I do not know how I developed interest in the study of
Problem play. A lot of intellectual probing gives me only a
vague idea that, perhaps, the abundance of problems in my life
must have led me unconsciously to the study of Problem plays.
During my lone struggle in the days of early youth I must have
felt starved of some congenial company and since there was nothing
but treachery and derisive smiles in the world of men, I must
have searched company in the world of books. Although devouring
everything that came in my hand, I gradually felt a little more
inclined towards problem drama because there alone I could see
truth shorn off all sentimental trappings. I was sick of the
fanciful flights of poets and I was disgusted with beautifully
worded nonsense of the sentimental writers. The naked realities
of life had made me wiser than my years warranted and when other
youths of my age were weaving rainbows out of their dreams, I was
making sincere efforts to be among the limited band of Shaw’s
followers.

In due course of time, with a good degree at my command,
I got the opportunity to get a station for myself. But old love,
they say, is not easily forgotten. I continued to browse dramatic
works of the realist school and at that time the study was directed
only towards mental enrichment. It was just out of curiosity that
I went through ‘Sindur Ki koli’. I had read one or two dramas of
Prasad earlier and had found these dramas to be wonderful pieces
of historical romance. But their appeal came from so distant a
post that it fell like a sweet symphony on the ear and failed
to provoke me in the least. 'Sindur Ki Loli', however, did
provoke me and I could find faint echoes of the Western masters
both in its content and technique.

Like food habits, reading habits also got well-set and to
me every work of problem drama was an irresistible attraction.
The dramas of Laxmi Narain Mishra, Seth Govind Das and others were
at first confined to a small circle of readers and it was only in
the late fifties that I got the opportunity to read them. My
attachment to Hindi Problem play grew deeper and deeper and there
was hardly a work of the established problem playwright which I did
not go through. On my shelf lay the works of all prominent English
Problem Playwrights side by side with the problem plays of the
realist school in Hindi. I would read a scene or two from Abir
Ya Garibi and then put the book on the shelf and pick up some other
English Problem play such as 'The Voyes Inheritance', or 'The
Widowers' House'. I admit there was no scheme in this random
reading and yet a ground for some sort of comparative work was
under preparation. The seed had yet to be sown.

It was in March, 1972, that I got an opportunity to
engage Dr. G.C. Gupta, the renowned scholar, in conversation
regarding the quality of research work on comparative literature.
He told me that an ounce of good work was better than a pound
of idle criticism and he asked me to do some work on comparative
literature by taking up a subject of my interest. My obvious
choice was problem play and Dr. Gupta was kind enough to give his
consent to guide me in this research project. But for his
learned guidance this work would never have been completed. His immense scholarship always came to my rescue whenever I groped in the dark.

The project in hand has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter deals with the general survey of English and Hindi drama and the second chapter covers the development of drama in these two languages. The nature and form of problem play in the social, economic and political backdrop has also been discussed in this chapter. Third and fourth chapters take up prominent problem playwrights of English and Hindi respectively and a few pages have also been given to minor dramatists not covered in detail. But so fertile was the period which gave birth to the dramatic genre called 'problem play' both in English and Hindi that all names cannot be included in any account. The exclusion of any name is not because of a sense of disrespect but because it may not have come within the scheme of things planned to be covered.

In the fifth and sixth chapters I have tried to show similarities and diversions in English and Hindi Problem Play from the point of view of theme and technique respectively. It would be pedantry of the worst type to claim absolute originality in any regard but this seems to be, to the best of my knowledge, the only research work on comparative study of English and Hindi Problem Play. I have tried to avoid the 'Shastra' style and have discussed things in a matter-of-fact
way. The last chapter sums up my findings in unambiguous language. It is hoped that some of my assertions will be put to critical scrutiny by future research scholars.

While dealing with problem play I have here and there touched some plays of the symbolic and poetic variety as well. This has been done only to show that the stream of Hindi Problem Play overflowed so powerfully for sometime that it spilled over to certain adjacent areas. The poetic drama in Hindi has, however, gathered sufficient momentum and now offers another full fledged subject of comparative study in regard to English poetic drama. I dedicate this work, without any pretensions of scholarship, to all lovers of comparative literature and if it succeeds to provide them an hour or two of pleasant and thoughtful reading that will be more than my reward.

Perfection is denied to man and divinity is not everybody's lot. What matters is the sincerity of purpose. Life can be looked at from a thousand and one points of view and despite sharp differences all the viewers may speak the truth and nothing but the truth as they have seen it. My humble submission to those who differ with my findings is to think for a while of the old proverb of 'four blind men and the elephant.' I expect nothing more than a casual remark from a discerning reader 'here is a thought-provoking work.' Let that alone be my satisfaction.

23rd June, 1977.                                                PURANCHAND RAKESH.