

**SOCIAL REALISM – A STUDY ON ASIF CURRIMBHOY’S “THE HUNGRY ONES****G. Mohana Charyulu, Ph.D.***Associate Professor & Chairman, RPAC, Dept of English, K L University, A.P. India.***Abstract**

India has the richest tradition in drama. Right from the Vedic Aryan period down to Post Modern Multi Cultural society, Indian Drama is credited with different episodes with different outlooks by the dramatists. Most of the themes describes the different situations relating to good and bad in different ; Crime and Punishment; Sin and Redemption and so on. It was Rabindranath Tagore and a host of others in the modern age of Indian Drama created the impression of drama in a new perspective. The Plays of Asif Currimbhoy throws light on the sensing conflicts everywhere. The conflict is sometimes internal like physical, mental, and emotional because of human relations that we maintain in society at the same time, conflict in theatre among the characters, situations, scenes and surprisingly among the audience. He invents human quandary through social, moral, religious and political concerns in his plays. His plays stand for universal revolt and anguish. This paper titled: “Hungry and Poverty in the streets of Calcutta – A Study on Currimbhoy’s “The Hungry Ones” makes an attempt to throw light on the human plight handled by the playwright where he looks at the things while others fail to see.

Key words: *Drama – India- Post Modern multicultural society- conflict- poverty- Hungry.*



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Drama is a major literary genre in India. It was performed in a simple way during the age of the Vedic Aryans period. The episodes from great epics like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagavad-Gita were enacted out in front of people. The objective of the dramatists in these areas is to convey the victory of good over bad. They created interludes, episodes, monologues and other techniques to give courage, amusement, happiness and advice to all of them. Indian Drama regained its strength when Britisher’s came to India. A new Drama emerged to the forefront of Indian audience during 1920’s with the influence of freedom movement, Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Symbolism and surrealism. After Independence, the Govt. of India established the Kendriya Sangeeta Nataka Academy in 1953 which gave a new footing to Indian Drama in many ways. There was a revolutionary change in the Style and Techniques of enacting, costume designing, stage decoration, presentation,

theme and dialogues. Rabindra Nath Tagore and a host of others contributed their best in pre Independent Drama. Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Asif Currimbhoy and Girish Karnad have contributed to the modernization of Indian theatre with their bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of thematic concerns and technical craftsmanship.

Asif Currimbhoy's plays are focused on human predicament which surprises him so much that he shares the pain and agony of humanity through the characters he creates. The pathetic human condition is uppermost in his mind. Hence, while expressing his concern for mankind in blackmood, he draws the attention of his audience to become sympathizers. His imagination is built on the experience of life. There is a perfect fusion of thought and feeling in his plays. All his plays deal with serious social, political, moral and religious issues with pathos, sentiment, irony and social criticism. He also adds gentle comic laughter with a cynical and ironic purpose. All his issues, though local in colour, are of universal appeal, drawing attention to problems of man everywhere such as denial of human rights, justice and freedom. This is evident from the appreciation he has received from theatres across the world, where the plays have been successfully staged. The conflicts presented are internal as well as external in nature, rendering them superb psychological studies.

The play **The Hungry Ones** is one of Currimbhoy's social plays which aim at depicting the real picture of the city of Calcutta during the 1960s. This play was published in 1965 and is based on the journey of two beatnik poets Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky. During 1960-70, Allen Ginsberg visited Calcutta along with his partner Peter Orlovsky. Both were highly influenced by the city and its condition. The play shows that hunger and love are not easily affected by the urgent need of circumstances. The dramatist reveals that hunger and love "stand out prominently in an environment of arson, loot and rapine as much as in an environment of transcendental humbug." (1985:106)

In the play, the monkey act performed by the two Indians in the first scene is actually the projection of the pitiable condition of the poor people who hardly manage their food of two times. The description of the monkey act or the hungry act arouses the feeling of pity and sympathy for the poor class:

The man now lies prostrate, as though without arms and legs,
writhing has body forward, inching forward painfully, his flesh picking
up the filth of the pavement, cutting itself on sharp stones till blood shows
on dirty cloth, all the time slapping his bare brown stomach,
his eyes hollow, till the sound of his empty stomach sounds

very much like the empty drum, that drives him on and on. (1965:26)

Currimbhoy does not simply presents the picture of society in regard to a major event but he also throws light on the causes of its occurrence. The reasons which give rise to disparity are openly discussed among the characters so that the viewers get aware of the causes which led to the destructive outcomes of the violence in the nation. He has criticized the society on several grounds. As he highlights the prejudices deeply rooted in the society and has turned out to be the established order of the society. There are several wrong notions in the society which has been accepted by people and has become one of the set norms. For example the exploitation of poor or labour class is continued from generation to generation and thus it has been set as an established order of society. As the hungry act in the first scene is in itself an example of the extent of poverty and misery. The scene ends with the voices of the two Indians speaking:

“...so you want to become one of us, stranger, a hungry one...?”

Then learn, stranger, learn...HUNGER.” (1965: 38)

This dialogue clearly expresses the condition of the poor who are victims of natural disaster i.e. famine in Bengal. The two Americans continue their struggle to understand the mystery of India. In their journey, they come across the ugly sight of poor natives. Asif presents the atmosphere of gloom, melancholy and despair. He makes use of visual image and gives the description:

Sam and Al look around slowly, peering through the darkness.

They see along the footpaths, rows upon rows of maimed and deformed beggars, some begging for alms, some moaning softly, some bearing patiently, some waiting. They start at the beginning of the row, lighting matches to see the faces of each individual beggar that blazes out shockingly in disease and deformity. (1965:38)

The play “the Hungry Ones” deal with with different social issues and problems prevailing in the contemporary times. Asif Currimbhoy as a social critic, throws light on the serious issues related to the society and instead of giving his own opinion, he enables the viewer to form his own idea about the particular issue. He has taken different themes from contemporary Indian society and presented them in the realistic manner.

References

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