INDO-ANGLIAN DRAMA : A CRITICAL STUDY
The aim of the present thesis is:

i) to attempt a critical assessment of plays written in English by Indians (and published till the end of December 1972 i.e., the completion of 25 years of Indian Independence),

ii) to analyse the problems and difficulties faced by Indo-Anglian playwrights,

and iii) to assess their achievement in the field.

Among the various forms of Indian writing in English, drama seems to lag far behind poetry and fiction. However, ever since the English language firmly established its roots in the country, there has been writing of plays in English in spite of their generally poor stageworthiness. Though it is rather difficult to keep track of all the plays and playlets published in book-form and in periodicals so far, some 400 plays have been included in the latest Bibliography compiled by the present writer and published in Perspectives on Indian Drama in English (1977) under the auspices of Karnatak University, Dharwar. Apart from articles and reviews written on some of these plays, a systematic study does not seem to have been made hitherto to assess the achievement and failure in the field; and hence this modest attempt.
For the purposes of research, all the available Indo-Anglian plays (including the authors' own translations of their works) published up to the end of December 1972 (i.e. the completion of twenty five years of Independence) have been considered. (Some of the prominent plays published between this date and 1979 have also been considered). They have been grouped phase-wise: the pre-Independence phase and the post-Independence phase; and in each phase, the works of the major and the minor playwrights have been considered mostly themewise. Since this is the first detailed study of the subject, the treatment is perforce both compilatory and critical, involving a comprehensive survey as well as evaluation.

The Classical Theatre of India: Origins and Development

India has a long and glorious dramatic tradition of her own. Though it is difficult to determine the exact date of its commencement, there were pageants, mimes and other folk forms in this ancient land known for its variety of climates, customs and languages. While Greek Drama had its origins in fertility rites and the frenzied worship of Dionysus, the Classical Sanskrit Drama of India probably originated from the folk theatre of the country.

Some scholars try to trace the origin of the Indian theatre to Greek Drama itself as words like yavanika (curtain) are found in Sanskrit drama. This
argument cannot hold good as we find better words like tiraskarini to mean a curtain. Further, the absence of the Greek unities, the importance of the rasa theory which is different from Aristotelian katharsis, the absence of comedies and tragedies of Greek type—all go to disprove the Greek influence on Classical (Sanskrit) drama. It is also difficult to concur with those who hold the view that Indian theatre, like Greek Drama, was born of the Vedic rituals. In view of restricted attendance in such rituals, they could not be said to be popular in those times; and hence religious ceremonies could not be the sole occasions for dramatic activities. According to the hint given by later dramatists like Bhāsa, Harsha and Bhavabhūti, drama had a place in seasonal festivals and other social and cultural life of the people.

Some of the Vedic hymns, the earliest available Indo-Aryan compositions, are believed by a few to have given birth to Indian drama. For example, in the third Mandala of the Rik-samhitā we find a dramatic conversation between the sage Viswamitra and the Rivers Vipasha (modern Beas) and Shutudri (modern Sutlej), when the sage's chariot and cart had to cross them on their way. Again, in the tenth Mandala, we come across two examples: a dialogue between Yama and Yami, the Adam and Eve of Vedic mythology; and a soliloquy of the intoxicated god Indra at the hermitage of the sage Laba. Such writings can only
suggest that a popular theatre existed; but they cannot be said to be the nucleus of drama.

There are also references to Indian drama in Panini's work and in the two great Indian epics The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. The two singers Kuśa and Lava mentioned in The Ramayana perhaps suggest the concept of dramatic dialogue. The Mahabharata, another epic meant to uphold the Vedic religion, has Seutī (the son of Soota) as its narrator, and as Adya Rangacharya (Sriranga) says, "the Sootas seem to be a hereditary caste of bards." The epic, the biggest compendium of a variety of knowledge, has had an appeal both to the classes and the masses right from ancient times and the bards maintained it in different forms. It is logical to believe that the dramatic recitations by these bards have sown the seed of the Classical Sanskrit Drama. The Sutrādhāra probably suggests an improved version of the Soota the bard, and he was a producer-manager and also an actor. This is illustrated by the conversation held between Bhavabhūti's Sutrādhāra and the Actor:

Sutrādhāra: ....... Let all the actors then be ready to accomplish my object by proper acting.

Actor: This order of your honour shall be obeyed. Your honour, however, has assigned to each of the actors that part only which befits him. And your honour is cast for the first character, that of Kamandaki, the

old Buddhistic female mendicant, while I am to assume the role of Avalokita, her disciple.2

Thus, the Classical Indian (Sanskrit) drama, probably originated in the folk-theatre of the country and, in course of time, both went on borrowing from each other and developed.

The existence of Bharata's Natyasastra, a treatise on dramaturgy, which is said to belong to the third century A.D., is a clear proof of existence of drama in a developed form in at least five or six centuries preceding it. This monumental work refers to the difficulty of tracing the exact time of the beginning of Indian drama. As Adya Rangacharya (Sriranga) remarks, "...... even Bharata (its author) does not know the origin of the Indian theatre. He too suggests the impossibility of the task by cleverly asserting that God Brahma created drama. Since God Brahma created the world also, we cannot question his ability or qualifications"3. Bharata claims that he had to make Brahma's treatise 'more simple, practical and useful'. According to Bharata, all the gods took a complaint to Brahma:

"People all over the world have taken to vulgar ways; they have grown greedy, avaricious, jealous and quarrelsome; they do not know if they are happy

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3. Adya Rangacharya, The Indian Theatre, p.2. (For some details given in this chapter, I am indebted to the author).
or miserable ... please let us have some diversion which could be both heard and seen. The Sudras cannot have access to the Vedic works; therefore create a fifth Veda which could be accessible to all the castes". (I, 9-12).

Though the latter half of the complaint looks a little paradoxical, it is noteworthy that the art of drama was given the status of a Veda. These words also make us guess the existence of an early theatre catering to the vulgar tastes of the audience characterised as Sudras. To corroborate this inference, we may point out that there is a reference to upā-upakas (secondary dramas) most of which are dance-dramas with a low type of humour in a dialect (may be Prākrit); and these Prakrit plays must be the earliest known form of the Indian classical theatre.

There are 37 chapters and 5569 verses in the available text of The Natyāsāstra. To prescribe stage-worthy things which are both entertaining and didactic seems to be the intention of the author. Bharata also shows how an actor should employ the media of expression like speech, intonation, gestures and movements; and in this connection, he mentions four modes (vṛitti) of representation in accordance with stress on one or more media: bharati, kaishiki, arabhati and sāttvati. Not only does he guide the playwright in writing a play, but he also prescribes qualifications for the audience. Further, based on
the story and the characters, he classifies plays into ten forms: Dima, Samayakāra, Ṛhāmriga etc. He does not fail to mention all the particulars pertaining to the entire structure of a play including poorvaranga (a sort of prologue).

The most interesting point which Bharata makes concerns his experience in his first production of the play Amrita-manthana, which necessitated the construction of a playhouse for subsequent performances. In this connection, he prescribes the construction of three types of theatres according to the required intensity of auditory and visual aspects: big (Vikṛṣṭa), small (trvasra) and medium-sized (caturasra).

Thus the comprehensive treatise of Bharata gives us an idea of the early Indian theatre.

Sanskrit Drama

As already said, some sort of early folk-theatre might have given rise to the Classical Sanskrit Drama which was further placed on a sound footing by Bharata. Starting from the Vedic hymns, we have ample evidence to show the development of Sanskrit drama.

There was a time when bards appointed at royal courts and wandering minstrels used to compose and sing to audiences ballads glorifying their patrons, heroes and legendary figures. Thus, the personal and political intrigues between two families of brothers, the Kauravas and the Pandavas narrated by these bards, gradually grew into one single book entitled
The Mahābhārata. This might have been published a century or two before the Christian era. A rich mine of information containing Vedic concepts, the Purāṇas, folklore, religion and different schools of philosophy of the times, the epic has been a source of inspiration to many writers including playwrights for centuries. It contains many a dramatic dialogue which the bards (Sootas) would sing to the people on various occasions.

The epic age also gives us two singers, Kusa and Lava who, as noted earlier, were supposed to sing The Rāmāyana, which has also influenced both the classical and folk theatres of the country.

Next, starting from Asvaghosa who is believed to have lived near the beginning of the Christian era, the Classical Sanskrit Drama, has a few noteworthy playwrights like Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, Śudraka, Visākhadatta and Harsha. Many of them drew direct inspiration from the The Rāmāyana and The Mahābhārata and the legends.

Thirteen plays are ascribed to Bhāsa, though the authorship of some of them is disputed. While The Mahābhārata supplies material for the themes of six plays, viz., Pancarātra, Dūtavākya, Dūtaghatotkaca Madhyama-Vyāvoga, Karnabhāra and Urubhanga, two plays Abhiseka and Pratima deal with the story of The Rāmāyana. Bhāsa’s famous plays, Swarna-Vasavadatta
and Pratijña-Yougandharāvana are woven round the popular legend of Udayana; and Balacarita is about the childhood exploits of Krishna. In the use of symbols (in Pratijña for example), crisp dialogue and action and in stage sense, the playwright was well in advance of his times.

A renowned poet and dramatist, Kalidasa shows himself to be a master of a refined art in his plays, Vikramorvasiyam, Mālavikāgnimitram and Abhijnāna-Sākuntalam. While the first and the last have themes from Puranic literature, the second has a historical one. While Vikramorvasiyam deals with the love story of King Vikrama and the celestial damsel Urvasi, Abhijnāna-Sākuntalam idealises the love between King Dushyanta and Sakuntala, a girl of the Urvashi clan; and Mālavikāgnimitram is the story of King Agnimitra who falls in love with Mālavikā.

Another dramatist of note is Bhavabhūti (circa 7th century A.D) who has given us three plays: Mālatī-Mādhava, Mahāvīrācarita and Uttara-Rāmacarita. In the first play which dramatises a love story, the lovers Mālatī and Mādhava are finally brought together with the aid of a Buddhist nun. The prologue to the play significantly contains information about the author and his views about drama in general and his play in particular; and thus it marks a stage in the development of Indian drama. Here is an instance of a tradition-bound scholar's attempt to take sophisticated drama to a popular festival. In the other two plays, Mahāvīrācarita and Uttara-Rāmacarita, the playwright covers the entire story of The Rāmāvama,
with his own variation on the motive in the abduction of Sita. With his mastery of pathos, Bhavabhūti added lustre to the rich tradition of Sanskrit drama.

Another milestone in the development of Classical Sanskrit Drama is Mudrā-Rākṣasa by Viśkhadatta, the one and the only example of a political play. The theme of the play is the founding of the Magadha empire by Chandragupta under Chanakya's guidance. It is an example of a good stagerworthy play containing dramatic presentation of political intrigues; and like Bhavabhūti, the playwright shows his dissatisfaction over the contemporary theatre.

Mṛcchakatika (Clay-cart) is another major play, the authorship of which is ascribed to a legendary king by name Sūdraka. Its main theme indicates a revolt against the existing social order and it is the story of a love between a poor but cultured Brahmin, Čārudatta and an equally cultured and rich courtesan Vasantaseṇā; it has a sub-plot woven round a political revolt. The play is noteworthy for its realism, its crisp dialogue, its management of suspense, and delineation of characters against a wide social canvas.

Thus, Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, Viśkhadatta and Sūdraka who breathed full life into the theatre, represent the golden age of Sanskrit Drama. From the 7th century onwards, there was a marked decline in the quality and originality in playwriting in Sanskrit
though a few appreciable features like stage worthiness are found in Harsha's plays Priyadarśikā, Ratnāvalī and Nāgananda. Further deterioration of the dramatic values is exhibited in the works of playwrights like Murāri, Jayadeva and Subhata; and also by Krishnamūrayati's Prabodha-candradayam which is just a series of conversations by allegorical characters on different schools of philosophy.

The causes of the decline of Sanskrit Drama are many — its restricted appeal owing to its limited use of the language at the popular level, the prominence given to Persian during the Mughal regime and the consequent inhibiting effect on Sanskrit literature in general and Sanskrit Drama in particular. Fortunately, since Independence, along with the impetus given to plays in modern Indian languages, a small attempt is being made to revive drama in Sanskrit in the country and V. Raghavan's Anarkali is an instance of this kind.

The Popular (Folk) Theatre

With the decline of the Sanskrit theatre in the country, the popular theatre of the masses in local languages dealing with well-known themes went on growing both in quality and quantity. Though the interregnum between the Classical Drama and the Modern Theatre does not give evidence of many written plays, it does not mean that the activity of the popular theatre now ceased completely. Meanwhile, the tradition of dramatic recitation of epic stories continued. This art was
specialised by a professional Chārana caste, probably the modified contemporary version of the Sūtas, the bards of the epic age (by about 10th century A.D). These chāranas might be deemed to have founded the Modern Indian Theatre. Patronised by kings and nobles, they would, in their songs, often glorify the lives of their masters. As they were professionals, they would go from place to place to seek patronage from the public also. By and by, they started going in a group of three, the bard to narrate the verse-story and the other two to participate in the intermittent dialogue. Thus they put up stage-shows in public, unconsciously giving shape to our folk-theatre. (The term Chārana is rather amorphous in its extent and application; The Sūtradhāra and Nāti, the Bhāgavata or the Nattuvār are the various forms crystallized out of this amorphic entity). In the process of the metamorphosis, the folk-theatre adopted (in addition to the Sūtradhāra and the Vidūsaka) many more classical conventions like the lengthy invocation to the deities and stage-techniques such as the use of mudrās and circular movements etc. to denote changes of scenes.

The political chaos and disintegration that plagued the country for a long time from the 8th century onwards could not affect the traditional urge for the unity of culture. In rejuvenating the Vedic religion and culture, saint-philosophers like Sri Śankara did a lot and the ensuing religious resurgence gave an impetus to the cult of devotion (Shakti),
with a galaxy of saints like Kabir Chaitanya, Ramadas, Tulasidas, Basavesvara and the Alwars preaching devotion in different ways.

The spread of the Bhakti cult was mainly responsible for inducing kings to build many temples; which also became, in fact, popular 'playhouses'. In addition, every encouragement was given by the kings for performance of devotional dramas in those places. The dramatised stories from The Bhagavata were some of the main attractions to devotees. Like Gita-Govinda in Sanskrit, many dramatic narrations were composed by saints and presented by a group of actors including the Charanars. This form of dance-drama gradually created the Naṭi, a new class of artiste.

In the process of the evolution of the Indian drama, the cult gave rise to different kinds of popular dramatic performances in different regions of the country. In about the 15th century, Assam gave birth to a type of drama called Ankiya-Nāṭs which were one-act plays based on the story of Krishna and his childhood; the Sūtradhāra, here, acted as a link between the stage and the audience. Simultaneously, the jātra type sprang up in Bengal with Sri Chaitanya's Rukmini harana. In course of time, even the kings composed some dramatic pieces; and the status of the Charanars went up, attracting men from the intellectual class, and the result was the birth of Bhands in Kashmir, Jogis in Punjab and
Kirtankārs in Andhra, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Without any stage or make-up, the Kirtankar (Harikatā artist) uses jingling anklets and a pair of cymbals, and even today performs his very popular one-man show delineating the different characters in a devotional story with gestures and modulations of voice, improvising dialogue and showing all possible actions in his posture, holding the interest of his audience throughout the performance, sometimes throughout a night.

Depending upon local conditions, folk-stages developed some distinctive features of their region. For example, while the Leela plays (Rāmālā and Rāslālā) of the Gangetic plain deal with the stories of Rama's ideal life and Krishna's love-pranks, the Yakshagāna of the coastal Karnataka mostly presents the heroic deeds of gods, demons and heroes of the epics The Rāmāvāna and The Māhābhārata and The Bhāgavata legends. It is an all-night performance without stage-setting in an open space, and follows the rules of The Nātyaśāstra. There is the Bhāgavata, the folk-counterpart of the Charana, who engages himself in reciting the text, singing and participating in the speech of actors; and he somewhat resembles the Sūtradhāra of the Sanskrit stage. The Yakshagāṇa has another character by name Kodangi (in the modern dress) who represents the audience and he reminds us of the Vidūsaka of the Sanskrit stage.
In Andhra, based on the episode of Krishna and his wife Satyabhāma, a form known as Bhama-kalāpamu developed into a popular dance-drama. Further, this region too has the Yakshagāna as both a folk-drama and a puppet-play; and it is also called the Veethī-nātakamu (performance on the street).

With the increasing influence of the Bhakti cult, many more forms of folk-plays (particularly, dance-drama) came to be evolved. The danda-nāta of Orissa was a dance-drama presenting the marriage of God Siva with Parvati, whereas Ranga-Sabha was another form dealing with the story of Krishna.

The jātra plays of Bengal too played an important role in the development of our folk-theatre; and the saint Sri Chaitanya adopted this form in an effective way to spread his mission of devotion. Later, arguments about the cult might have necessitated an addition of discussion in prose to dance and songs in such forms. With the increase in the popularity of these folk entertainments, certain matters of contemporary interest also formed their theme in addition to the devotional stories. One such example could be seen in the performances given by the Randhī-bhand of Punjab. Likewise, the people were attracted towards the satire on men and morals in the tamaśīs of Maharashtra and the folk-plays like Rāma-dhānya-nātaka ("the play of Rama and the Cereals") by saint Kanakadāsa of Karnataka.
Thus, the Classical Sanskrit drama and the folk-theatre of our ancient country went on interacting upon each other; and in a way, the former, after its decline, survived in some crystallized forms of the folk theatre like Rāmāliḷa, Rāsilīḷa and Nauntangi of North, Bhavai of Gujarat, Tamāśa of Maharashtra, Jātra of Bengal, Ankia-nāṭ of Assam, Yakshagāṇa of Karnataka, Veṣṭhi-Nāṭakamu and Burra Kathā of Andhra and Teerpukoothu of Tamilnadu.

The Modern Theatre Movement

The adventurous and experimental minds of theatre-lovers could not rest content with the various theatre-forms that existed till the end of 17th century. The rejuvenation of the folk-theatre under the influence of the Bhakti cult was followed by translations of Sanskrit plays into regional languages; for example, Prabodha-Čandrāvam, Čanda-Kausika, Hanuman-Nāṭaka and Ratnavali (Mitra-vindā Govinda in Kannada). At the same time, the establishment of the British rule in the country marked a search for a new theatre though it is again difficult to fix the exact date and mode of commencement of the Modern Theatre Movement. The foreign conquerors were feared and much admired by the educated class of the country; and the natural outcome of this was a desire to imitate the West. This desire among the educated Indians, added to their urge for finding a new theatre, sowed the seed of the modern movement.
For the first time in the history of the modern Indian theatre, two comedies *Disguise* and *Love is the Best Doctor* were translated from English into Bengali by Lebedoff (a Russian) and Goloknath Dass, and on the 7th of November, 1795, they were produced in a specially built urban theatre in Calcutta. Though nothing significant happened during the next half a century, the first Bengali theatre (the Hindu theatre) was established by Prasanna Kumar Tagore in 1831, and some English plays (including translations) were also staged. Next, encouraged by the Raja of Sangli, Vishnudas Bhave produced his play *Sītāswayāmvāra* in 1843 and thereby shaped the Marathi theatre.

The example of the Lebedoff theatre soon induced others to cater to the new taste of the audience which expected realistic plays without the traditional dance and music. Also a blending of tradition and modernity was attempted. Further, the powerful wave of English education brought in some adaptations of Shakespearian plays in modern Indian languages, like *Bhānumati Chittavilās* by Harachandra Ghosh. There were attempts to write and produce original plays in modern Indian languages, like the *Inder Sabha* an opera and costume play in Urdu, and the first Bengali play *Kulinakula-Sarbāsva* by Pandit Ram Narayan Tarkaratna, dealing with the problem of polygamy.

The War of Independence of 1857 gave rise to a new awakening among the people. By the turn of the century
this resulted in the birth of plays expressing the contemporary urge for freedom as their theme like Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nil-darpan* ('a mirror to indigo') (1858) and Vinayak Janardan Keertane's *Thorle Madhavrao Peshwe* (1861) which is considered to be the first original Marathi play. Side by side, a desire grew in the Indian playwrights to give a modern interpretation to mythology. Some plays right from Michael Madhusudhan Dutt's *Sermista* (1859) up to Girish Karnad's *Yavat* (1961) and *Hayavadana* (1975) illustrate the point. Further impetus to drama was provided by Bharatendu Harischandra, a Hindi playwright who took hints both from the classical theatre and the modern, and gave a new direction to playwriting and staging.

As a natural consequence of these dramatic activities, the professional theatre flourished in various parts of the country. The Parsi Natak Mandali established in Bombay in 1852 was followed by the formation of the Dramatic troupes like the Elphinstone Dramatic Club and Victoria Natak Mandali. The movement gained further momentum owing to the earnestness and expertise of professionals like Bal Gandharva and Keshavrao Bhonsle. It inspired other cities to have their own troupes and playhouses. Simultaneously there were performances in colleges, which gradually led to the formation of amateur troupes, like the Amateur Dramatic Association of Bangalore.
The attempt to develop the Indian theatre continued in this century also. While Gurzada Apparao wrote powerful social satires in Telugu and K.P. Khadilkar was the first to use Indian politics as a theme for the stage in Marathi, Rabindranath Tagore, dissatisfied with the western melodrama, was attracted towards the tradition of the classical Sanskrit plays and was concerned more with the inner world of man than the outer physical world; and his interest in a poetic presentation of the man within could be seen in almost all his plays (originally written in Bengali, some translated into English and other languages). Like Tagore, Jayashankar Prasad, a Hindi poet and dramatist cared more for the inner working of the mind than for external action.

A few playwright-actors like T.P. Kailasam gave a new direction to the amateur movement. His Kannada plays like Tollu Gatti (1922) and others have some unconventional features. In his discussion in the beginning of the play itself, the author, flinging a satirical remark at the existing professional stage containing lengthy essay-type speeches on ethical topics, says, "To begin with, it is no play at all; it is a series of lectures; but when I announced my lectures, nobody turned up; so now I am announcing it as a play". At the same time, there were instances like Raghava of Bellary who had mastered the acting of roles in Shakespearian plays.
After Independence, the Indian theatre movement gained momentum with the establishment of bodies like the National School of Drama, the Sangit-Natak Akademi and Drama Departments in some universities. Certain journals devoted to the propagation of the dramatic art acted as forums for crystallizing and disseminating new ideas in this regard. The Indian Theatre in the various languages flourished on account of some good plays during the period: for example, Vijay Tendulkar's Shāntata! Court Chālu Āhe in Marathi, Mohan Rakesh's Āhe–Adhure and Āshādh Ke Ėk Din in Hindi, Badal Sarkar's Ėvam Indrajit in Bengali, Sriranga's Kēlu Janēmējavē and Chandrasekhara Kambar's Jōkumārāswēmy in Kannada.

Indo-Anglian Drama

As already pointed out earlier, since the beginning of the 19th century, there has been a growing demand for plays in modern Indian languages including translations. Side by side with this demand, the educated class was fascinated by plays in English (including Shakespeare's which were occasionally staged). The Bombay Amateur Theatre (the first theatre in Bombay built in 1776) presented mostly later Georgian comedies; this was followed by the opening of the Grant Road Theatre. But plays in English written by Indians were not encouraged by these early theatres. Yet there was a faint desire here and there to have new dramatic pieces
in English based on Indian themes. In addition to the staging of western plays in the major cities of India by some European touring companies, many amateur groups and clubs flourished; but they concentrated more on modern drama in Indian languages.

Indo-Anglian drama took its birth and grew at its own pace in these circumstances. The First Parsi Baronet, perhaps the earliest Indo-Anglian verse-play, was written by C.S. Nazir in 1866; but he was thereafter attracted towards Gujarati and Hindustani plays. Next we find a phase (from 1877 till the end of the century) wherein plays in English like The Bombay Palkheewala and Bengali Baboo entertained the gatherings at some Hindu weddings and similar ceremonies of other religions. But, in all this time, the Indo-English drama could not face the challenge offered by plays in vernaculars such as Marathi, Bengali etc. The theatre movement in Bengal had started with the presentation of Bengali plays adapted first from English and then from Sanskrit; but this early period could boast of only one major play in English i.e. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Is This Civilization?* (1871). In Madras, Europeans staged plays in English at the amateur level in the Madras Dramatic Society which was established in 1875. This was followed by the Oriental Drama Club and the Sarasa Vinodini Sabha, the first Indian amateur dramatic society in South India. But they were not exclusively meant for dramatic performances in English.
Even in the early part of this century, drama in English had no chance to develop, whereas the theatre movement in Indian languages gained momentum (of course, under the influence of British drama); and the period (from 1940 onwards) presents the birth of several dramatic organisations like the Indian People's Theatre, the Indian National Theatre (established by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya), Ebrahim Alkazi's Theatre Unit, the Bharatiya Natya Sangha (affiliated to the World Theatre Centre of UNESCO) and several regional amateur theatres. In the post-Independence period, the performing arts were given a further impetus by the establishment of major organisations like the Sangit-Natya Akademi, the National School of Drama, training centres like the Adiyar Kalakshetra in Madras and Darpana in Ahmedabad, and Drama departments in some of the Universities in the country. Added to these, there have been annual National Drama festivals organised by the Sangit-Natya Akademi. The occasional visits of foreign troupes like the New Shakespearian Company acted as a further stimulus. But, as these opportunities have been mostly intended to encourage plays in Indian languages, the sad tale of the want of a living theatre in respect of Indo-Anglian Drama continues (though a few local organisations like the Bangalore Little Theatre have come up exclusively for it).

Commenting on Indo-English Drama, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar writes, "Modern Indian Dramatic writing is
neither rich in quantity, nor on the whole, of high quality.\textsuperscript{4} In that case, what could be the reasons and hurdles in the field? In spite of many handicaps, writing plays in English by Indians has continued for more than a century (till now), and we have nearly 400 plays (including the authors' translations of their works) to date. While Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Kailasam, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Bharati Sarabhai and Asif Currimbhoy are some major playwrights, we come across a few like V.V. Srinivasa Iyengar who appear to have written dramatic pieces just for occasional entertainment. Either for lack of proper encouragement to the playwright or owing to inadequate means of preservation, a good number of plays must have been lost or must have remained unpublished.

As Kalidasa says, drama is mainly meant to be performed (pravṛga-pradhāna). In the Classical Sanskrit Drama itself, we come across Bhasa who was well ahead of his times in this practical aspect. The success of a play is to be judged only on the stage as "drama is a composite art in which the written word of the playwright attains complete artistic realisation only when it becomes the spoken word of the actor on the

stage, and through that medium reacts on the mind of the audience." For successful communication the playwright will have to exert utmost care in the presentation of themes and in employing models, techniques and dialogue as well as the language suited to the purpose.

Then, what is the situation of Indi-English Drama? What are the problems the playwrights have had to face and their attempts to solve them? How far are the playwrights successful in tapping the rich sources of our ancient lore, history, politics and society for their themes? Have they made any attempt to interpret ancient Indian myths and legends from a modern point of view? As regards models and techniques, how far have they imitated the west or made a judicious use of the rich dramatic tradition of our Classical Sanskrit Drama and folk-stage? The English-speaking people being in a minority in the country, what is the playwrights' approach to the problem of employing a suitable language for dialogue? What are the reasons for the poor output of stageable plays? What is the achievement in the field on the whole? Is there scope for optimism regarding further improvement? These are some of the major issues which the detailed critical study of the entire corpus of Indo-Anglian plays attempted in the present work seeks to throw light upon.