ACHIEVEMENT AND CONCLUSION

It is but natural that this survey of Indo-Anglian plays in the pre-Independence as well as the post-Independence phases should lead to an important question: what is the total achievement in the field?

Of course, as already indicated, there have been some stageworthy plays of note (though they have some minor imperfections); but their number is only to be counted on the fingers: Sri Aurobindo's Rodogune, Kailasam's The Purpose, Chattopadhyaya's The Coffin, Bharati Sarabhai's Two Women, A.S.P. Ayyar's The Mother's Sacrifice, Gargi's The Vulture, Abbas's Invitation to Immortality, Currimbhoy's The Refugee, Smt. K.B. Thakur's Mother and Child, Gurucharan Das's Larins Sahib, Borgeonkar's Bhasmasura, Tagore's Sacrifice and Karnad's Havavadana. Among these playwrights, a new interpretation of the myths and legends has been successfully attempted by a few like Sri Aurobindo (in his Perseus), Karnad (in his Havavadana), Bharati Sarabhai (in her The Well of the People) and others. Some success has been achieved in securing the kind of concentration required in short plays (as already shown in the case of plays like The Coffin the The Refugee by Chattopadhyaya and Currimbhoy respectively). Not only Sri Aurobindo, but also some playwrights like Kailasam have continued the romantic tradition and,
as already pointed out in the case of The Purpose, make epic stories credible, though the attempts at casting their tragic heroes into the Elizabethan mould have failed. Similarly, we find some achievement in dramatising epic and historical events emphasising the human element in them (as shown in the plays like Smt. Thakur's Mother and Child, Ayyar's The Mother's Sacrifice and Das's Larins Sahib), in projecting on the stage social evils like extreme superstition and exploitation of the poor by the affluent (as shown in the plays like Ayyar's In the Clutch of the Devil and Gargi's The Vulture respectively), and in showing Science vis-a-vis human life (as observed in the study of Abbas's Invitation to Immortality and Borgaonker's Bhasmasura).

But, as noted in the previous chapters, apart from such small success in using material and constructing plots with the required suspense and action, the playwrights have disappointed us by not fully tapping the rich fund of material from the ancient lore, history and legends of our country; nor have they tried to employ the models and techniques of our dramatic tradition (with a very few exceptions as seen in Karmad and Dalal) and in solving the language problem (again with a few exceptions as seen in some plays of Currimbhoy, Ezekiel and others).
Apart from a few such plays, the actual achievement in the field of Indo-English Drama is very meagre, compared to that in prose, poetry, the novel and the short story. For this poor performance, there are some major reasons which this survey has indicated from time to time.

Reasons for the Meagre Achievement

The first and foremost reason is the want of a living theatre. It is a well-known fact that the real success of a play can be tested only on the stage. A playwright always needs a living theatre to put his work to an acid test, evaluate its total effect on the audience and thereby get a chance to improve upon his previous performance. But, as already shown in the introductory chapter, the history of evolution of the modern Indian theatre reveals how the Indo-Anglian playwright had to suffer for want of a regular living theatre in the country. This main handicap did not allow him to pursue playwriting in a systematic and comprehensive way. As already explained, the result is that most of the dramatists seem to have taken playwriting, not as a 'cause of the soul', but only as a light hobby; and they seem to write for the reader (and not for the playgoer) who could have some entertainment so far as his imagination could conjure up the necessary setting and visualise the action. Thus it is no wonder that most of the playwrights did not bestow due thought on the stageability of their plays.
Another important reason for the meagre achievement in the field is the playwrights' failure to employ the rich folk-forms, and traditional models and techniques of the Classical Sanskrit Drama. As M.K. Naik remarks, "It is a shocking fact that he (the Indo-Anglian playwright) has mostly written as if he belonged to a race which has never had any dramatic tradition worth the name". ¹ As already shown, there are examples of playwrights like Sri Aurobindo who have unnecessarily imitated the West. Throughout the survey one can find many places where the folk-stage could have been exploited with advantage in some way or the other. For example, in the plays with hagiological themes like Chattopadhyaya's Jayadeva and Roy's The Beggar Princess, folk-songs could have been introduced at places to indicate the saint's growing popularity among the masses. Even a play like Arati Nagarwalla's The Bait would have better fitted into the folk-form of North Karnataka (on the model of Chandrasekhara Kambar's award-winning Kannada play Jokumaraswamy) to dramatise the extreme loyalty and innocence of the aboriginal tribes. A play like Kailasam's The Purpose could have definitely gained by the employment of folk-motifs in tune with the setting of the forest abode of the hunter Ekalavya.

Similarly, there are places where the stage cries out for some useful techniques of the Classical

Sanskrit \( \text{德拉} \) drama. The Sutradhara, for example, would have better served the purpose of effectively introducing the theme to the audience and thereby preparing the faculties of their mind for aesthetic experience, particularly in the plays with mythological, epic and historical themes like Sri Aurobindo's \text{武生达施塔} , Kailasam's \text{泰古塞} , Roy's \text{斯里查蒂坦亚} and Sadar-Joshi's \text{阿恰里亚 布罗纳} . Even today we find some successful experiments of this nature like those of David Horseburgh (an Englishman who has settled in India) whose Sutradhara in his play \text{感激的男子} (an adaptation of \text{Harcatantre}) can very well serve a link between the stage and the audience. Next, for example, Indo-Anglian playwrights have failed to recognise the use of techniques like the \text{pravesaka} , which can conveniently fill up the gap between two distant scenes (as already explained in respect of the play like Smt. Thakur's \text{摩督和孩} and \text{米瑞纳里尼 塞门} 's \text{监禁的土壤}). Thus, they have failed to follow the useful tradition of both the folk-stage and the Classical Sanskrit Drama of the country.

Further, drama is a growing art, and, as such, it needs constant experimentation. At best, we have seen only a very few playwrights who have experimented with strategies such as a new interpretation of myths and legends; highlighting the modern relevance of epic characters; evincing a deep insight into historic
and political events; presenting social maladies so as to provoke thought; allegorical representation of ideas and dance-drama; etc. Compared to the vastness of the field, the extent of this experimentation is rather meagre; and the great amount of disinclination shown in this vital aspect all these decades has been another major setback in the path of concrete achievement in the field.

Also, the playwrights' failure to tackle the problem of language is not a small reason for their meagre achievement. For, dialogue, which is complementary to setting and action, can make or mar a play. As discussed earlier in both the pre-Independence and post-Independence phases, many playwrights do not seem to have bestowed sufficient thought on the use of language. Though our country has been and continues to be benefited by the richness of the English language, the English-knowing people do not form a considerable majority and much less in number are the people who speak English. Having this in view, what type of language is suitable for the Indo-English stage? Except in the case of some plays by Sri Aurobindo, Chattopadhyaya, Currimbhoy and others, many have employed a highly literary idiom irrespective of their themes. For, while stylized language would be effective for a mythological or a historical theme, it would be artificial in the case of themes from the contemporary society, which naturally necessitate the use of the
spoken language. Moreover, even in the use of literary language, many do not seem to have taken into account the fact that their characters belong to different strata of society. Even regarding the use of Sanskrit and other Indian words the meaning of which cannot be fully conveyed by their English equivalents, some playwrights appear to have gone to an extreme. Anyway, on the whole, the attempts to solve this vital problem of language are rather disappointing, and they have naturally told upon the achievement in the field.

The Present Situation

Still there is no living theatre in the country exclusively meant for plays in English, and the Indo-Anglian dramatist has to suffer from lack of opportunities to test the success of his new work on the stage. Of course, political Independence gave an impetus to the performing arts in the country in various forms like the establishment of the National School of Drama etc. (as detailed in the first chapter). But all these have done a purposeful service for the cause of drama in Indian regional languages, almost to the total neglect of the drama in English, in the case of which merely an occasional performance or two in big cities cannot help its growth. There may be a few organisations like Akshara Little Theatre in New Delhi and Bangalore Little Theatre, which are solely meant for drama in English; but their number is very small in view
of the great need for Indo-Anglian playwrights spread all over the country.

However, there has been a growing awareness among the new writers of the need to employ folk-forms and make their plays effective on the stage. The example of Girish Karnad has already been mentioned. His experiments need to be multiplied so that fresh experimentation can emerge out of such attempts.

In addition, playwrights seem to have realised the importance of experimentation in language also; to which the plays written particularly during this decade bear evidence. Of late, they seem to employ more and more of spoken language for social themes and thereby reduce the element of artificiality in dialogue. In tune with the growing tendency regarding the use of language, playwrights like Currimbhoy have chosen more of the spoken language in their later plays; Ezekiel, Partap Sharma and Karnad are some more noteworthy examples in this direction. Further, unlike Kailasam, these writers do not seem to be unaware of the latest developments in style. Like Anand, they show their ability to make careful use of Indian words when they cannot find suitable English equivalents of the same connotation. All such experimentation can help in a great deal in improving the quality of Indo-Anglian drama of the future.
Gone are those days of the foreign rule when anything Indian (let alone Indian literature) was condemned irrespective of its merits even by our own people. Now there is a marked change in their outlook. They have begun to give due consideration to modern Indian literature including Indo-English writing. Now the works of eminent writers like Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan, Sri Aurobindo and Kailasam are not something to be read casually; but evaluation of these works at the highest level has been done and is going on. At the moment, great interest is being evinced by the reading public in three forms of Indo-Anglian literature, viz., the novel, short story and poetry. This is sure to widen the horizon of its interests, from which Indo-Anglian Drama is to benefit. The playwright has to seize this opportunity and make earnest qualitative efforts to win increasing attention from the public.

Drama is entirely meant for performance; and, as repeatedly suggested already, a 'living theatre' is a 'must' for the art to flourish. As a play staged can educate the people by enlightening them about the merits and drawbacks of our society and nation, greater Government encouragement is needed in this important aspect of drama. Thereby all the cities and towns, as well as some chosen central places in rural parts could always be kept buzzing with theatre.
activity which would give frequent opportunities to the playwright to put his work to the acid test of a stage and improve the art.

The poor achievement in the field of Indo-Anglian drama need not be a deterrent to the future playwright. Whatever the causes of the past failure to write a good number of stageable plays, he can take up successful experiments and avoid the pitfalls to which so many of his predecessors have succumbed. As repeatedly mentioned, he has to tap the rich material of ancient myth and history, problems of contemporary society and politics. He will do well to follow the footsteps of Sri Aurobindo, Karnad and others in giving a modern interpretation of ancient myths and legends. Further, innumerable problems continue to crop up in this ancient land of variety in customs and languages; and they can be a perennial source for the playwright's social themes.

No art can naturally grow unless it is rooted in the soil. As such, to improve the stageability of his plays, the Indo-Anglian playwright should first find his roots in the rich tradition of classical Sanskrit Drama and folk-stage as well as the culture of his country. As already suggested, he should first consider this tradition for his models and techniques, and make a judicious use of them. What 'Sriranga' (Adya Rengacharya) remarks
about the Modern Indian Theatre in general, may, always serve as a beacon light to the Indo-Anglian playwright in particular: "Unthinkingly we opened our Theatre, and bewitched by the (Western) breeze we forgot it (our dramatic tradition) and just walked over to the Western Theatre... Like parentage it lives in us even in these days. We may denounce our father, but we cannot empty ourselves of his blood in us". Further, if and when found necessary, he can certainly supplement the Indian models and techniques from the suitable ones of the West. For his dialogue, he has to employ a stylized or the spoken tongue as his theme warrants; and as already said he can unhesitatingly — of course, sparingly — use Indian words according to the demand of a particular context.

On the whole, the prospect is certainly not bleak provided we have playwrights solidly grounded in the Indian tradition and yet willing to experiment, and also a living theatre to subject their art to the kind of test which alone can prove the authenticity of their dramatic genius.