



Book Review

Into the Grey

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Into the Grey is the play written by South African Indian playwright Ashwin Singh in 2017. The play is published in the playwright's second anthology of plays *Durban Dialogues, Then and Now* consisting of three plays published in 2018. The playwright's first anthology *Durban Dialogues, Indian Voice: Five South African Plays*. The first anthology discusses various issues of the multiracial existence at the time of the nation's freedom. Problems arising out of various races living together are discussed threadbare. Indians, Black, White and the Coloured people who have never lived together so far find it difficult to adjust with the new reality and hence each race tries to dominate over the other. One unmistakably feels that no one talks and discusses about the nation! Each of the three plays in the second anthology *Durban Dialogues, Then and Now* marks progression from the first anthology. These plays depict situation of the nation in the post-honeymoon period, viz., post-2010.

Into the Grey discusses the political and social situation of South Africa. The playwright fears that the nation might collapse leaving behind all its glorious past and traditions. There is a clear tone of pessimism arising out of the play. Unethical nexus between the politicians and the rich has shattered dreams of the Rainbow existence of all races together. Both are out to exploit the resources and none seems to care about pertinent issues of the poor people. Those who fought for freedom and sacrificed everything are disillusioned about the intention of the leaders of the nation. The nation is into the grey once again. They decide and vow to free the nation from such unholy nexus.

The play is centered around two characters, Logan Pillay, an Indian and Sandile Ndlouv, a coloured. The play progresses with the growth of these characters from youth to adulthood. Both were revolutionaries fighting for human rights of the youth of the nation during the apartheid. Both fought for freedom and when freedom was earned, both parted in their own different ways. Logan Pillay went on to become a doctor with the nationalist zeal of serving the nation with the best that he could! However, petty interests of unionists, frequent strikes and undue favour of the Black disillusioned him about the kind of freedom they have won. He was considered as a corrupt and was dismissed from services despite his best efforts to serve people. His character proves that an honest and sincere person cannot survive in the contemporary South African reality. Sandile, on the other hand, enters politics in order to serve the

nation. However, he soon is sidelined and like many war heroes his ideals and ideas are ignored. He realizes that petty and corrupt politicians are not interested in national growth. They want to exploit the nation at any cost. Both the friends have become old and have realized the uselessness of their sacrifices for freedom. Now, what is the way out of the present situation? To accept the modern reality as it is or to fight and try to change it? Ultimately both decide to start freedom struggle once again, freedom against corrupt politicians, freedom against unethical nexus of the rich and the powerful, freedom against the exploiters of the nation, freedom against their own people, etc. This fight is not going to be easy. Both vow to fight and are even eager to lay down their lives for their freedom despite their old age. They want to get rid of the racial politics.

Into the Grey turned out to be so real that very recently South Africa witnessed political turnover as people were fed up of the ugly and unethical nexus of politics, power and money. People realized that they never wanted such freedom and hence they started raising their voice against the government. And therefore the government was under tremendous pressure to leave aside its petty politics. Sensing unrest among the people, the ruling party ANC called back the veteran apartheid activist Cyril Ramaphosa to lead the nation out of crisis and immediately address impending issues. Thus, the play is successful in accurately presenting the time, however cruel it is.

The play is set in an imaginary town called Chatsworth and is divided in eight scenes. Each scene is given a title suggesting its theme. The play is spread through twenty nine years beginning from its freedom struggle to the present time. This play shows mirror to the contemporary situation of South Africa. South African Indian theatre is rich in its output. Since its inception, this theatre has successfully voiced the issues and problems of its people. And therefore, South African Indian theatre has not remained an ethnic one, rather has become a national theatre. Ashwin Singh is one of the foremost playwrights of South Africa. He can see through the problems of the time and artistically presents through the medium of theatre. It is indeed joy to watch his *Into the Grey*.