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POLITICAL, ECONOMICAL ISSUES AND COMMUNALISM IN ASIF CURRIMBHOY'S
'THE REFUGEE'

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ABSTRACT

The Refugee a one act play was written by Asif Currimbhoy. The play portrays the miserable condition of the refugees from East Bengal on hand and on the other hand the play throws ample light on the effects of the refugee problems in social life in India during 1971. Asif combines the major issues with other problems like communalism as it is also led by other issues. It suggests that one problem gives way to other problems. The present play focuses all the issues due to the influx of refugees. How the refugee problems made political, economical, personal issues and communalism in the society.

Key words: communalism, refugee problems, social life, political issues, economical issues

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The Refugee, a one act was play written by Asif currimbhoy against the political up heal in East Pakistan in 1971. Currimbhoy is quick with his dramatic reflexes to events around him. It reflects the miserable condition of the refugees from East Bengal on one hand and on the other hand the play throws ample light on the effects of the refugee problem in the social life in India during 1971. The play focuses refugee problems and how the problems are affected on social life. Particularly how it is created religious, political and economical problems in the society. Asif has brought the events to the readers in a realistic way.

Each of his play has a touch of reality due to its connection with some major events or incidents of the past or the contemporary time. He targets the impact of the social issues over the lives of people. He believes in the fact that literature is meant to represent the society. The skill with which Asif currimbhoy traces the subtle change that comes over the characters reveals him as a play Wright of psychological skill. As a social critic, he exhibits his excellence in portraying the social condition as prevailing in the contemporary time. The plays of Currimbhoy are based on the issues related to the society, politics, religion, human life and relations etc., He takes up particular incident happened in the country and presents it in a realistic mode. The present play is one of the examples of it.

The plot centers around two characters like Yassin and Sengupta. Yassin, a young intellectual who searches for his own conscience in the confusing world. In the beginning of the play, Yassin flees to India from East Pakistan as a refugee. He was received by Sengupta, a confident-looking middle-aged man about fifty. Sengupta says that he is ready to welcome refugees as long as there is food to share and place to live in his house.

Sengupta's family has shown much affection on Yassin because Sengupta and Yassin's mother were born in India, grew up together and did their education in the same. Finally Sengupta insists that we are the East Bengali whether Muslim or Hindu, always yearns for his old home town. Later Gupta enquires about 'The Awami League' in Comilla University in West Pakistan. The Awami League through which the students were motivated to involve in cruel and unethical activities that made Gupta's blood boil. Here Asif has shown the communal conflict between Yassin and Sengupta. It exposes....

Yassin: The University learning offered a way of life. Non-political, non-party; scholarship became an end in itself. Do you understand?

Sen Gupta: No! (TR,12)

Finally Sen Gupta opines that they have wasted much time till now so it is time to declare war and March in. The expression of Gupta.....

"Huh? (his reverie broken) Do? Adopt a more aggressive posture. The refugee exodus is an undeclared war by Pakistan. (Yassin comes in unnoticed) we've wasted too much time already. It's costing us money and lives anyway. A quick kill, that's what we need to do. Declare war and march in!" (TR...32-33)

Here Yassin interrupts them and opposes Gupta's view about Pakistani. By this sort of killing we cannot get any benefits instead of hitting the innocents. Moreover he is born in Pakistan so he has to be Pakistani. The emotional attitude of Yassin.....

"Nobody's! But if you'll push me, I'll tell you. I was born in Pakistan- not India like Mosin here. If I am anybody, I have to be Pakistani!" (TR, 33)

Currimbhoy combines the major issues with other problems such as communalism as it is also led by other issues. It suggests that one problem gives way to other problems. Besides creating social unrest, the influx of refugees also led to communalism in some places too. Most of the refugees were Hindus when they came in such a helpless state in India it created tension between Hindus and Indian Muslims. The other important thing is that politics which plays a key role in the refugee problems.. Bangladesh must have a political solution due to the problem of refugees. He too talks about the Muslim community and their position in India. It reveals in this play by the characters of Sengupta and Professor Mosin .

The expression of Sengupta...

"Well, you can't deny it, Mosin! There's a massacre taking place out there - in a Muslim country - and their Islamic brothers keep quiet here!" (TR,32)

Asif Currimbhoy further portrays the fact that the heavy influx of refugees created a rift between Pakistani Muslims and Indian Muslims. It reflects the characters of Professor Mosin and Yassin. Prof. Mosin speaks about Indian Muslims, their attitude and their status in India. He also compares the Pakistani Muslims with Indian Muslims. Finally he supports Indian Muslims. The expression of Professor Mosin.....

"There is a naturaldelicate balance in society. The Indian Muslims as a minority have learnt to co-exist, sometimes precariously. Along come the refugees, mostly persecuted Hindus, and throw off the balance."

"There is a difference between the Indian Muslim and Pakistani Muslim." (TR,42)

Here Yassin misunderstands Prof. Mosin's opinion about Pakistani Muslim. Then Mosin tries to convince him. Afterwards Yassin realizes and expresses he doesn't like to disturb the friendship between Mosin and Gupta's family. Moreover Mosin has to live his life time in India. The expression of Yassin

"No, no, Professor. I thank you.....for your liberalism.....Your frankness. Our friendship matters to me too and I would rather it were on a realistic basis." (TR,42-43)

It not only created bitterness in Indo-Pakistan relations but also put a heavy burden on Indian economy on May 24, 1971, addressing Indian parliament Mrs.Indira Gandhi expressed a great concern over the influx of the refugees to Indian territories:

We all felt our country was poised for rapid economic advance and a more determined attack on the age old poverty of our people. She said in a pensive mood. Even we were settling down to these new tasks, we have been engulfed by a new gigantic problem, not of our making....., So massive a migration in so short a time is unprecedented in history. Three and a half million have come in the last eight weeks on the present estimates the copy of relief to the government of India may exceed as 180 crores for six months. (Mrs.Indira Gandhi, 'Address to parliament', may 24, 1971. Quoted by Dr.Mankekar, Pakistan cut to size, New Delhi. Indian Books company.1972.13.print)

Asif has presented the economical issues in a practical mode in this play. He also portrays how it is affected middle class people life. Due to this, how the personal idealism declines. It is very clearly revealed by the character, Sengupta. In the beginning, he received all the refugees and provided shelters and food for them. Whenever the refugees increased in number his idealism starts waning.

The irritating expression of Sengupta.....

But no, no! I didn't mean my own garage! Next they'll be moving into my stud.....(stops halfway from saying "study" and guiltily lowers in his voice) shhhh..... do you think he heard me? (TR,20)

Asif Currimbhoy's presentation reflects personal attitudes on the issues. We find out in this play by many characters. Another important character of this play is Mita, daughter of Sengupta shows much interest in voluntary social work. She is even involves in refugee rehabilitation. Mita inquires yassin about his attitudes. Particularly, the reason is for avoiding refugees though he is a refugee. He even doesn't talk about them or help them as though didn't exist. Yassin can understand refugees' problems better than others however he can't show interest on refugees and their problems.

The emotional expression of Mita....

"You..... You avoid the refugees. You don't talk about them, or help them. As though they didn't exist.(In Yassin's eyes a haunted expression. He still does not reply; then softly) why don't you come with mewith me, Yassin?"

"There is so much you can do. You'd understand their problems better than otherscould help.....in their rehabilitation". (TR,28)

She also explains very clearly the practical problem of refugees while seeing this she gets tears from her eyes, their sufferings touches her heart. In this connection she is unable to leave them alone. It reflects her attitude towards refugees. It is in the expression of Mita.....

"They bring tears to my eyes , their suffering touches my heart. I can't bear to leave them alone. All of life draws methe human condition. The need and recognition. If.....if all of us were toabstain the way you do, we'd be doing harm, don't you see the kind of harm that is deliberately done through neglect? Do you understand me my dear?.....Tell me" (TR.....29)

Through her words she has given a clear description on refugees and their status in the camp.

After listening the words of mita , Yassin gets realization and changes his attitude about refugees. He expresses.....

"I shall try , Mita, I promise You I shall try." (TR.....29)

Mita announces about the ' outbreak of cholera' in the camp with an emotional way. She expresses her worrying towards refugees since many refugees die like flies. It is unable to see it. Particularly, their worryings and their problems. She prays to God to solve it. The emotional attitude of Mita.....

Refugee dying like flies. Disease.spreading (breathless) Trying hard to contain it. Much sympathy from outsiders. (Looking straight at yassin, the tears at last streaming down her face) They sayat last(laughing and crying hysterically). (TR,34)

She has brought the real situation of refugees to Yassin. Here Yassin replies that he has taken the decision with his own not by the force of others. He appreciates Mita's suggestions so as to understand the reality.

In the beginning of the play Yassin is unable to find out his own conscience in this confusing world. In the middle he conflicts with situation and people. However finally he understands the fact and chooses the right path.

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