



**A Study of 'Kitchen Sink Drama' with Special Reference to John
Osborne's *Look Back in Anger***



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Research Paper :

Introduction :

Drama is a form composition designed for performance in theater, in which actors and actresses take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated actions, and utter the written dialogue. The term came from a Greek word meaning 'action', which is derived from the verb meaning 'to do or to act'. The Romans introduced drama to England, during the medieval period. A number of auditoriums were constructed for the performance of the art form, when it came to the country. Mummers' plays, associated with the Moris dance, became a popular form during the medieval period and few days later the

mystery and morality plays were also performed at the religious festival, carried the Christian theme.

During the Renaissance period the first English tragedy and comedy (types of drama) came into existence. Queen Elizabeth I ruled during the period, when great plays were produced. The playwrights of this time included William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, John Webster and many others. These dramatists wrote plays based on the themes like history, comedy, and tragedy. During the interregnum, the Puritan closed English theaters for their own religious purposes and ideological reasons. However, the theaters in London were reopened soon after the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660. In this period the terms new terms came into existence such as Heroic Drama and Comedy of Manners.

In Eighteenth Century Domestic Tragedy and Sentimental Comedy became the new flavor of the period. Musical Burlesque and Comic Operas competed with plays written by Shakespeare during the Victorian Era. In 1890, the first series of Edwardian musical comedies were introduced to the country. It was during this time that a new medium-motion picture started gaining popularity. Postmodernism had a serious effect of the existence of English drama in the end of twentieth century. However, a large number of theaters still exist such as Shaftesbury Avenue, The Royal Shakespeare Company etc.

Let us begin by analyzing the term 'Kitchen Sink Drama'. The term was coined to describe a British Cultural movement that developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s in theater, art, novel, film and television, plays, whose protagonists usually could be describe as angry young men. In the United Kingdom, the term 'Kitchen Sink Drama' derived from an expressionist painting John Bratby which contained an image of a 'Kitchen Sink'.

Perhaps the first, and most notable, characteristic of these 'Kitchen Sink Drama' is the way in which they advanced a particular social message or ideology. The settings are almost always working class. The previous trend in Victorian theater

had been to depict the lives of the wealthy members of the ruling classes. These classes of people were often conservative in their politics and their ideologies. This is not in the case of 'Kitchen Sink Drama'. 'The Kitchen Sink Drama' brings the real lives and social inequality of ordinary working class people to the stage. The lives of these people are caught between struggles of power, industry, politics and social homogenization. Another chief characteristic of the 'Kitchen Sink Drama' is the way in which its characters expressed their unvarnished emotion and dissatisfaction with the ruling class status quo.

Some critics have noted the irony in the term 'Kitchen Sink Drama'. The domestic world during this time was believed to be the domain of the feminine. Almost all of the major 'Kitchen Sink Drama' works which take place in the mid-twentieth century, however, are centered on a masculine point of view. These plays rarely centered on the emotions and tribulations of its women characters. The power dynamic between male and female often assumed to be masculine and is an unexamined critical component in many of these plays. Women are often assumed to serve the men of their household and, when conflicts do arise, it is often the man who is portrayed as the suffering protagonist.

Whether social or domestic the 'Kitchen Sink Drama' changed the trajectory of British theater. Though many of authors considered to have written in this genre such as Osborne, Arnold Wesker, Shelagh Delaney and John Arden never claimed the title of 'Kitchen Sink Dramatist', these authors plays contained themes of common life that deeply resonated with British culture of the period. These types of plays signaled a resolute shift of British theater into the 20th century.

Let us begin by analyzing John Osborne's *The Look Back in Anger* where the characteristics of the term 'Kitchen Sink Drama' can be seen. Like other 'Kitchen Sink Drama', *The Look Back in Anger* also explore the real lives and social inequality of ordinary working class people and its protagonists 'Jimmy' described as angry young men. Jimmy, husband of Alison, runs the stall of

sweets with his friend Cliff for their bread and butter. He never tries to live happily with his wife Alison because she belongs to upper class family and Jimmy thinks that upper the class people always underestimate the working class people. So, throughout the play Jimmy troubles his wife a lot. He even cannot bear her small mistakes which are easily ignorable and scolds her as if she has made huge mistakes. He also does not like Alison's friend Helena should come their home and scolds his wife many times due to this. However, later, he has an affair with Helena. Jimmy complaints against each and every thing. For example, he does not like boring Sundays, hates daily news papers and many other common things. Because of Jimmy's nature one day Alison leaves his home and returns to her parents. However, in the end, the reunion of Jimmy and Alison can be seen.

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