) is about a child with a sick body. The King visits the boy. Amal is a sick boy with the vision that the King will send a letter to appoint him as a post man and imagines the same throughout the day and night but he dies at the end of the play. Amal's aspiration and divine response meets and its consequence is his new birth, not physical death. The adventure with the Divine leaves the man cured in soul as well.
as body. The spirit has come to the parched human heart and there will be new life and joy.

Chitra(1913), Gandhari’s Prayer(1897) and Karna and Kunti(1897) are inspired by the Mahabharata. The play Chitra depicts love from the sphere of physical beauty to the eternal heavens of moral beauty. In Chitra’s character Tagore embodies the idea of the evolution of human love from the physical to the spiritual. Chitra is attracted to Arjuna. She worships God and got boon of beauty for one year. Under the false pretext Arjuna loves her beauty. Indeed the youth and beauty are evanescent but Chitra and Arjuna do not realise this truth and their illusion is broken. Both realized that true love transcends mere physical love and signifies a total giving. This play focuses on the youth and growth, and true virtue of womanhood.

Mukta-Dhara (1922) is a social play, the king of Uttarakut decides to construct a dam against a river which lead to the sufferings of many farmers but Prince Abhijit, a foundling, realises the grief of the poor and fights against the heartlessness of the king. Abhijit breaks the dam and sacrifices his life. The Cycle of Spring is an interesting play that deals with the fear of death. A king finds two gray hairs behind ears, fears death and loses interest in his duty. Later the king got realization that life is ceaseless and resumes his duty as a king. Red Oleanders (1924) presents victory of human values over materialism.
Rabindranath Tagore was influenced by Jatra, a folk theatre of Bengal and Sanskrit drama and all plays are known for use of symbolism, myth and legends. The characters and themes are rooted in Indian ethos and deepest convictions. His plays are comparable with the dramas of W.B. Yeats. Tagore's dramatic art is both simple and complex. It is simple in style and expression. It is complex in the variety of its forms and the depth of its meaning. There is variety of structure in his plays. The form of Tagorean play is always shaped by the need of its theme.

Sri Aurobindo is one of the foremost writers in Indian English literature. He is a poet, dramatist, prose writer and a philosopher. He has tremendous knowledge of the Eastern and Western cultures and Languages-English, Sanskrit and Bengal. His works – Collected Poems and Plays published in 1942. Hence, his plays can be taken up for study in the pre-independence phase, in spite of the fact that they were separately published after 1947. Sri Aurobindo was a prophet and a recluse and he stood apart in unique solitariness. His five complete plays and six incomplete plays are but a small fraction of his phenomenal literary output. The complete five plays of Aurobindo are Perseus the Deliverer, Vasavadutta, Rodogune, the Viziers of Bassora, and Eric the King of Norway. Out of these five plays Rodogune is a tragedy and other four are comedies.

The romantic story, Perseus the Deliverer deals with Greek legend of Perseus. Perseus, the son of Danae and Zeus, is known for grace and
compassion. He fights against Poseidon and Polydaon, the evil force and wins Syria and marriages Andromeda. He is hailed as a deliverer of the people. *Perseus the Deliverer* is a play in five acts written during the early part of Sri Aurobindo's literary career. The playwright weaves a romantic story around the Greek legend of Persusas.

*The Viziers of Bassora* is a romantic love story taken from *The Arabian Nights*. The two young lovers, Nur Al-Din Ali, a son of the good Vizier Alfazzal and Anice-al-Jalice a slave girl, are united with the help of Caliph Haroun al Rashid. The play is again presents fight of evil and good. The wicked Vizier Almuene with his wicked tricks puts many obstacles in their ways but finally the lovers get marry and also get the throne of Bassora.

*Vasavadatta* is a romantic play of young king of Cowsambie, Udayan and princess Vasavadatta. Udayan is kidnapped by his political rival Mahasegn the King of Avanthie and kept in jail under the vigilance of Vasavadatta. The love ensues between Udayan and Vasavadatta and they escape to Cowsambie. This hurts to Mahasegn but the situation is brought under control by Gopalaca. Mahasegn finally agrees to free Udayan and conveys his approval to Vasavadatta's marriage with him. *Rodogune* is the only romantic tragedy. The love leads to the Civil war between Antiochus and Timocles. Rodogun and Antiochus are the true lovers but Timocles is attracted to the beauty of Rodogune kills Antiochus. This leads to the
death of Rodogune. *Eric* deals with the Viking culture of the Nordic race in ancient Norway.

The main theme of Sri Aurobindo's plays is love, liberty and evolution and symbolically they present the inner urge for freedom. All the plays are treated romantically. The dramatic literature of Sri Aurobindo has global coverage in the total content. There is a great influence of Elizabethan drama in plot construction and characterization. At the same time there is impact of Sanskrit writers.

K.R.S. Iyengar aptly says about Sri Aurobindo’s plays as:

"But all five plays are steeped in poetry and romance, recalling the spirit and flavour of distinctive dramatic type exemplified in different ways by Bhasa, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti".7

The specialty of Aurobindo’s plays is variety of period and place ranging from ancient Greek times to medieval India and covering diverse lands like Syria, Norway, India, Persia, and Iraq and so on. Sri Aurbindo indirectly presents realities of the contemporary world by taking the audience to a distant past, to a world of adventure and chivalric love and uses few supernatural elements also. Aurbindo is influenced by William Shakespeare. But these dramas can be called as closest dramas as they cannot fully meet the demands of the stage.
Harindranth Chattopadhyaya occupies special place in Indian English drama and his dramas deal with social, devotional and historical themes and known for his versatility. He brought working class characters on the stage, *Five Plays* (1929) is a collection of plays reveals his social consciousness and flair for realism. This collection of plays has social playlist: - *The Window, The Parrot, The Sentry's Lantern, The Coffin and The Evening Lamp*. H.N. Chattopadhyaya wrote hagiological plays also, such as – *Siddhartha: Man of Peace, Saku Bai, Jayadeva, Mela, Eknath* etc., deal with the conflict between good and evil and the victory of virtue over evil. His religious plays deal with the lives of saints. He attempted to modernize Indian drama in English. In the social plays evils and problems are exposed with the help of symbols. To be more impressive the characters and situations stand sharp contrast to one another. The dialogues are crisp and used several spoken words. The dramatist being a poet, made efforts to write plays but unable to meet all the essentials of the stage so far as full length dramas are concerned.

Tyagaraja Paramasiva Kailasam is essentially a Kannada playwright. He is called as father of modern Kannada drama and finds complete expression in English plays. Being a bilingual dramatist, he wrote both in English and Kannada. The plays present sound knowledge of the ancient Indian lore. The rich tradition of the Kannada theatre and rich cultural heritage of his country helped him to adroitly use myth and
history for dramatic purpose. His long stay in England urged him to contribute something to the field of literature particularly to drama in English. His plays have a deep reverence for our ancient culture, the values of life, blend of vision and stagecraft. The dramatist has taken majority of his themes from the *Mahabharata* than from the *Ramayana* as he believes that the characters of the *Mahabharata* are like real people of mundane world, though they may have meditative ambition still all are like human being but in the *Ramayana*, the characters have transgressed humanity.

Kailasam’s published plays are – *The Burden*(1933), *Fulfillment*(1933), *A Monologue*, *The Purpose*(1944), *The Curse of Karna and Keechaka*(1949). G.S.Amur holds a very high opinion about T.P. Kailasam, and says: "A talented actor who appeared on the amateur as well as the professional stage, he brought to the writing of drama an intimate knowledge of the theatre. It is for this reasons that his plays whether in Kannada or English, have a uniform technical excellence."8

The English plays of Kailasam deal with epic themes and a world of romance whereas his Kannada plays deal with contemporary society and its problems. He shows his interest in highlighting the greatness of the epics. Kailasm stands apart from his contemporary writers as he highlights the greatness of tragic heroes of the epics and gave prominence to neglected characters of the epics. His plays are stage worthy as he had
better stage sense and his plays appear to be capable of greater success on the stage.

_The Burden_(1933) is a tragedy deals with Bharata and Satrughna meet two aged Chamberlains at court and make enquiries with them but fail to know the matter, finally they find the truth that their father Dasaratha died and banished Rama. Bharatha is enraged with it and the royal priest Vasistha consoles him and directs him to perform his duty. _The Purpose_ deals with life of Ekalavya who learned archery with the image of Drona, a great teacher who rejected him to be his student. Ekalavya observes the teaching of Drona from distance and become a great archer, later cuts his thumb and offers to Drona as a fees to his teacher. Thus the Ekalavya's story has become a powerful story in the hands of Kailasam. The play _Fulfilment_(1933) deals with how Lord Krishna tries to dissuade Ekalavya from joining Kauravas, his efforts are failed, hence Lord Krishna stealthily kills him and justifies the act that it is the purpose not the manner of killing that decides fairness of killing. The misery of son's death kills his mother too, fulfill the purpose.

_The Curse or Karna_(1964) deals with the story of Karna, his birth and his participation in war and his death. _Keechaka_(1949) is the last play of Kailasam deals with the hero's attraction to Sairandri (Draupadi disguise as a punishment for Pandavas) and his death in the hands of Bhima. These plays of Kailasam deal with stories of characters from _The Mahabharata_ with
some changes where ever is necessary. His plays highlight the greatness of the tragic heroes of the epics, the plays have better stage sense, and capable of greater success on the stage.

A.S.P Ayyar is a significant playwright. His famous plays are In the Clutch of the Devil(1926), Sita’s Choice And Other Plays(1935), The Slave of Ideas And Other Plays(1941), and The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity(1942) deal vigorously with contemporary life. Sita’s Choice, a play in five acts, deals with the theme of widow marriage. Brahma’s Way is an indictment of the caste system. The Slave of Ideas presents a clash between Rangaraju, a young lawyer with the spiritual leanings, and his materialistic wife, Subhadra develops extra marital relations with Thimmaraju. The Clutch of the Devil exposes the havoc caused by the superstitions about devils and witchcraft prevailing in rural India in general and in Kerala in particular.

Ayyar’s The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity is a brief allegorical play with touches of humour and irony. A.S.P. Ayyar also pioneers the writing of historical play. A Mother ‘s Sacrifice is his only historical play. The playwright writes about the noble sacrifice of Panna, the faithful nurse, who saves the life of Prince Udaya Singh by substituting him for her own son. Panna’ s motherhood and sacrifice are glorified. Satish Kumar says:
"As a writer of plays dealing with contemporary reality and historical themes Ayyar is a pioneer. His place, though not very high, is secure in Indian English drama".9

J. N. Lobo-Prabhu is an important playwright. He has written over a dozen plays. *Mother of New India*(1944), a play in three acts, *Death Abdicates*(1945) appeared before Independence, and *Collected plays* were published in 1955. *Collected Plays*—contains six Plays—*Apes in the Parlour, The Family Cage, Flags of the Heart, Winding Ways, Love Becomes Light* and *Dog’s Ghost*. The play *Mother of New India* centers on the theme of social reformation. The felicity of dialogue and situation creation is admirable elements in his plays, but the characters are not life like and not convincing to the audience.

V.V. S. Iyengar exposes humor and satires the angularities of middle class people in Madras in *Dramatic Divertissements*(1921). The collection consists of the following comic plays which were, perhaps, written to provide entertainment on public Functions—*Blessed is A Wife, Vichu’s Wife, The Surgeon-General’s Prescription, The Point of View* and *Wait for the Stroke*. These plays provide us vivid vignettes of social life. Iyengar also wrote a historical play *At Any Cost* which deals with the good treatment Akbar gave to the wife and the sister of Rana Udai Singh after the siege of Chittor. Iyengar fails to create historical realism which is essential for a historical play. Iyenger’s plays are based on well contrived situations.
Mirth and humour, wit and satire abound in his plays. The characters in the play are types than the individuals.

Balwnt Gargi’s *The Vulture and other Plays*(1941) deals with themes which are engaging the attention of people everywhere. *The Vulture* exposes the evil of hoarding and the title is symbolic. *The Vulture* symbolizes the greedy tyrants who suck the life blood of the poor. The realistic characters, life like characters and well structured plot are the special features of the play.

There are many other dramatists who contributed to enrich Indian English drama such as — Dhan Gopal Mukherji, Dilip Kumar, B.S. Mardhekar, S. Fyze — Rahman, Suryadutt J. Bhatt and others. In spite of famous plays of these dramatists, Indian English drama could not achieve the excellence achieved by poetry, prose and fiction in the pre-Independence days.

**Indian Drama in English in Post-Independence India:**

After the independence of India, the Indian English Drama showed good achievement. The National School of Drama and Sangit Natak Academic are found; these gave more support to the advancement of regional language dramas than the English dramas. Some the Indian English plays are performed abroad, later the plays are performed in Indian theatre.
T. Shashikanth Reddy says – “Post – Independence writing in English has stood the test of the moment and the test of time. It has found readers at home as well as abroad. It has got plenty of critical acclaim and quite a happy share of critical denunciation. Post – Independence Indian English written by the Indians has almost all the qualities that a standard written language possesses. It has freshness, glamour, humor, satire, hybridization, slangs and new coinages in plenty. The recognition of a national identity after 1947 proved a great gain for the Indian English writer. It gave him greater self – confidence, winded his vision and sharpened his faculty of self – scrutiny”.10

The Indian English theatre, the rich chronicle of Indian drama, the colossal history of Indian natya then witnessed a marked change with the advent of the eminent theatre personalities like Habib Tanvir, K.N. Pannikar, Asif Currimbhoy, Girish Karnard, Vijay Tendulkar and many other who further carried English drama in India to the further step of maturity. Some Indian dramatists tried to highlight Indian tradition, folklore, custom, rituals, conventions, and rites amidst the innovativeness of English drama. Other dramatists with substantial output include the poet Nissim Ezekiel, Dina Mehta and Manjula Padmanabhan. The saga of English theatre, which began long back during the British Imperialism, continued further and is still an eminent part of various forms of theatre in India. Continuous study, deep understanding and above all the tuneful
blend of the West and East have helped English drama in India as a distinct art form whilst aiding it to stand apart with pride and dignity. K.R.S. Iyengar rightly observes as:

"‘Indo — Anglican drama’: isn’t it like talking about ‘snakes in Iceland’? Not quite, — but the problem is there, for while poetry, novels and non-fiction prose can be read in the silence of one’s study, Drama can come to life only in the theatre."11

Notwithstanding the above said problem prominent playwrights of this age wrote several dramas. Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Gurcharn Das, Mahesh Dattani, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad have used new methods and techniques to enrich Indian English Drama.

G. V. Desani is an important dramatist. His famous play *Hali* (1950) is a complex and singular piece of dramatic art. It has been highly admired both by European and Indian critics for its originality, symbolism, vividness of imagery and sheer apocalyptic quality. It is conspicuous for stage ability. It was staged at the Watergate Theatre in London in 1950 and was also produced in India. *Hali* is an allegorical play in poetic prose. It is a presentation of everyone’s quest for fulfillment. The protagonist, Hali, is named after a Muslim saint and stands for humanity at large. Other characters too are symbolical. It is a superb passion play which projects the story of Hali’s confrontation with the powers of creation and destruction,
life and death, his surrender to the phenomenal world, his realization of the supremacy of love transcending time and space. The entire action of the play is symbolical.

Lakhan Deb’s *Tiger’s Claw* (1967) and *Murder At The Prayer Meeting* (1976) are remarkable contribution to historical play. Deb skillfully uses blank verse in these plays. *Tiger’s Claw* is a verse play in three acts, which dramatizes vividly the killing of Afzal Khan by Shivaji. Deb’s *Murder At the Prayer Meeting* deals with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi and is full of the echoes of T.S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral*. It is modeled on the technique of Greek tragedy. The playwright deftly uses the unities of time, place and action, and employs the devices of Prologue and Chorus. The plot of this play covers Mahatma Gandhi’s dominant role in politics, the sad events that followed the country’s partition, the two-way exodus of refugees and the consequent communal clashes and bloodshed. Lakhan Deb is a talented playwright and he has widened the scope of historical drama in Indian English literature. *Tiger’s Claw* is a successful historical play on Shiva and in *The Murder at The Prayer Meeting* Deb has adroitly written a fine historical tragedy on Indian history.

Gurcharan Das is well known for his successful historical play *Larins Sahib* (1970) which deals with Henry Lawrence of Punjab. The action of the play is based on event in the Punjab in 1846-47, deals with the nineteenth century colonial India. Henry Lawrence was appointed in East
India Company's resident in the Punjab court of Ranjit Singh's twelve-year-old son, Dalip Singh. The play is successful in presenting the colonial atmosphere. The characters are convincing and realistically capture the essential historical traits of these historical personae. His other two plays are — *Mira* (1971) deals with Mira's immaculate God-love for Lord Krishna with all the superiority of contemporary theatre, and *Jakhoo Villa* presents theme of the decadence in a Hindu family in Simla.

Pratap Sharma’s two plays are *The Professor Has A Warcry* (1970) and *A Touch Brightness* (1973). There is much sensational melodrama in *The Professor Has A Warcry* but it is noticeable for a keen sense of situation and effective dialogue. Sharma’s second play *A Touch of Brightness*, a Commonwealth Festival play, presents a vivid realistic picture of the Red light district in Bombay. The playwright successfully recaptures the dark side of the sophisticated city life that perpetuates the existence of brothels. His plays were staged in Europe and America successfully but failed to find proper stage in India. The sense of situation and dialogues are effective.

Nissim Ezekiel, is a well known poet, has five plays to his credit. *Three Plays* (1969) includes *Nalini- A Comedy, Marriage poem, A tragic-comedy*, and *The Sleep Walkers: An Indo American Farce*. His other two plays are *Don ‘t Call It Suicide*, and *Song of Deprivation*. Some of his famous themes are institution of marriage, the uselessness of social codes and the
void in the urban middle class. He is not bothered about the plot construction but the characters hold his complete attention. In spite of strong sense of dramatic concept, the poetic talent of Nissim Ezekiel cannot be transformed into drama. His plays are appreciated for symmetrical construction with abundance of irony, focus on oddities of human life and behavior and his plays make a pleasant reading.

The development of Indian English drama is actually a collective attempt of all the regional writers producing plays in their respective languages and sometimes translating their works into English for wider use and publicity. Like Rabindranath Tagore who wrote plays originally in Bengali and translated into English by himself and others also translated his works. Some of the regional writers have been writing plays in their respective languages and translating their works into English. The great regional playwrights who added a new dimension to Indian drama are Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, Girish Karnad in Kannada, Badal Sircar in Bengali and Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi. These writers have left the Elizabethan rules and regulations far behind and have evolved new technique combining both classical and modern ideologies.

Mohan Rakesh’s One Day in Ashadha (1958), Great Swans of the Waves(1973), Half— Way House (1969) show his love for new and challenging themes and a constant desire to leave behind the traditional set up. His major concern has been the irony and tragedy of the
relationship of man and woman. The people admire for his talent of exposing the complexity of human thought and their helplessness.

*One Day in Ashad* moves around the character Kalidasa who fail to cope with surrounding and fails to maintain the good human relationship. He has the feeling of uprooted and fear of leaving the native land but Mallika force him to accept the royal proposal, Mallika and Kalidas love each other, her mother expects them to get married. Then he goes to city, failed to adjust with the city life and returns to village. Kalidas is a symbol of a man who fails to take a timely decision and leads a discontented relation. The play *Half-Way House (Adhe-Adhure)* deals with elder daughter who cannot find fulfillment in her husband, she fails to get complete satisfaction in other man also. The play is concerned about the broken house forms the background of the play, it also moves around the unmanly and unemployed husband who fails to fulfill the needs of his wife. *Great Swans of the Waves* deals with dilemma of Nand who loves his wife and strongly attracted to the call of Lord Bhudha. The irony lies in his inability to take decision even when limited alternatives are left before him. All the character is alienated, isolated and dissatisfied with the situation, they are conscious of their inability in their personality to be complete, normal and adequate. The plays present precarious nature of man's existence in the universe.
Badal Sircar is a great Bengali writer uses the contemporary situation and social problems to present the life-in-death situation in modern society. Badal Sircar starts his career as a dramatist with the play *Evam Indrajit* (1962), the unique structure and social utility attracted the popularity. The play moves around the theme of middle class people who have failed to adjust and struggle for survival of the life. *Evam Indrajit* is a play of a dramatist who fails to write a play, as an honest and conscious writer. He presents the mechanical and chaotic life. There is no value for emotions; external world and materialism are proved to be unreal and have weightless existence, the dramatist does not offer any hope in the play. The dramatist negated all the conventions of the traditional drama by this play. The dramatist uses situations and social problems of his time to depict the atrocities of modern life. His themes depict an anguish caused due to the meaninglessness in one’s existence. His famous plays *Evam Indrajit* (1962), *The Other Side of History* (1964), and *There is No End* (1971) deal with political, social, psychological and existential problems. *Procession* is about the search for real home, a new society based on equality. The theme of the play is ideal concept where man works according to one's ability, and gets according to need, where no one is being exploited. *Bhoma* is another play focuses on the life of the innocent farmers, the society is full of exploiters and opportunists who make use of the innocent people to achieve their goal. Bhoma is an aboriginal barbarian
woodcutter, cannot cope with these people, and symbolically sharpens the axe to cut the poisonous tree which grows around him.

_Some Day Later_ deals with various questions relating to history. The play moves around the character Shankara, who feels that one or the other day the horror of his experience may repeat. Man is a puppet to possess materials like-property, career, and marriage. _Poet's Story_ deals with the story of election campaign, Manibhushan is the central character who wants to win the seat in Assembly. The dramatist presents the comedy through the mistaken identity theme.

Badal Sircar works in the direction of highlighting the ideal and presenting the gap between the ideal and real. His plays belong to the third Theatre, the socio political problems are discussed. The subjects of his plays are poverty, corruption, greed, industrial and agricultural exploitation, terrorism, police brutality, caste system and dowry system. He dwells deep into the problems of middle class society. Thus the dramatist is conscious of the contemporary problems of the society. He has given a fresh air to Indian English Drama technically and thematically.

Vijay Tendulkar, a leading contemporary Indian playwright, wrote thirty full length and twenty-three one act plays. His contribution to modern Indian theatre is significant. Some of his subjects for plays are about fight against injustice, gender role, class system, social

His famous plays are *Sakharam Binder* (1972), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972), *Vultures*, and *Silence! The Court is In Session* (1968) are his four successful experiments on the Marathi theatre. The themes of his plays are human violence, oppression of the individual and many layers of exploitation. He concentrated on man’s existential anguish and his confrontation with his surroundings. He presents a fictional reality of life acquires a sharp focused character having rare dramatic power.

*Ghashiram Kotwal* was performed at Bharat Natya Mandir, Pune. The play explores the life of morally decadent Peshwa ruler Nana Phadnavis and the corrupt Brahmins of Pune. The play has the element of Dashavatara form with music and dance which sharpen the irony of the situation. *Vultures* is based on negative aspect of human life as a man aspires for sex which leads to violence and evil. The hideous nature of the vulture’s family and suffocating pressure upon two innocents is effectively and evocatively expressed. It shows the degeneration of a family with compassion and cruelty. *Sakharam Binder* is a naturalistic play which
focuses on complication of human nature, formation of physical lust and violence in human being. The brutal objectivity is presented through triangular relationship between Sakharam and two mistres Sakharam and two mistres Laxmi and Champa. Another play *Kanydan* deals with a dalit writer as a drunkard, wife-beater, manipulator and blackmailer.

*Silence! The Court is in Session* deals with patriarchal value on woman, the character Leela Benar performs mock trial in a village, but it became a trial of her private life who is accused of infanticide, immorality and unwed motherhood. Her defense is expressed through monologue which expresses the hypocrisy and double standards of the society, and the condition of Bener is of Draupadi in the *Mahabharata*, Lord Krishna has rescued her but in the play none is there to rescue her. When she stands in witness box, her plight is very critical. The play ends with the doubt that whether she aborts the child or not. The upliftment of woman is possible only with the changed attitude of men.
Vijay Tendulkar is known for stage-craft by presenting the pictures of various problems of Maharashtra, the deep rooted taboos and cultural rituals. The plays include music, theatre, religion and philosophy. The dramatist goes deep into the human psychology, existence and expresses through the drama. The theatrical craft is so systematic that production is assured by following his stage direction. The characters of his plays are from middle class who struggle for the achievement in the outer world. The women characters are memorable and present the woman position in the contemporary society. The complexity of human nature has attracted the dramatist. The characters are mixture of evil and good.

It is noteworthy that there was a movement “the theatre of roots” after the independence of India. M.K. Naik opines:

"...that if Indian English drama wishes to go ahead, it must go back first, i.e. only a purposeful return to its roots in the rich tradition of ancient Indian drama, both in Sanskrit and folk drama in the Prakrits can help it shed its lean and pale look, increases its artistic hemoglobin count, and make it cease to be the “Sick man” of Indian English literature." 12

The playwrights and directors turned to their roots in Indigenous classical rituals and folk perform once to create a modern Indian theatre in search of Indigenous aesthetic and dramaturgy. Girish Karnad and Kavalam Narayan Panikkar belong to the root movement.
Panikkar is an eminent poet and theatre director. He has written 26 Malayalam plays. His famous plays are Sakshi, Aramba Chekkam and The Right to Live. These plays have the influence of poetry. He was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi award for Direction in 1983, Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship 2002 and Padma Bhushan in the field of Arts in 2007. His plays are derived from Sanskrit drama and Shakespearean drama. He is the founder director of theatre troupe which led to the foundation of the Bhasabharati a centre for performing arts, training and research.

Girish Karnad, a leading playwright, secured permanent place in Indian drama in English. He is an actor, director, art critic, translator and writer mingled in one. He represents our country in foreign lands as an emissary of Indian art and culture. He has played leading roles in films directed by eminent directors like Shyam Benegal, Basu Chatterjee and Subhas Ghai. His roles in 'Mahatma' and 'Swamiji' in Hindi films brought popularity. He has directed Kannada films - 'Kadu' and 'Ondanondu Kaladalli'. For his contribution to art and literature, he got several literary awards like, Padmashri (1974), Padmabhushan (1992) and Gnanapitha award in 1999.

are borrowed from Indian myth, legends, folk tales and history but his approach and techniques are modern. He has used history, myth and legend with imagination and creativity. He built a bridge between the elite and the folk.

*Yayati* is an important play written in Kannada, later he translated into English by Karnard. The theme is borrowed from the *Mahabharata*. The Indian mythology is turned into existential drama. Yayati, the king of Hastinapur, leads the life of sensual pleasure. He shuns his responsibility as a ruler and he exchanges his old age with his young son to live the life of sensual pleasure and yearns for eternal youth. Through this play Karnard portrays the life of modern man who is engrossed with sensual mundane pleasures.

*Hayavadana* is an adaptation of a Sanskrit tale from *Kathasaritsagara*, expresses the problem of search of identity in a world of tangled relationship. The play has the atmosphere of absurdity and contradiction; all the characters are fractured personalities; none is whole. Thus the play is an interminable quest for perfection. *Naga Mandala* exposes the male chauvinism, the oppression and injustice of woman in patriarchal culture. The play moves around the character Rani, who is ill treated by her husband Appanna. Naga, a snake disguises himself as Appanna and had relation with Rani. Later Rani has to undergo a test to prove her chastity.
Karnard suggests that if the society wants to change, it will have to revert to matriarchy.

*The Fire and the Rain* draws the story from the *Mahabharata*. Karnard gives a contemporary meaning to an old legend which stresses the danger of knowledge without wisdom and power without integrity. All characters in the play are the learned man but they do not save one from unethical conduct. Yavakrita falls to prey to lust, Raibhya and Bharadwaja to anger and Paravasu to dishonesty. The 'Fire ' in the title is the indication of lust, anger, vengeance, envy, treachery, violence, and death. The 'rain' indicates the self sacrifice, compassion, divine grace, forgiveness and life.

*Tughlaq*, a historical play, centers around the character Muhammad -bin - Tughlaq. The play is considered as his most famous play and would have been established Karnard as a noted dramatist. *Tughlaq* deals with the fourteen century north Indian history, especially with Muhammad -Bi-Tughalaq's last five years' rule from 1327 to1332. The dramatist flouted the dramatic unities because he concentrates on the five years of the Mughal period when Tughlaq shifted the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. *Tale - Danda* (1993) starts in the year1168 which comprises three acts and sixteen scenes. The play is based on a historical incident that took place in the twelfth century. It deals with last years of Basavanna's life who is a great social reformer and founder of the lingayath caste. The play awakens the
sensibilities of audience to think about the eradication of caste system in present day and find some solution for it.

Veena Noble Dass has said about Girish Karnad's contribution as: "He has shown the Indian stage as to what depth the mythical themes could be taken to in order to recreate a contemporary consciousness. Karnard's advantages are many - his expert knowledge of contemporary European theatre, his exposure to the western dramatic literature and more importantly his theatrical sensibility - all these certainly sharpened by his thorough knowledge of the stage. He has shown to the Indian theatre community and to the world theatre community how our past and present coalesce to give to our present day existence meaning and to theatre activity direction".13

Mahesh Dattani, a director and writer is one of few dramatists who write plays in English and does not follow the western dramatic canon. The dramatist intends to develop theatre which can be understood and enjoyed multi-lingual community of India and abroad. Thus the playwright has used English as a means of communication. Mahesh Dattani is aptly considered as a successor of Girish Karnad. A close analysis of his plays reveals that plays are rooted in urban milieu of India, and reflection on concerns and constraints of the commoner. The plays present common man's efforts to have space and respect in society. Plays are faithful expression of socio-cultural environment. Famous dramas of
Dattani are Final Solutions and other plays which includes four full length plays, and Collected plays comprises six full length plays and two radio plays. His Final Solutions (1992-93) deals with communal tension which bags Sahithya Academy Award in 1998. Where There's a will (1988), Bravely Fought the Queen (1991), Dance Like a Man (1989) and Tara (1990) are the plays deal with painful tales of various families have gone into the fabric and texture of the plays. The playwright depicts the battles being fought among the members of same family at home.

The play Tara deals with the major problem of female feticide, parents favor the boy and rejects the girl, there is a tensed argument regarding parents' preference for male child at the cost of girl child. The purpose of the play is to create awareness among the people to protect girl child. Dance like a Man deals with conflict between tradition and modern. The play Seven Step Around the Fire deals with life of Kamala, a eunuch, is killed and the police investigates the case. The play reveals the attitude and brutality of society towards eunuch. Ek Alag Mausam is an interesting play, presents the voice of the marginalized being HIV positive. Through this play the dramatist seeks for creation of awareness against HIV, love and understanding for the HIV afflicted. Mahesh Dattani is known for use of symbols, devices, technique and props to suit the theme of the play. Other two important plays are- On A Muggy Night in Mumbai (1998)Thirty Days in September (2001). Dattani has written various radio plays and the

The main focus of Dattani’s plays is on the social and political realities. The themes are-Indian joint family, the plight of woman in the Indian society, the homosexuality marriage and career, the patriarchal social system, the conflict between tradition and modernity, identity crisis, workings of personal and moral choices and familial relationship. Dattani is well known for complete use of theatre space in order to yield the maximum effect. He uses special device like double dialogue.

Some of the women dramatists have contributed to this genre. Bharati Sarabhai is the most eminent women dramatist. The first play of this author is The Well of People (1943). It is a realistic play which depicts the miserable plight of a Brahmin widow who is unable to go to Kashi or Haridwar. She decides to dig a well for untouchables from her savings in her dear old village, but a pitcher is broken at the threshold of the well, which has symbolic significance. Her play is Two women depicts the tension caused by east –west encounter, tradition and modernity. Anuradha, a wife of the anglicized Kanaka Raya and Urvashi, a widowed girl who turns a devotional singer are the two women in the play. Each of
these women is herself two women in one-an artist and a saint. The play reaches some sort of conclusion but reader gets impression that the real conclusion is yet to come. This play depicts the message as – attachment with detachment and one has to perform duty with detachment.

Mrinalini Sarabhai is another woman dramatist, contributed a historical play. Her *Captive Soil* is a historical play on the freedom movement. It is a verse play in two acts with a prologue and an epilogue.

Dina Mehta’s *The Myth Makers* (1969) is a significant play for which the playwright is awarded the Padamshree prize in a playwriting competition. It exposes provincial parochialism and intolerance. A violent agitation flares up in Bombay against those people who have come from other states and have settled there.

Manjula Padmanabham is the first Indian English dramatist to win the first prize in the first Onassis International Cultural Competition. Her famous drama *Harvest* won this prize in 1997. It deals with exploitation of human body, population explosion which is a cause of pauperization and dehumanization of the city people. *Light out* moves around the real incident gang-rape which took place in a middle class community of Santa Cruz, Mumbai 1982. The crime of rape occurs in the society but none comes forward to help the victim. The people have closed doors and windows and switch off their lights to the scream of the victim. The play
presents the disgusting system and need to overcome it. *Five Monologue* is based on the Bombay and Gujurat riots. The play focuses on violence in society which gives the impression to audience foxed, insecure, nostalgic and resentful.

Annie Zaidi is another contemporary Indian English playwright. The famous play *So Many Socks* presents sense of rejection but one cannot reject one's own identity. Other full length plays *Name Place Animal Thing* and Jamwon Hindu Metro Plus and BBC International radio award respectively. Other contemporary emerging woman English dramatist are Deepika Arwind, Mnjima Chatterjee and others. There is a need for support and patronage for woman dramatist to embellish this genre.

To conclude, Indian English drama fails to reach the high statues of poetry, fiction and non-fiction prose. The playwrights are unable to solve the problem of sense of good theatre, dramatic stories and dramatic technique which are essential for success of plays on the stage. Most of the plays of early period lack the stage worthiness except Rabindranath Tagore.

Indian English drama has been written on varied themes which embrace all aspects of life. History, politics, national and international events, society with all its complex problems, east-west encounter, lives of saints and great men, myth and legend have been the themes of Indian
English drama. The playwrights leaving out a few notable exceptions like Tagore, Asif Currimbhoy, T.P. Kailasam, Pratap Sharma, Gurcharan Das, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani and Girish Karnard have evolved neither technique nor idiom for giving a viable shape to dramatic writing in English. Drama is a growing art which requires constant experimentation but little has been done in this direction. Some modern playwrights have done their best to English, a foreign language, for use in drama. It is a matter of great satisfaction that some of the Indian English plays have been staged in European and American countries. On the whole, the prospect of Indian English drama is not yet bleak. The playwrights like Dattani, Karnad, Tendulkar, Sircar and many others are willing to experiment with a strong sense of a living theatre and they have opened up a new horizon of dramatic achievement.

1.2 Asif Currimbhoy – His Life And Works

Asif Currimbhoy is one of the most prolific and versatile playwrights in Indian English Literature. He is rightly called by Faubion Bowers as “India’s first authentic voice in the theatre”.14 His plays are not only the expression of thought but thoughts are meant for action on the stage. He is the only Indian English playwright who put great effort to enact his plays on the stage in India. Thus he is successful in producing actable plays. His plays cover various facts of society and written social, political, historical, art, psychological and religious plays.
He was born on 15th August 1928 in Bombay. His father was an armchair intellectual and a liberal minded person. His mother was veteran social worker. He hails from a family of industrialists who won the title of baronetcy by the British Government. Asif Currimbhoy was a non-practicing Muslim writer. He studied in St. Xavier’s High School Bombay. The school exposed Asif Currimbhoy to an environment of the western culture and English language which gave basic foundation of language at the early stage of his life. Though he studied in the Christian missionary school, he did not miss the roots of an indigenous culture. He studied the Ramayana, the Bhagavad Geeta and other Indian classics. For higher studies Asif Currimbhoy went to USA. He studied at University of California and graduated in Economics in 1950. Then he studied at Wisconsin University. He stayed in USA for four years and studied Shakespearean dramas and witnessed numerous dramatic trends in drama in the USA. Bayappa Reddy said “this (USA) must have gone a long way in shaping him as a man of the theatre.” Hence he had a good knowledge of the theatrical techniques.

Asif Currimbhoy married Suraiya when he returned to India. She being an influence on him, always encouraged him to be sincere and work hard. She calls her husband a Karma Yogi.

Asif Currimbhoy’s job in the New India Assurance Company in Paris gave an opportunity to acquaint French culture and way of life over
there. He compared living style in Paris and Indian standard of life. Later on he joined the Barma Shell in India as a marketing executive and travelled throughout India, where he comes in contact with different people and problems.

The milieu of the pre-Independence, post-Independence and partition of India and Pakistan had great impact on him. During the sixties there was great current of violence in India to quote from Bayappa Reddy as “too much democratization, the lack of aptitude and objectives among students, incompetence among the teachers, crises of conscience and culture among the parents, crippled the education system. The students were thoroughly disillusioned when they knew that their degrees would not get jobs at all. So they often indulged in violence. Much of this has gone into the making of Currimbhoy’s plays.”

The Rockfuller Foundation in USA invited him to produce his plays. His plays were enacted in the Ropertory Theatres and Coffee House theatre in Greenwhich village. When he returned to India his fame came with him and became an acceptable playwright in India. Then onwards his plays became part of study, research and translation.

After analyzing Currimbhoy’s life sketch, one gets the idea that our life is not to ask why, it is in only to do and die. He died of a heart attack in
1994 on a train returning to Bombay from Calcutta viewing a performance of one of his plays.


Asif Currimbhoy is well known for using new technique in his plays like-documentary elements in political and historical plays;
cinematographic technique; picturesque background and episodic technique. His dramas cover wide variety of subjects like history and politics, social and economic problems, psychological problems, art, religion and east-west encounter etc. The major contemporary problems are brought on the stage. It is very interesting to note that majority of his dramas end with ray of hope, that life gives chance to be optimistic.

The important plays of early phase of Asif Currimbhoy touch various subjects like social, political, psychological, religious, east-west encounter, and so on. The plays like *The Doldrummers*, and *Thorns on A Canvas* deal with social problems.

*The Doldrummers (1960)* deals with shack dwellers in Juhu beach in Bombay. The play presents modern Indian society influenced by western culture. It is a protest against immorality and indecency. The play was banned by the state censors but ban was removed by the efforts of Mulk Raj Anand and Khushavanth Singh. The play was enacted in the Theatre Group, New Delhi in 1969. The depressed youth of lower class of urban society is represented by Tony, Joe, Rita and Liza. The play deals with basic human needs of food and sex, hence these characters want to satisfy these instincts which led to rivalry and conflict between Rita and Lizza, and Tony and Joe. The play successfully presents the poverty, squabbles, love, small joy, basic humanity, disillusion, agony and reality in urban life. The play presents a picture of artificial life, a careless and pleasure seeking
life which is ruining young boys and girls. Through this play Asif Currimbhoy is giving a message to the Indian mass that the morals and values are not cultivated to the young generation. Hence they are involved in physical pleasure. The drama attacks on the purposeless attitude of the youth, lack of courage and vigor of the modern youth. The play is successful when it is enacted as it has innovative use of audio visual effect on the audience.

*Thorns On Canvass* (1962) is the confirmation of artist faith in Man and Man's creative work. The artist expresses his unique essence of the world. The play is a reaction against the banning of the *Doldrummers*. The play is a satire and protest against all establishment of sponsored art. The play moves around the characters like a patron, who runs an Academy of art, his daughter Malti, a painter, Nela, a dancer, Yakub and Nafesa. The intention of the dramatist is that an elevated art should express one’s feelings, ecstasy and unique essence of the world. Art cannot be taught by training; it should come as naturally as a leave comes to a tree. The dramatist satires the government policies and academy where no real art is produced. A true artist does not require any publicity and does not require any patron. Asif Currimbhoy clearly presents that artist is blessed by God, hence training is not required.

*The Hungry Once* (1965) deals with poverty and the famine-stricken city of Calcutta. The two American Poets-Allen Ginsberg and Peter
Orlovsky visit Calcutta. The play presents hunger in the riot torn and the famine stricken capital of Bengal. The two Americans fail to understand the mystery of India. It ends with the two frustrated Americans leaving India. This play is a symbolic play, which has been inspired by American beatnik-poets. It presents socio-political consciousness. The play also focuses on the harsh reality of Indian society, where rich people exploit the poor and become rich. The rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer, there is a great gap between the rich and the poor. The social problem of lawlessness, violence and riots shatters the life of Calcutta. The playwright has not only presented the hunger, but also the other forms of hunger like hunger for external values, hunger for sex, hunger for happier life for common people, hunger for wealth without any consideration for moral values and social codes.

_The Tourist Mecca_ (1959) is a romantic play. A group of four tourists come to Agra from different countries like, U.K, U.S.A and U.S.S.R. _The Tourist Mecca_ deals with visit of Janet Toffin, the daughter of an American Widow Lady Toffin, to the tourist place Mecca, the Taj Mahal and falls in love with Keshav Singh, a tourist agent. He wants to marry her but Jenet wants to love him but does not want to marry him. The play presents the several contrasts like lady Toppin who is growing older and Keshav who becomes younger and younger, Toppin thinks her daughter is like herself, but inwardly she knows they are pole apart. Both Janet and Kate are
possessively jealous of Keshav, Kate thinks that Keshav is a professional lover but Janet feels he has a sincere love towards her. Their love affair is cut short by the intervention of Lady Toffin. Jennet goes back to USA promising him that she would come for the next holiday. Keshav Singh slips the ring given by her. The playwright is successful in presenting the different experience of tourist. The use of flash back technique makes audience go into the mind of the characters. The language is crisp and lucid. Dialogues are suitable to characters. The new technique like flash back and the use of music reveal the intensity of action on the stage.

The playwright is known for his interest and presentation of religious subjects in his plays like *Om*. The play *Om* deals with development of the Hinduism from the Vedic times. The dramatist makes use of the Vedic and the Upanishad lore to make his play a panoramic sweep of India's spiritual tradition. The main theme of the play is search of God and different paths of salvation. The new technique like one character is used in a one act play. The *Clock* has psychological theme. Henry, a salesman, is the one character in the play; the other characters are revealed through voices and shadows. This play deals with the disappointments and failures in life. The materialism has violated all the morals of human being. One has to take care of spiritual upliftment rather than physical riches. *The Dumb Dancer* too is psychological in content. The specialty of this play is the use of Kathakali dance art form. Bhma is the protagonist.
who completely identifies himself with the characters of Bhima in the epic the *Mahabharata* that leads to chains of problems. He is so confused that he cannot make any difference between the world of reality and the world of myth, who is treated by a psychiatrist but the psychiatrist himself become insane at the end of the play. *The Captive* (1963) is a play on China war and successfully presents the feelings of soldiers in war. Specifically, the play deals with Indo Chinese conflict of October 1962. It actually probes the Post-partition human psyche in the Indian subcontinent.

Asif Currimbhoy uses apt title for his dramas, the title of the play suits the morale and theme of the plot. *The Dumb Dancer* deals with the life of a dancer; *Hungry Once* focus on hunger of drought stricken poor people of Calcutta; *Om* has religious theme; *Clock* reveals the fact that time never waits for anyone and man has to get success and spiritual achievement within given period of time; *Darjeeling Tea?* deals with life of planters in the place called Darjeeling. All the plays of Currimbhoy have the titles revealing the theme of the plays.

Language is lucid, natural and suitable to the characters. He uses some Hindi words in his plays like nehi, sabjee, pundit ji, yes mamu etc. He uses picturesque technique and dream sequence to convey the meaning more effectively to the audience. Even the readers can visualize scenes in their minds. Asif Currimbhoy made a great mark in Indian English literature; he took Indian English drama to the highest zenith of literature.
He has covered all facts of society in his plays. His plays have the mark of humanity and optimism. It is true that he is India’s authentic voice in theatre.

To conclude, the dramatist is one of the most influential and successful representative voices of contemporary Indian life in theatre; the various themes are covered such as political, social, religious, art, psychological etc. The use of new techniques, dream like sequence and several props convey hidden feelings of characters. The language of the dialogues is suitable to the situation and characters. Language is simple, lucid, crisp and understandable to Indian audience. The playwright has a cosmopolitan background. He studied in California, worked in France, lives in India and writes on important international events and situation. The dramatist focuses on human condition everywhere with compassion and truth. Hence his plays have universal appeal.

1.3 Criticism on Asif Currimbhoy and Objectives of the Study:

So far, there is no critical work done on the later plays of Asif Currimbhoy. There are some of research articles by A.K. Agarwal, Satish Sharma, Krishna Bhatta, R.K. Dhawan, K.R.S. Iyenger, V.K. Reddy etc. There is a full-length study entitled Appreciation of Asif Currimbhoy written by Faubion Bowers, published by Writers Workshop, Calcutta. Prof. Bayappa Reddy's The Plays of Asif Currimbhoy is published by Writers
Workshop, Calcutta. The author has undertaken a herculean task of critical analyses of all the published plays of Asif Currimbhoy. This book is a detail study of theme, stage-craft, special technique and characterization. K. A Agarwal has written full length work *The Best Plays of Asif Currimbhoy: Critical Study* published by Book Enclave Jaipur. The author has analyzed eleven plays of Currimbhoy with critical outlook.

The present research work is undertaken to assess Asif Currimbhoy as an authentic voice of theatre to express injustice, exploitation and sufferings of the different classes of the society. The plays evaluate imagery and his world vision. The study proposes to put together the aspects of social, economic, philosophical influences which shaped important incidents under scrutiny. The main purpose of the present thesis is an analytical study of the nine significant plays of the later phase of Asif Currimbhoy's literary career, laying stress on artistic excellence and theatrical vitality, thematic significance, plot-construction, use of props, language and different techniques.

The later plays of Currimbhoy which are more mature and significant in understanding and evaluating him as a dramatist. The contemporary social issues are incorporate in his plays; human frailty and foolishness are observed in the plays. Hence this humble attempt has been made to study the later nine plays in chronological order -- *Inquilab* (1970), *The Refugee* (1971), *Sonar Bangla* (1972), *An Experiment With Truth*
(1969), Darjeeling Tea? (1971) Om Mane Padme Hum! (1972), Miracle Seed (1973), Dissident MLA (1974) and This Alien... Native Land (1975). The research study comprises of the nine of the later plays which are very powerful on the stage. The scope is limited to these nine plays, leaving the rest. However, there is the study of early plays.

1.4 Research Methodology:

The research methodology adapted is mostly descriptive criticism. There is a field work of collecting plays and reviews. The language should be of the apt kind to study and analyze the major nine plays from the thematic and technical points of view. Attention is laid on the plot construction and use of props.

1.5 The Design of the Thesis:

The thesis is designed into five chapters of which the first chapter is introduction which surveys the origin and development of Indian drama in English and life sketch of Asif Currimbhoy and his contribution to literature. It gives a fair background to the study of the modern plays. The second chapter deals with the three major plays in chronological order - Inquilab (1970), The Refugee (1971), and Sonar Bangla (1972). These three plays deal with problems at different point of time in Bengal in the 1960s. With West Dinajpur District in West Bengal as its background, The Refugee is about the influx of Bangladesh refugees into India during 1971. With the border village in Bengal as the setting, Sonar Bangla presents the emergence
of independent Bangladesh. The plays are studied from the thematic and technical point of view.

The third chapter examines the next three major plays - *An Experiment With Truth* (1969) deals with the life and assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The play *Darjeeling Tea?* (1971) deals with the life of planters in Darjeeling. *Om Mane Padme Hum!* (1972) presents inner conflict of Dalai Lama to escape from Tibet to India. Thematic, plot construction, language and technical points are analyzed.

The fourth chapter deals with the next three major plays - *The Miracle Seed* (1973) deals with farmers, plight in India in general, Maharashtra in particular. The protagonist Ram being a poor farmer represents the plight of all farmers during drought for two years. *The Dissident MLA* (1974) is about Manu, a dissident MLA of Gujarat, who makes use of students to get assembly dissolved. *This Alien ... Native Land* (1975) presents Indian Jewish family's psychology and sensibility who lived in India. This chapter also analyses the theme and techniques used by the playwright.

The last chapter "Conclusion" concludes the earlier conclusions of the previous chapters having studied the plays. The focal point is laid on the major themes and techniques in the plays, social relevance, innovations in language and theater - craft.

There shall be a comprehensive bibliography on the writers at the end of the thesis.
REFERENCES


16 Ibid. p.24