

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

‘All Human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ (1). This famous first sentence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted almost sixty years ago by the General Assembly of the United Nations, is an important one for the lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, transsexuals, transitioned, intersexual persons, (LGBT) People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and other religious and ethnic minorities.

The world has gradually accepted that individual human beings have different sexes, racial or ethnic origins, and religions and that these differences must be respected and not be used as reasons for discrimination. But most countries still do not accept two other aspects of human diversity: that people have different sexual orientations and different gender identities and that a person's identity as female or male or neither, is not always determined by the type of body into which they were born.

Refusal to accept and respect these differences means that oppression of LGBT people is still a daily reality in most parts of the world. In some countries, discrimination and violence against LGBT people are getting worse. But more and more, brave individuals and groups are standing up for LGBT human rights in every region of the world. In particular, LGBT individuals and groups in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe no longer accept prejudices and discriminations, and are becoming increasingly impatient to achieve freedom and equality. Progress in realizing LGBT, PLWHA and Minorities Human Rights demands multi-layered change in all parts of the world: rights must be secured, laws changed, new policies designed and implemented, and institutional practices adapted. LGBT, PLWHA individuals and groups are the prime agents of change (Montreal 1). Tony Kushner – a powerful American gay activist and playwright is one of them. But progress is very uneven and is not automatic. Advances and setbacks are seen in many parts of the world. The purpose of this study is to study

Tony Kushner's fight against the social stigma and discrimination against LGBT, PLWHA and other social minorities by focusing on his play *Angels in America*. This research aims at analyzing how he redraws the boundaries of gender; sexuality and HIV/AIDS in play *Angels in America*.

Tony Kushner was born in Manhattan, New York, in 1956. While he was still an infant, his musician parents moved the family to Louisiana, where they played with the New Orleans Philharmonic. He developed an appreciation for opera and literature from his father, and learned a passion for theatre from his mother, who acted in local plays. Kushner's views on religion, politics, and sex, hallmarks of his later work as a playwright, began to take shape during his early childhood. He attended Hebrew school, where he developed an attraction toward his teacher but struggled to hide his homosexual feelings for several years. He felt further isolated as a Jew in the American South, where he regularly encountered anti-Semitism. When he left Lake Charles to attend Columbia University in New York, he was, by his own estimation, liberal, ardently Zionist, extremely closeted.

While at Columbia, he discovered new intellectual influences that changed his perspectives and would later shape his writing. He delved into the Middle Ages, found his own fantastical, spiritual side, and thought for a time that he would become a medieval studies professor. It wasn't until after he received his B.A. that Kushner "came out" and began to live as an openly gay student and artist. He went on to study directing at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Kushner read Bertolt Brecht and Karl Marx and realized the awesome potential of a politically charged theatre. He credits Brecht, particularly the German's play *Mother Courage and Her Children*, with guiding him toward a career as a playwright.

In this respect a short description of Kushner's major works would be relevant. *A Bright Room Called Day* (1985) was Kushner's first foray into professional theatre. The play, which initially received only a brief run at London's Bush Theatre, concerns a group of friends in pre-World War II and their responses to Hitler and Nazism. Critics were not kind to the work, especially in the United States where it was called "fatuous" and "an early front-runner for the most infuriating play of 1991." Kushner himself called the production a "catastrophe." The writer's next efforts were adaptations: *The Illusion* (1988), taken from Pierre Corneille's play *L'illusion comique*; and *Widows*, adapted from a book by fellow playwright Ariel Dorfman (*Death and the Maiden*) and produced in Los Angeles in 1991)

### **What are His Subjects**

Theatre and life is the major subject of Kushner. First it should be noted that Kushner was a student of Medieval Culture. He has little interest in the specific Christian contents of the cycle. Unlike Aristotle, he deliberately tries to evoke the long history of western dramatic literature and positions himself in the same tradition as Shakespeare, Brecht and other.

While Kushners' use of multiple locations is obviously consistent with medieval practice, his arrangement of incidents in *Angels in America* closely imitated the structural outline of mystery cycles. As the cycles trace the events ranging from Genesis to Dooms Day, so too, does Kushners' play. As the cycles begin with the creation and fall, Kushner's this play also begins with allusion to a more perfect and significantly Jewish past, now fallen from grace. At the funeral of Sarah Ironson, Rabbi Chemelwitt notes that her grand children "with the goyis name" have become so assimilated into the modern world a world fallen from the primal Eden of a the clay of some litvak Shtetl" that they are no longer capable of embarking on a Great voyage.

Secondly, Kushner is trying to follow the footprint of great playwright like Sophocles, Shakespeare, Brecht, T. William and Miller. Like them, he is trying to shown the social issues in theatre and provide an open space to audience to judge what is right and what is wrong. Like Tennessee William, he is trying to bring up the issue of homosexual couples and to represent the problems they face in society. Like G.B. Shaw, he has used stage as a forum for social debate. He liked to show that every play criticizing society “must if it is an honest play, involve certain struggle with public” (Shaw GB, May 18, 1895. NP). Individual position in the society is the prime issue of Kushner's play.

A search for identity is underway, beginning with the opening monologue of *Angels in America*, and each of the characters becomes involved in this search whether they intend it or not. In his eulogy for Sarah Ironson, Rabbi Chemelwitz describes the deceased as one of a special breed of immigrants who crossed the ocean and established a new homeland in America, carrying along bits of the Old World and passing them along to her children. To the Rabbi, Sarah Ironson is part of America's identity; she was an essential ingredient in "the melting pot where nothing melted."

The issue of sexuality, gender division and discrimination, Kushner has advocated in this play. His major character Joe seeks a different kind of identity. All his Mormon life he has tried to deny the nature of his sexuality: he is attracted to men. In an attempt to change his true identity, he went a far as marrying Harper. Contrary to his beliefs, he helps write decisions in court cases that deny the rights of homosexuals. Through the short relationship he finds with Louis, he is nearly liberated. He admits his longings to himself, and to Louis, but stops short of coming out to the world. At the end of the play he is still torn between his life as a heterosexual, married, Republican law clerk and the fleeting glimpse of happiness he found in Louis's arms.

In keeping with his character traits, Louis's search for identity is more abstract. Though he thinks he has come to terms with the world, and has developed opinions and answers for any situation, his philosophies are constantly being tested, and he, like Joe, lives a life of contradictions. He criticizes Joe for hiding his sexuality, yet he has a "butch" side himself, an overtly masculine, heterosexual façade that he assumes around his family. He is a tortured agnostic who was raised Jewish but can't find a religion that accepts him for what he is. Politically, he is an extreme liberal but is attracted to a confused right-wing Republican. Louis's quest for identity does not end with the play. During the Epilogue, he is still arguing religion and politics with Belize (who, as a black ex-drag queen and confidant to both Prior and Louis has an identity crisis of his own).

The creative work, *Angels in America* is the first major work of the playwright Tony Kushner, and its astounding success has turned Kushner and his writings into cultural icons of the late-twentieth century. Referred to by scholar John M. Clum in *Acting Gay: Male Homosexuality in Modern Drama* as "a *Angel* as turning point in the history of gay drama, the history of American drama, and of American literary culture,"<sup>(4)</sup> *Angels* has received numerous awards and critical accolades, including the Pulitzer Prize for drama and Antoinette Perry (Tony) Award for the best play. It has been produced in dozens of countries around the world and translated into several languages, including Chinese.

It is worth noting that such prizewinning creation; *Angels in America* began as a work made for hire. After writing only a handful of plays, and experiencing only one major production, Kushner was approached by Oskar Eustis, a resident director at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, who had been impressed by the playwright's first drama, *A Bright Room Called Day*. In 1987, Eustis asked Kushner to write a play about the impact of AIDS on the gay community in San Francisco for the Eureka Theater. The

two applied for grants, conducted workshops, and developed the work, which became *Angels in America*, at the Mark Taper Forum. The play then went on to the Eureka and later to the National Theatre of Great Britain, where it began to attract its global following. Thus Scope and fame of the play reach widely in the field of literature and society.

While talking about technique, *Angels in America* is an "epic" drama, which means its plot unfolds over great distances of time and place, involves many characters, and more than one story line. Two complete plays form the entire plot: the first part, *Millennium Approaches* and its second installment, *Perestroika*. Together, they present more than thirty characters in eight acts, fifty-nine scenes, and an epilogue.

Furthermore, Kushner subtitled his play "A Gay Fantasia on National Themes." Like a "fantasia," which is a medley of familiar tunes with variations and interludes, the play's scenes often seem musical, like operatic arias, playful duets, or powerful trios. Characters move in and out of conversations with each other, sometimes even overlapping other vignettes, which occur onstage at the same time, and the settings change rapidly from offices to bedrooms, from hospital wards to the imaginary South Pole.

Though the play seems very complex in its structure, the plot of the play is quite simple. It is the story of two couples whose relationships are disintegrating, set in America in the 1980s against a backdrop of greed, conservatism, sexual politics, and the discovery of an awful new infection-HIV. It is this backdrop that provides *Angels in America* its magnitude and sets it apart from other love stories. In this play, the plot is largely driven by its themes, which are viewed from different characters' perspectives, as through a kaleidoscope, as the story unfolds.

Kushner's this work *Angels in America* which catapulted him to the forefront of

the American theatre and earned him praise on stages around the world. More than one critic labeled the AIDS drama *Angels in America* a spectacular, monumental achievement, and marveled at Kushner's ability to capture the mood of an era. As a result of his success the playwright emerged as a widely respected spokesperson for many marginalized groups, including gays and lesbians but blacks, Jewish agnostics, socialists, and artists, all of whom he depicted in a struggle for dignity, respect, and survival in his play.

Change and transformation are at the center of *Angels in America*. In one way or the other, each strand in the plot is related to change of some kind, and every major character faces some manner of transformation. Some characters are frightened by change and prefer the comfort and familiarity of the world they know.

Harper, for example, begins the play terrified by the changes she sees, or thinks she sees, around her. She fears she is losing her husband, her home, and her sanity, and it is all overwhelming. She finds a metaphor for her fear in the ozone layer, high above the earth, which she likens to protective, guardian angels surrounding the planet. "But everywhere," she says, "things are collapsing, lies surfacing, systems of defense giving way." Through the course of the play, Harper does indeed lose everything she held dear, and in the process finds a new perspective on change and transformation. As she sits in a plane, bound for San Francisco and a new life, she suggests, "Nothing's lost forever. In this world, there is a kind of painful progress. Longing for what we have left behind and dreaming ahead."

Similarly, other characters are encouraged by change, even thrive in it. Louis's view is somewhat Darwinian. He tells the Rabbi that his sense of the world is that it will change for the better with struggle, which is why he can't accept Prior's sickness into his philosophy of life. Instead, Louis runs away. Immersing himself in change to avoid

deterioration. He finds Joe, who earnestly echoes the sentiments of his newfound right-wing Republican friends, Roy and Martin. Joe tells Harper that things are starting to change for the good in the world. "America has rediscovered itself," he insists, "Its sacred position among nations." To Joe, the country has been reinvented, for the better, during the Reagan years. Interestingly, through, by the end of the play both Louis and Joe are longing to return to the way things were, but both are denied this homecoming.

Prior and the Angels are caught up in the play's biggest struggle over change. On a personal level, Prior is having change after change thrust upon him. First, his disease attacks, changing his body. Then, Louis abandons him, changing his world. Finally the Angel calls upon him and asks him to become a Prophet on behalf of the Continental Principalities. Stasis, the opposite of change, is what the Angels seek. Prior thwarts their plan, however, and tells them, "We can't just stop. We're not rocks - progress, migration, motion is . . . modernity. It's animate; it's what living things do".

### **Kushners Theatrical Concept**

It is worth noting to note the influence of Kushner towards his contemporary writers. Tony Kushner seems highly influenced by the German playwright Bertolt Brecht and Carly Churchill and their concept of Epic Theatre and Theatre of Absurd.

Bertolt Brecht (1896 – 1918) envisioned a new theatre experience to replace what he perceived as a failing of the realistic theatre. Brecht's epic theatre has achieved an influence on the development of the modern equal to the influence of Stanislavsky's method acting on the development of contemporary psychological acting.

Brecht believed that there was a danger in the audience's becoming too deeply engrossed or lost in the story of play. For Brecht, the realism to make the audience members forget that they were in the theatre made the theatre into a kind of anesthetic. He wanted to find away to make the audience step back from the drama in order to

encourage analysis rather than empathy or identification. He wanted to create question from the audience that would maintain an active internal dialog with the performance. From Brecht comes the idea, idea of interruption, of breaking the narrative to snap the audience out of what Brecht saw as a hypnotic state.

Brecht also did not want the experience of the play to be completed within time and space. Instead, he saw theatre as a call to action. He hoped the performance would be a starting point or part of a process in which the audience and actors would become engaged in social action. Therefore Brecht did not expect to provide the audience with the kind of experience that involves empathy and then the emotional release often referred to as Catharsis, Brecht wrote:

The Spectator was no longer in any way allowed to submit to an experience uncritically without practical consequences) by means of simple and empathy with the characters in a play. . . .

The dramatic [realist] theatre's spectator says: Yes I have felt like that too — Just like me — It's only natural — It will never change — The suffering of this man appeal me because they are inescapable — That's great art, it all seems the most obvious thing in the world — I weep when they weep, I laugh when they laugh.

The epic theatres' spectators says: I'd never have thought it — That's' not the way — That's' extraordinary hardly believable — Its got to stop — The suffering of this man appeal me, because they are unnecessary — That's great art: nothing obvious in it — I laugh when they weep, 'weep when they laugh (71).

Borrowing the concept of the Epic theatre Kushner has visualized the problems the Minorities faced in Reignites America. Unlike realistic theatre, he gives open space to audience to judge the facts and problems they faced.

### **Epic Theatre**

*Angels in America* is built with an epic plot construction. In the early storytelling, epic is referred to the kind of tale Homer told in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*: stories that cover long periods of time, perhaps months or even years; involve many locations, ranging from small rooms to forests and battle fields; follow many characters through multiple plotlines; and alternate short and long scenes, with a series of crisis points, rather than a single strong climax near the end. Many of Shakespeare's plays follow in the epic tradition, and other notable modern examples include the plays of Bertolt Brecht (*Mother Courage and Her Children*), and Robert Schenkkan's *Kentucky Cycle*, six-hour, nine-play saga covering two hundred years of history in the lives three eastern Kentucky families.

Kushner's massive undertaking with *Angels in America* is divided into two complete plays: *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*. Together, they span more than four years, from October 1985, to February 1990. Settings range from living rooms, offices, and hospital wards to New York City streets.

Scenes in *Angels in America* are both long and short and often overlap, occurring on the stage simultaneously. This provides two qualities that are important to epic plots: juxtaposition and contrast. In climactic plots, the story moves forward in a cause-and-effect fashion, with the action in one scene influencing the action in the next. In epic plots, however, the action may alternate between the plot and subplot, with little connection between the two. The effect of two seemingly unrelated scenes placed next to

each other is a juxtaposition of action, characters, and ideas, which often produces a contrast that makes the play more meaningful.

For Example, Act II, scene 9 of *Millennium Approaches*, is a split scene involving Joe and Harper at home, and Prior and Louis in Prior's hospital room. The two scenes, juxtaposed together, each present someone abandoning a loved one. Joe has already drunkenly confessed his homosexuality to his mother on the telephone and now seeks a way to escape his wife, who needs him desperately. Louis, on the other hand, still loves Prior but can't stand living with his sickness. Playing the two scenes simultaneously amplifies the confusion and agony each man feels and makes it difficult to simply dismiss their actions as heartless. Similar juxtapositions occur throughout the play.

Most importantly, the overall effect of an epic plot is cumulative rather than catastrophic. In a climactic work, such as Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* or the plays of Henrik Ibsen (*A Doll's House*) and Arthur Miller (*Death of a Salesman*), events are compressed and occur quite near the end of the story, making an explosive confrontation inevitable. Epic plots allow events, circumstance, and emotions to pile up, one on top of the other, over-whelming the characters and audience alike. Rarely does a single event - a character's error in judgment or an antagonist's vile deed - decide the outcome. Accordingly, *Angels in America* ends in uncertainty. The ultimate fate of the characters is unknown, but the events and emotions that have accrued impart a sense of enormity and importance to the play's ideas - progress, identity, community, and acceptance.

Theatre has been a forum for political ideas and agendas for as long as audiences have been attending plays. In America, the Federal Theatre project of the depression - era 1930s mounted "Living Newspapers," short plays integrating factual data with emotional, often melodramatic vignettes. Topics usually addressed some kind of social

cause, such as slum housing for the urban poor or the plight of the American farmer. During the radical 1960s, several black theatre groups, such as Imamu Amiri Baraka's (formerly LeRoi Jones) *Spirit House* and the *Negro Ensemble Company*, were organized with the goal of producing plays written by, and for, blacks in America, often with anti-white themes. Whatever the cause, political theatre is often driven by the themes, or ideas, in the play, as much as by the plot or characters.

Kushner follows in the tradition of large, important, political dramas, influenced mainly, he claims, by Bertolt Brecht, the German playwright who is credited with the creation of a unique brand of Epic Theatre. Brecht's theories for his Epic theatre contain many of the qualities of epic plot structure but also assume a strong political aspect; he was a staunch communist and held virulent antiwar beliefs. His plays were didactic, which means he wanted to teach his audiences something, and his lessons were usually stated strongly and openly. Furthermore, Brecht wanted his spectators to be active participants in the theatre and think critically while watching his plays, rather than become absorbed in emotion as passive witnesses. To manage this, he attempted to "alienate" his audiences by exposing theatrical devices (lighting, scene changes, etc.). He also broke up the action of his plays - with disruptive elements such as ironic songs and placards that explained forthcoming plot points - so spectators were not allowed to become absorbed in the story but were instead constantly forced to reevaluate characters and their actions. Through this process, Brecht felt, audiences would better understand and appreciate a play's political messages.

Like Brecht, Kushner strives for a very theatrical presentation that doesn't attempt complete illusion. He recommends a minimal amount of scenery for *Angels in America* - with all the rapid changes of location, realistic scenery would be quite cumbersome to a production. Furthermore, Kushner suggests the scene changes be handled quickly, in full

view of the audience (without blackouts) using both stagehands and actors, a very Brechtian technique. As for the moments of magic in the play, such as the appearance of the Angel, the ghosts, Mr. Lies, and other fantastic occurrences, the playwright says in his introduction, "It's OK if the wires show, and maybe it's good that they do, but the magic should at the same time be thoroughly amazing."

Kushner is also extremely political, and he, too, wants his audiences to learn something, though he allows more subtlety of expression than Brecht. In Kushner's play, the strong political ideas are woven into the fabric of the plot and sub-plots, and the audience is left with an impression rather than an obvious message. Controversial ideas are usually presented from both sides, leaving the audience free to draw their own conclusions. While Brecht strongly advocated communism and often hit audiences on the head with his overt pacifist rhetoric, Kushner lets his characters and their philosophies speak for themselves.

The concept of the American Dream, for example, is viewed from several perspectives, none of which is presented as "right:" Roy and Martin, two major characters in the play find the American Dream in the struggle for political power: Joe harbors an idealistic, perhaps naïve vision of America as a land of freedom, opportunity, and justice for all; embittered Belize and Louis, scorned by mainstream society for their openly gay lifestyles, find America oppressive and hypocritical, yet they continue their struggles for rights and recognition. By presenting political ideas in this kaleidoscopic fashion, Kushner opens a political dialogue with his audiences, rather than simply shouting messages at them.

### **Theatre as a Social Force: Kushner's Rationale**

Theatre is a gathering place for the public presentation of ideas. Because ideas are exposed through characters caught in difficult or dangerous situations, the theatre

creates an intensely emotional experience for the audience. It is particularly the collective and public nature of the theatre that makes it such a potent social force. The number of people present then magnifies the import of the work. A collective emotional response is a force of enormous energy and can function in different ways. On the one hand, theatres can evoke a collective sigh of relief and emotional release. Sometime when a group of people have laughed very hard together or cried together, they feel that they can more easily accept the difficulties of their daily lives or the pressures that face the entire community. On the other hand, theatre can senate and focus collective anger or outrage which can then take form as a revolutionary force. It is one of the most powerful weapons that can change social belief, norms, and values more easily than others.

The relationship between theatre and society is complex because the theatre has so much potential power. Theatre can be a conservative force that contributes to stability and reinforces the status quo or it can be part of an experimental process through which a society redefines itself. Theatre can release social tensions or it can lead social upheaval. Theatre can be part of social debate, part of the free exchange of ideas, or it can be used for the dissemination of propaganda. Because of its unique power as a collective public form, theatre has always been of great interest to philosophers and social activist.

Realizing this fact, Tony Kushner also chooses theatre as a measure of social transformation. He brought the issue of HIV/AIDS, issue of sexual minorities so vividly that audience themselves realties their folly attitude towards sexual minorities and their mis-conception towards HIV transmission. He has chosen theatre as a major force to redraw the historical boundary of gender/ sexuality by showing the possibilities of different roles of gender activities and sexual behaviors apart from the society has assigned.

Issues of life and individual's position in the society are major in Kushner's play. In this play, *Angels in America*, he has dramatized the struggle between American conservative and liberals, and more specifically of the conflict over moral and social dilemmas, such as the conflict between religious beliefs and social realities of homosexuality, the AIDS pandemic and the attempt to locate a moral footing in a broadly multicultural and diverse democratic society. In fact, the play deals with a number of sensitive issues in current American society, many of which are of grave significances religious beliefs in conflict with social reality, the polarity of American politics, homosexuality, the after empts to find moral footing in multicultural and diverse democratic society in which values seem to be constantly.

## **Chapter II: Redrawing the Boundaries: Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS**

Late in the [19th] century, as large cities allowed for greater anonymity, as wage labor apart from family became common, and as more women were drawn out of homes, evidence of a new pattern of homosexual expression surfaced.

Regarding Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, intra-sexual and queers, (LGBTIQ) movements, in *Readers' companion to American History*, Houghton Mifflin has described how these individuals developed ways of meeting one another and institutions to foster a sense of identity. By 1915, one participant in this new gay world was referring to it as “a community distinctly organized” (5). An urban gay subculture had come into existence by the 1920s and 1930s which, for the most part remained hidden from view because of social hostility.

World War II served as a critical divide in the social history of homosexuality. Large numbers of the young people left their families, small towns, and closely knit ethnic neighborhoods to enter a sex-segregated military or to migrate to larger cities for wartime employment.

After the war, many of them made sexual choices designed to support their gay identities. Pat Bond, a woman from Iowa who first met other lesbians while in the military, decided to stay in San Francisco after her discharge. [Donald] Vining remained in New York City rather than return to his small hometown in New Jersey. They, along with countless others, sustained a vibrant gay subculture that revolved around bars and friendship networks. Many cities saw their first gay bars during the 1940s (7).

RSAH further summarize that this new visibility provoked latent cultural prejudices. Firings from government jobs and purges from the military intensified in the 1950s. President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued an executive order in 1953 barring gay men and lesbians from all federal jobs. Many state and local governments and private

corporations followed suit. The FBI began a "surveillance program against homosexuals" (9).

The lead taken by the federal government encouraged local police forces to harass gay citizens. Government officers regularly raided gay bars, sometimes arresting dozens of men and women on a single night. Under these conditions, some gays began to organize politically. In November 1950 in Los Angeles, a small group of men led by Harry Hay and Chuck Rowland met to form what would become the Mattachine Society. Mostly male in membership, it was joined in 1955 by a lesbian organization in San Francisco, the Daughters of Bilitis, founded by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. In the 1950s these organizations remained small, but they established chapters in several cities and published magazines that were a "beacon of hope to the readers" (11).

In the 1960s, influenced by the model of a militant black civil rights movement—the "homophile movement," as the participants dubbed it—became more visible. Activists, such as Franklin Kameny and Barbara Gittings, picketed government agencies in Washington to protest discriminatory employment policies. In San Francisco, Martin, Lyon, and others targeted police harassment. By 1969, perhaps fifty homophile organizations existed in the United States, with memberships of a few thousand.

The book further states that [t]hen, on Friday evening, June 27, 1969, the police in New York City raided a Greenwich Village gay bar, the Stonewall Inn. Contrary to expectations, the patrons fought back, provoking three nights of rioting in the area accompanied by the appearance of "gay power" slogans on the buildings. Almost overnight, a massive grassroots gay liberation movement was born. Mixing their voice with that of the radical protest of blacks, women, and college students in the 1960s, gays challenged all forms of hostility and punishment meted out by society. Choosing to "come out of the closet" and publicly proclaim their identity, they ushered in a social

change movement that has grown substantially. By 1973, there were almost eight hundred gay and lesbian organizations in the United States; by 1990, the number was several thousand. By 1970, 5,000 gay men and lesbians marched in New York City to commemorate the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riots; in October 1987, over 600,000 marched in Washington, to demand equality.

The changes were far-reaching. Over the next two decades, half the states decriminalized homosexual behavior, and police harassment was sharply contained. Many large cities included sexual orientation in their civil rights statutes, as did Wisconsin and Massachusetts, first among the states to do so. In 1975 the Civil Service Commission eliminated the ban on the employment of homosexuals in most federal jobs. Many of the nation's religious denominations engaged in spirited debates about the morality of homosexuality, and some, like Unitarianism and Reformed Judaism, "opened their doors to gay and lesbian ministers and rabbis" (11). The lesbian and gay world was no longer an underground subculture but, in larger cities especially, a well-organized community, with businesses, political clubs, social service agencies, community centers, and religious congregations bringing people together. In a number of places, openly gay candidates ran for elective office and won.

These changes spawned opposition. In 1977 the singer Anita Bryant led a campaign to repeal a gay rights ordinance in Dade County, Florida. Her success encouraged others, and by the early 1980s, a well-organized conservative force had materialized to target the gay rights movement. Politicians, such as Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, and fundamentalist ministers, such as Jerry Falwell of Lynchburg, Virginia, who formed Moral Majority, Inc., joined forces to "slow the progress of the gay movement" (15).

In the book *Drama for Students*, Thomson comments, that the onset of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, although it intensified the antigay rhetoric of the New Right, also stimulated further organizing within the gay community. AIDS made political mobilization a matter of life and death. With a large majority of the cases striking male homosexuals, the gay community created a host of organizations, such as the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York City in short order, to provide services and assistance to those infected. Local and national gay civil rights groups also grew in size and number, as the community sought to increase funding for research and education and to win protection against discrimination. A personal and social tragedy of immense proportions, AIDS paradoxically strengthened the political arm of the gay movement.

The other "war" that really matters to *Angels in America* was a domestic one that was being fought between an outnumbered, marginalized, terrified homosexual community and the rest of America, which was largely heterosexual. The discovery of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in 1981 threw both sides into a feverish struggle over rights, recognition, and morality in America.

Americans have always been, at best, ambivalent about homosexuals in their midst. It wasn't until 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders; and the U.S. military continues its "don't ask, don't tell" policy for gays in the military. For a time, AIDS was used by some as justification for anti-gay sentiments (some made outrageous claims that the disease was a biblical curse sent down by God to eradicate homosexuality). In the early - 1980s, the disease became known as the "gay plague," in spite of the fact that other groups of heterosexuals - notably Haitians, drug addicts, and hemophiliacs - also suffered the syndrome's debilitating symptoms. The government - and President Reagan in particular - seemed disinterested in the suffering of gay Americans. Serious research at the National

Institutes of Health did not begin until early - 1983, eighteen months after AIDS had been declared an epidemic in the U.S. Gay rights activists compared their treatment by the united states government to the suffering of Jews in Nazi Germany during the Holocaust (5).

While there are a great many important themes in *Angels in America*, it is this crisis, at once historical and timely, that Kushner chooses to return to at the end of the epic. Prior, one of the major protagonist, closes the play's Epilogue with a direct address to the audience, during which he tells them, "This disease will be the end of many of us, but not nearly all, and the dead will be commemorated and will struggle on with the living and we are not going away." In many ways, the struggle that began for homosexuals in America with the AIDS crisis in the 1980s defined the relationship between gay and straight America in subsequent decades. Even holy Bible summarizes homosexuality as a very sinful, immoral, devilish act. Those people do not have right to live anymore in this earth. One day god will eradicate them by sending a plague. That will eradicate all of them from this holly land. Similarly, HIV/AIDS is traditionally considered of a curse. God cursed homosexual people to eradicate them from this word. They have no right to live in this world anymore. The people who are once infected by HIV, he dies immediately. They are untouchable. We must avoid them. Bring the strong example of Prior, Louis, Roy Cohn and Belize, he tries to justify it (260).

The term AIDS for an "acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome", Jan Zita Grover explains, "was officially adopted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in 1982" (19). Grover offers a concise explication of the medical profession's process of identifying the various symptoms, disease, and invading organisms; for example that led to the official CDC adaptation of AIDS as a term in 1982. But certainly, as Grover suggest, people were dying from the opportunistic infections we know associate with

AIDS before the official arrival of the term AIDS. In this, sense, AIDS predates the official record of the CDC definition died of complications due to AIDS, despite there being no such thing as AIDS before. The point here is that AIDS existed before its official entrance in to historical register; while the specific cultural practices that produced the term AIDS may not have taken effect until 1982, viruses and infections were debilitating and killing many people before this date (21).

On the same issue, National central for AIDS and STI control centre, Nepal write in his report, [t]hough HIV/AIDS is a fatal disease, if we give proper care and treatment of other side infections, balanced diet, if one have more positive attitude towards live, people can live more than 20 years. Even viral load come to nil stage. It is not a disease but a syndrome. He wants to clarify that HIV is a not a disease but Human Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Gradually reductions of the immune power make one very weak. His body can not fight with infections. Ultimately man enters to the stage of AIDS and he dies. If we really give him proper food, clean drinking water and warm company, viral load can reduce. If a person really is an optimistic and hopeful, his viral load come to zero (NCASC, IV -VIII) too like of Prior. Prior, in *Angel in America*, survives and beats AIDS due to the warm company and regular medical treatment given to him by Belize. In the other hand, if a person really is a hopeless, try to hide his infection; he dies shortly as Roy Cohn another important character, dies in *Angel in America*. This infection is not like other viral infections that transmit through air, water, and food. It transmits only through blood and unsafe sexual activities. So, it is foolish to run away from HIV infected people. They need our care and support to live long and happily like everyone else.

Roy Cohn, who was infected by this new infection- HIV and he himself was a gay, never accept his infection as a AIDS. Because he was hiding his sexuality-

homosexuality and at that time AIDS was closely related with the gay people. When his doctor Henry informed him that this infection is AIDS, Roy completely denied it:

Henry: Roy Cohn, you are . . . you have had sex with men may many times, Roy and one of them or any number of them, has made you very sick. You have AIDS.

Roy: Your problem, Henry, is that you are hung up on words; on label . . . AIDS. Homosexual. Gay. Lesbian. . . . Homosexuals are not men who sleep with other men. Homosexuals are ma who in fifteen years of trying cannot get a Pissant antidiscrimination bill through city council.

Homosexual are men who know nobody and who nobody knows who have zero clout. Does this sound like me, Henry?. (51)

Cohn's' sophistry embodies the intellectual, moral and spiritual stagnation from which most of Kushner's' character and the nation itself are seen to suffer in *Angels in America*. Incapable of reconciling "homosexuality" and "clout", Roy Chooses to remain in fundamental contradiction within himself. As he explains to his doctor: "Roy Cohn is not a homosexual. Roy Cohn is a heterosexual man, Henry who fucks around with guys . . . AIDS is what homosexuals have there cancer" (51). He directly avoid his infection.

Likewise when Louis-partner of Prior, come to know that prior too infected with HIV, leaves him immediately. He scared with this new infection because of the negative projection concerning the disease. Unable to give company to his partner Louise leaves Prior at his last stage and leaves after giving an oral note to nurse:

Louise: Yes Danger.

Tell him if he wakes up and you are still on, tell him good bye, and tell him I have to go. (58)

AIDS, up through 1992, emerged with in and was determined by the socio-political institutions in the United States whose effects in Judith Butlers' phrasing "produce and vanquish bodies that matter" (14). Butler's insistence upon making intelligible the cultural format that produces and vanquishes bodies that matter speak directly to the work of AIDS activist in the United States who relentlessly pursued the presidential candidate during the earliest days of the primaries, and who tirelessly pressed Clinton and Bush to address AIDS from a national platform. Fueled by the reprehensible politics of the 1992, Republican convention and inspired by Clinton, gestures towards lesbian and gay people, those of then engaged in the fight against AIDS, saw the 1992 election as a political surrounding AIDS. Revising the cultural psyche around AIDS has always been one of the fundamental missions of AIDS activists, from the earliest efforts of people with AIDS to redress the morphology of "AIDS victim" to more current efforts to reposition AIDS centrally in the political sphere.

The experience of social stigma is doubly painful for people who are at first, are homo and secondly, they are infected with this new infection of AIDS. Being such they compel to stay in the closet. They have to make multiple partners due to social stigma and discriminations, and can not openly admit their sexuality. They have very high risk of HIV/AIDS, as especially in anal sex there is more risk of rupture and bleeding. That make easy for the transmission of various sexual infections.

Realizing such issues, Stigma and discrimination towards gay people, misperception about HIV/AIDS and its transmission, by bringing the various examples of infections that took lives of million - Plague of thirteen century, Black fever of seventeen century and current problem of ozone layer, he has de-ghettoized the AIDS, placing disease, like the destruction of ozone layer.

He is focusing at the point that- problems were there in the past too, infections were there too, but in course of time, medicines came and eradicate them. AIDS is not such a new terrible disease. If we give proper treatment, love, they can live healthier, happier life like of Prior. One day science will find out new solution as found for plague and black fever. We should not under look them as the Regain government does.

Regarding gender/sexuality, in our society there is a concept that man should be more muscular and woman should be more famine. Man should marry woman and woman should marry man. Man must father a child. Its gender role that society has assigned. But still our society has not accepted two other aspects of human diversity: People have different sexual orientation and different gender identities and that two women or two men can fall in love with each other; and that person's identity, as female or male or neither, is not always determined by the type of body in which they were born. In the same context, Betty Rostak comments:

He is playing masculine. She is playing feminine.

He is playing masculine because she is playing feminine. She is playing feminine because he is playing masculine. He is playing the kind of man that she thinks the kind of woman. She is playing ought to admire. She is playing the kind of woman that he thinks the kind of man he is playing ought to admire.

If he were not playing masculine, he might well be more feminine than she is except when she is playing very feminine. If she were not playing feminine, she might well be more masculine than he is except when he is playing very masculine. So, he is playing harder. And she plays softer.

He wants to make sue that she could not never be more masculine than he.

She wants to make sure that he could never be more feminine than she.

He therefore seeks to destroy the femininity in himself. She therefore seeks to destroy the masculinity in herself. (VII)

There is very hard competition to hide their real sexuality. No matter what kind of effect that make upon them. Joe-husband for Harper and boyfriend for Roy is living double life. Harper expects sexual satisfaction from him and mother a child whereas Joe dream for handsome man to fulfill his sexual desire:

Joy: I had a book of Bible stories when I was a kid. There was a picture I'd look at twenty time's everyday. Jacob wrestles with the angel. I don't really remember the story or why the wrestling - just the picture. Jacob is young. . . The angel is . . . .A beautiful man, with golden hair and wings, of course. I still dream about it. Many nights. . . I'm . . .

Struggle. . .Your heart took out from Gods'. But you can't not lose. (55)

By bringing the clear characters, a Belize, a ex-boyfriend of Prior and Drag Queen, nurse by profession, Prior-his desire for make-up, looking for same sex partner, Joe-who is living double life, a husband for Harper and wife for Roy, (because he plays bottom role while making love), Kushner tries to visualize the possibility of different gender/sexual identity that is apart from biological sex and gender role that society has assigned.. He is trying to redraw the boundary of sex-sexuality gender and HIV AIDS in his play to sensitize the people.

It will be very unfair to say that Kushner has used this specific methodology, approach of particular writer to write this great socio-political Play *Angels in America*. For my connivance, I have analyzed this text on the basis Michel Foucault's concept of history, Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction- rupturing the hierarchy, dismantling the logocentric boundaries and Judith Butler's concept of sexuality-different aspect of human sexuality and gender identities.

Recent critical studies on “Gender”, “Sexuality” and “HIV/AIDS” undoubtedly, have to deal with it as a category consisting of wide range of sexualities rather than only a monolithic heterosexual one. The traditional formula of 'normative' heterosexuality, it seems, has erased the historiographies of many people or groups whose sexual behavior define such norm. Contemporary studies on gender/sexuality seek to describe these repressed historiographies, and these "other" sexualities that were ignored or denied by traditional scholars. Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, among many others, have illustrated and emphasized the shift-worthwhile to be noted-from sexual behavior to sexual identity with the commencement of modern practice of putting mortals into either/or camp of sexuality from nineteenth century onwards. In his influential *The History of Sexuality*, volume one, Foucault thus argues that homosexuality and homosexuals date from the 1870s. Foucault argues:

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality [...] Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (43)

Foucault, however, does not mean to say that sexual acts that we refer to as homosexual acts were unknown before the 1870s. Rather, such behaviors already had a long, rich history and as Sedgwick comments, "What was new from the turn of the century was the world-mapping by which every given person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable to a male or female gender, was now considered necessarily

assignable as well to a homo- or a hetero-sexuality [...]" (2). This shift, obviously, was a political one. In the name of maintaining morality, the society exerted a set of limitations by constructing parameters of normalcy. It is interesting to note the use of concept of 'normalcy' in the modern sense and its connection to the act of rendering sexualities other-than-hetero-sexualities as deviant. Though early Christianity had adopted anti-sexuality-as different from the sexual permissiveness of Hellenistic times-as its major tenet, watertight classification of individuals into heterosexuals and homosexuals occurred only in the late nineteenth century especially when those groups also started to raise their voices, try to come in to mainstream society. Later when new infection HIV spread among gay people, it was able to draw the attention mainstream society. The then bourgeoisie, by making use of what Foucault calls deployment of 'technologies of power', was able to make that arbitrary imposition of hetero/homo division in seemingly natural ways, which, in turn made hetero-desire a compulsion.

Along with Foucault, Jacques Derrida's poststructuralist contribution of deconstructive strategies, has similarly disclosed the credibility of the spectrum of gender/sexualities, demarcating "the insecure divisions between male and female, femininity and masculinity, heterosexual and homosexual, friend and sodomite" (337), a point also developed by Rachel Adams and David Savran ascribe in introductory part of *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Since all such terms are historically contingent, talking only of homosexuals and heterosexuals, for example, is not only insufficient to refer to conscious or unconscious performances such as "queen, dyke, butch, transsexual, nelly, femme," (Chinn 295) but absurd also, as the system of constructing such binaries is less a condition of human nature than it is a feature of certain kind of society. If something can be constructed upon some grounds, by the same token, the pendulum may swing to the other side also to deconstruct that that once constructed.

Binaries, such as Adams and Savran mention, especially their traditional formulaic referential significance, are inefficacious to include the dynamic range of sexual desire and multiple identities. At present, the terms 'sex', 'gender' and 'sexuality' often blur into each other in a complicated way. 'Sex' not only refers to what Sedgwick calls 'chromosomal sex' but to the cultural expectations of male and female, namely masculinity and femininity. 'Gender' again fares the same schema, as due to the hardcore imposition of masculine/feminine qualities, individuals are forced to act accordingly. If gender was not limited to the logic of the binary, sexuality would also be able to cater to wider range of other repressed or unacknowledged desires and practices, Moreover 'sex' and 'sexuality' also overlap, as Sedgwick clarifies:

[. . .] the whole realm of what modern culture refers to as 'sexuality' and also calls 'sex'-the array of acts, expectations, narratives, pleasures, identity-formations, and knowledge, in both women and men, that tends to cluster most densely around certain genital sensations but is not adequately defined by them-that realm is virtually impossible to situate on a map delimited by the feminist defined sex/gender distinction. (29)

Sexuality, thus, can be seen as a fluid category, which incorporates not only concrete and real activities but ruminations, fantasies, and what-not. Moreover, due to the individual differences it is very hard to define a precise boundary of sexuality. Even identical sexual acts may mean very different things to different people. Many people may even have richest mental or emotional involvement with sexual acts they do not do, or which they even do not want to do. Thus, the homo-/hetero-opposition turns out to be overtly constricting in this regard.

Rather than viewing masculinity/femininity or homo-/hetero-sexuality as dyads of binary oppositions, they must be taken as performative variations. Needless to

explicate, the structure of their 'constructedness' modulates the performance in such binary system. The subject can not perform according to its free will but acts only by subjugating itself, because the performativity begins right from the moment of birth with the remarks: "It's a girl/boy." The whole social matrix pulluates the age-old system of performance even before the body can opt as a subject. Butler in her introduction to *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* opines:

In the first stance, performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act' but, rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names [...] the regulatory norms of "sex" work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative. (2)

Such endemic impact of performance, though replicated in many forms, can be denaturalized by bringing it to the forefront as a configuration of society. So, not only performances such as 'female masculinity' as treated by Judith Halberstam in her essay "An Introduction to Female Masculinity," and 'male femininity' as discussed by Don Kulick in "The Gender of Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes" for example, but a number of other back and forth and overlapping in variations are possible in the uneven, heterogeneous terrain that we know as "sexuality". In other words, the binaries of homo-/hetero-sexuality and masculinity/femininity break and collapse into one another to liberate an infinite possibilities of other "sexualiti(es)".

In a nutshell, rather than being embroiled in the accuracy of biological essentialism versus historical constructivism regarding, sex, gender, and sexuality, it would be more reasonable, as Sedgwick argues, to keep such understanding, and

"cultural and material reproduction, plural, multi-capillared, argues-eyed, respectful and endlessly cherished" (44). And as Garber's concept "clothes make the man" in her *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* also suggests, the concept of male and female or masculinity and femininity and, by extension, sexuality, must be viewed as an unstable historical and political construct in our societies and such an awkward issue has continually to be revisited, disavowed, rediscovered, and affirmed.

Modern society judges all human experiences by putting them through the parameters of 'normalcy', whereas this very concept has been shown as a matter of social and historical construction rather than a condition of human nature. The boundaries and structures of normalcy, which we think of as "natural" givens now, seem to have constructed just one and a half century ago. Before that, the concept of normalcy was not pervasively prevalent. Lennard J. Davis, in his essay "Constructing Normalcy" in *The Disability Studies Reader*, says:

The word 'normal' as 'constituting, conforming to, not deviating or different from the common type or standard, regular, usual' only enters the English language around 1840. (Previously the word had meant 'perpendicular;' the carpenter's square, called a 'norm' provided the root meaning). Likewise, the word 'norm' in the modern sense, has only been in use since around 1855, and 'normality' and 'normalcy' appeared in 1849 and 1857, respectively. If the lexicographical information is relevant, it is possible to date the coming into consciousness in English of an idea of 'the norm' over the period 1840-1860. (10)

If any dimension of human experience did not fall within the requirement of 'norm' it became inevitably deviant. One of the factors determining such a conceptualization of the "norm" is the rise of scientific knowledge such as statistics.

According to Davis, the French statistician Adolphe Quetelet "contributed most to the generalized notion of normal as an imperative" (11). There was the concept of 'ideal', which also dates only from the seventeenth century, before the construction of the concept of the norm. However, since the ideal was impossible to achieve by mortals, the concept was linked to the world of the divine. Within such a schema of the "ideal" there could be no room for the notion of deviance. Disability, for example, did not mean deviance but part of the ideal. After the construction of "norms" around the mid-nineteenth century, rules and regulations were created in each and every dimension of human experience. The same happened to sexuality as well. This is not to say that there were no rules and laws on sexuality before the nineteenth century. The earliest laws regarding sexuality of which there is knowledge date back from second millennium BC. What was new following the construction of normalcy was the rigorous demarcation between legal and illegal, norm and transgression, and so on. Once the demarcation came into existence, then the series of repression, marginalization and torture started to shower towards the "other" sexualities. Such a stigmatization of what Foucault calls "peripheral sexualities" (40) was endorsed through a definition of the norm of sexual development, and through a simultaneous description of the possible deviations. Many watchdogs came into existence to regulate the regime of sexuality, which in turn only consolidated the "normative" heterosexual practices.

The construction of 'normalcy,' thus, can be seen as giving a firm background to the production of 'sexuality'. As already noted, the practice of assigning individuals to homo-/hetero-sexuality binary dates only from late nineteenth century-from the 1870s, according to Foucault, to be more specific. More interestingly, the term 'homosexual' came into existence even before the invention of the corresponding term 'heterosexual' as many writers have argued. In a sense, thus, the notion of 'abnormality' preceded the idea

of 'normality'. Taking those 'norms' as base, lists of desired and undesired traits were defined. Anyone having "undesired differentness" had to carry the burden of stigma, as Erving Goffman also indicates in his essay "Selections from *Stigma*." Goffman explains that the term 'stigma'-which can be seen as linked to the concept of the "norm" and the exclusions generated by it-itself came across various usages through history. According to Goffman, the Greeks originally used the term 'stigma' to denote bodily signs, especially to expose something unusual and negative about the moral status of these signs. In Christian times, the term 'stigma' referred metaphorically to two new areas: religion and medicine. In the first sense, the bodily signs that took the form of eruptive blossoms on the skin, were referred to as signs of holy grace. The second allusion was in a medical context, when the signs were seen as the outcome of bodily disorder. At present, according to Goffman, "the term is widely used in something like the original literal sense, but is applied more to the disgrace itself than to the bodily evidence of it" (203). Thus, the same signs sometimes became holy, and at other times were discredited and relegated to the arena of stigma. This shows how norms of today can be non-norms tomorrow. And also, by the same token, deviations and stigmas of today may become norms the next moment.

In terms of HIV/AIDS, the first infection detected in the gay man during 1982. And it will be very unwise to say this infection is only of a gay man. It was there in the past and is today as well. It is among all kinds of people issued out of whether they act homo or hetero. No binaries is left in so far as AIDS is rendered an official historicizing vis-à-vis the date of the body response to diagnostic procedures and test, and in so far as an printed genealogy of AIDS over determines the arrival of AIDS and obscures the process(es) of AIDS, AIDS will continue to be understood within the confines of those narrative of origin. Narratives of AIDS are always problematic, whether they raise from

science or media. Narratives of AIDS are always representation of AIDS [through HIV and AIDS is very different term and stage], and, as Cindy Patton makes clear "representation of AIDS at every level-in the media, in the science, in the cultural assumptions manifest in the effects of institutional process-are multiple and discontinuous" (11). After that concept towards AIDS is gradually changed. Concept of "long-term-surviving", and the violently contested and revolutionary concept of "safe-sex" has also emerged. In *Surviving AIDS* Michael Callen writes, "discovering different way of thinking about AIDS at such crucial turning point in my life provided a framework for me to justify believing that I might survive my disease it was a life raft that keep me afloat in a sea of doom and gloom" (105).

In other words, grand narrative about gender sexuality HIV/AIDS are gradually changing, and I intend to analyze the shifting borders of this narrative in Kushner's *Angels in America*.

## Chapter III: Textual Analysis

### Reading Against Canon

Individual Human beings have different racial and ethnical origins. People have different sexual orientations and gender identities. But all must be respected. But the society, always stigmatizes to the minority subjects. In such situation, Kushner has given different reading on so called social norms and values regarding gender identities of human sexuality and newly found infection-HIV/AIDS in his socio- psychological play *Angels in America*.

Talking about stigma, there are three kinds of stigma in our society. First there is abominations of the body-the various physical deformities. Next there is blemishes of individual characters perceived as weak, those who have mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism homosexuality, unemployment and radical political behaviors. Finally, there are the tribal stigma of race, nationalities and religion. Kushner has touched all those issues and tries to de-stigmatize it.

In the case of America, there was no such hard debate on gender and sexuality till 1980 because it has not created such a big problem in the society. The social order has always been on the hand of heterosexual man. Sexual minorities especially those who have different sexuality and gender identities than biologically assigned role were slowly relating their presence. They gradually started to express their feelings, sexual emotions differently that made no problems with heterosexual society.

After 1980s, sexual minorities started to raise their voices and started to demand for their right like other ethnical and religious groups. At the same time, new infection called HIV also appeared among gay people. And that fatal infection draws the attention of large majority, media and mainstream community. For the same issue, Harlan Lan writes for *Disable Studies*:

For a very long time, the dominant construction of homosexuality like that of alcoholism was a moral one man and woman was making sinful choice; the problem was "owned" by church. Later.... [i]n the third phase, Gay and lesbians were presented as a minorities group. They ask for the same protection as all other groups that are discriminated against based on the circumstance their birth, such as black and women. (154)

To challenge the social belief homosexuality gender varieties a man can fall in love with man, a woman can fall in love with woman, and a person can have different sexuality apart from his biological sex, Kushner has used the characters with different sexual, gender identities. Regarding HIV/AIDS, media, press and society has canonical beliefs: HIV and AIDS is the same thing. And a person with HIV dies very after of his infection. To challenge this concept, he has dramatically used the character-Prior, who is infected with HIV and lives very happily, physically healthier life and live for years.

In the play, in order to redrawing the canonical boundaries of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS, Kushner has treated setting and characterization differently. Regarding characterization he has used two different couples: one homosexual-Prior and Louis, and another heterosexual-Joe and Harper. Meanwhile, there characters also mingle with each other. Roy Cohn- a very closet gay man, who refuse his homosexuality and even refuse his infection HIV. Bleze is a former drag queen and a nurse- who openly admit his transgenerness and very liberal and positive towards HIV/AIDS. Angel is a heavenly figure who is supposed to know everything about past present and future regarding gender sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

In order to de-canonize the contemporary concept about newly found infection HIV/AIDS, Kushner has used historical facts such as of plague of thirteen century, Black fever of seventeen century great earthquake of 1906 at San Francisco and

contemporary problem of Ozen as parallel motifs. When a new infection HIV was found among gay men, it was taken as a fatal disease in the sixties. During 1990s, there was no medicine for this infection. Due to hopelessness and social stigma, people used to die soon after infection. Even family of partners hesitated to go near their dear ones due to the fear of being infected. Being such, even the infected person used to hide their infection as Roy Cohn - a major character; living with HIV/AIDS did in the play. When Henry, doctor of Roy Cohn, informs him his infection is AIDS, Roy directly rejects his infection and his sexuality.

Henry: well, I have just removed one of three lesions which biopsy result will probably tell us is a kaposi's Sarcoma lesion. And you have a pronounced swelling of gland in your neck, groin, and aronpit lymphadenopathy is an other sign. And you have oral condidiasis and maybe a little more fungus under the fingernails of the digits, on your right hand. So, that's why . . . .

Roy: This disease . . . .

Henry: Syndrome.

Roy: Whatever. It afflicts mostly homosexuals and drugs addicts.

Henry: Mostly. Hemophiliacs are also at risk.

Roy: I'm not a drug addict. (49)

It is crucial to note that even the person like Roy Cohn who is famous advocate and as rich socially established person, directly rejects the term AIDS .He rejects this due to social stigma towards AIDS and homosexuality. Instead of accepting his infection, he tries avoiding it and he claims that he has cancer, not AIDS.

Henry: You have AIDS; Roy.

Roy: No Henry, no. AIDS is what homosexual haves. I have cancer. (52)

It is very unfair and very unscientific to say that HIV/AIDS is related to only homosexuals and to drugs addicts. There are equal chances of transmission within the heterosexual community too. In the annual population of report of WHO has clearly mentions that "HIV can transmit one person to another by blood and mother to child and through unsafe sexual activities" (20). No matter, whether it is homosexual act or heterosexual act. So, Kushner has tried to redraw this misconception regarding direct relation between HIV/AIDS and homosexuality.

Similarly, even the doctors themselves are not clear about HIV/AIDS. Henry, a famous New York doctor is using term AIDS for HIV. These, in matter of fact, are different terms. HIV is name of virus and AIDS is the very last stage - where all the immune system collapse and body is no more able to resist any infection. The doctor also insists enormously that HIV/AIDS is only related to homosexuals. When Roy Cohn admits that, once he had syphilis from a whore in Dallas, Cohn tries to force upon him that they are not female whore but male whore.

Henry: From syphilis to venereal warts. In your rectum which you may have gotten from a whore in Dallas, but it wasn't a female whore. (50)

In trying to represent the same issue, Kushner has brought another major character - Prior, a homosexual gay man, ex-boy friend of Belize and new boy friend for Louis. He is also infected with HIV and his situation is very terrible. After all he is very positive towards his sexuality and his infection. He is very optimistic person. He wants to live more though his boyfriend Louis left him due to his infection.

Prior: (Getting suddenly upset): I don't remember, I don't give a fuck. I want

Louis. I want my fucking boyfriend, where the fuck is he? I'm dying, I'm dying, where's Louis? (66)

When he was in good health Louis who gave company to him left. As soon as he discovers his infection, however Louis leaves him all of sudden due to his new infection. It happens because of Louis misconception towards HIV/AIDS. Under such situation Belize - a registered nurse and ex-boy friend for Prior, who is well sensitized about his sexuality and HIV/AIDS, gives him warm company. In terms of the social context, it is interesting to note that officially there was no medication of HIV but scientists were working for solution. The national institute of Health (NIH) was practicing AZT - Anti Retroviral Treatment medicine for experimentation to few people, a treatment for which one had to stay for two years in the waiting list.

Henry : Well, whatever the fuck you have. Roy it is very serious and I haven't got a damn thing for you. The NIH in Bethesda has new drugs called AZT with two years waiting list that not even I can get on to. So get the phone Roy, and dial the fifteen numbers, and ... for liver cancer because you can call it any damn thing you want. (52)

The medication was so rare that only very influential person, such a Roy, could obtain it. Roy managed adequate number of AZT drugs and Belize managed to take same medicine to Prior after getting them from Roy.

Prior, due to his positive attitude towards his sexuality and infection gradually recovers his immunely system where as Roy Cohn, due to his closet behavior, becomes worse and worse and finally dies (247), where Prior is discharged from hospital with better health. While Prior discharges from hospital, Belize hands him some bottle of AZT.

Belize: Before I depart a home coming gift.

Prior: What! I can't read the label, I . . . AZT. (271)

After taking this AZT regularly, Prior becomes very good, healthy and happy though he is still infected with HIV. He never hides his infection and sexuality, and that make him very positive and helps him to live long. When Hannah, mother of Joe, asks him about his infection, he openly admits that "Prior: I'm a homosexual with AIDS. I can just imagine what you . . ." (235).

In this way, Kushner has tried to justify the fact that HIV/AIDS is different term. Even the infected can live long if he has positive attitude towards this infection - HIV. Science has already successfully experimented AZT and available now in the market. It is available everywhere. So, there is nothing to worry about it. By bringing the character Prior I, of thirteen y who died by plague and Prior I is of seventeen century ,who died by Black fever, the dramatist reveal the fact that problems were in the past too, and today is and tomorrow will be due to Ozen. But science and knowledge will eradicate it. It is simple phenomena, nothing to worry up. Only one thing we need is we should be very positive towards life and infection. Rests are very nominal.

### **Possibilities of Different Sexuality and Gender Identities**

Breaking the stereotypical concept about gender role and sexuality, Kushner has shown different possibilities in his play *Angels in America*. Social history reveals that, there are two sex-biological male and female. And according to biological sex, sexuality and gender identity of men and women is assigned. Man must love woman, man must wear Man's dress, he must be very masculine, and woman must be more feminine. She must wear female dress and put on make up. Man must father children. Women must take care of family and children. But society has completely ignored the other possibilities a man can fall in love with man; a person can have different sexuality from his biological sex, and he may have different gender identity beside his social given

gender role. Kushner is trying to redraw the traditions concept about gender and sexuality in the given play.

Joe - a gay man married with Harper. He fails to perform his masculine role. He himself dreams for handsome, masculine man, where as Harper is longing for his penis and a baby. Harper believes that Joe must have sex with her. It is her right to have sex with her husband. But due to his sexuality, he himself is looking for a man partner. He marries her only because society always questions him if he stays unmarried. Moreover, homosexuality is taken as an illegal, unmoral, sinful act. According to Christianity it is very devilish act and that one must get punishment for it. In the same context, Louis a boyfriend of Prior, admits in front of priest "I'm afraid of the crimes, I may committed"(31). Homosexuals cannot involve in any religious activities. So, to hide their face from the social gaze even gay man used to marry as Joe did. Our society is so much rooted on social rules and regulations; everybody is mechanically obeying those rules as a part of their body. Gender classification and gender role division is so strong and rooted deeply in the peoples mind that everybody is doomed to obey it. The fact is that a person can have different sexuality and gender identities beside the biological sex. Society has totally ignored this fact and certain individual have to struggle against it. Even as they try to reveal their sexuality and gender differences to their family, society, the latter refuse to listen and accept it. Instead of listening them, they ignore and start to hate them as people who are bearing the marks of it. Social stigma thing happens with Joe the major character of the play. Joe a married gay man, lives a double life. He tries a lot to confess about his sexuality and real desire to his mother and to his wife but fails. Ultimately he reveals with full intoxication. With desperate, at night he stand at pay phone in the central park where he used to go to seek a sex partner, call to his Mormon mother in salt lake city and confess about his homosexuality. Confused and angry, his

mother tell him he is being ridiculous, drinking is a sin and he should go home to his wife .She does not believe his talk, just assumes that he is angry and fed up with his wife and telling all those things ,despite of his telling the very fact .

Joe: Mom?

Hannah: Joe.

Joe: Hi

Hannah: you are calling from the street. It is ...it must be four in the morning .What happened?

....

Hannah: CENTRAN PARK! Oh my lord .what on the earth are you doing in central park at this time of night? Are you . . . .

Joe, I think you ought to go home right now....

Joe: Mom .Mom I am a homosexual, momma.

Boy did that come out awkward.

{Pause}

Hello? Hello?

I am a homosexual.

{Pause}

Please, Momma. Say something.

Hannah: You are too old enough to understand that your father did not love you with out being ridiculous.

Joe: I m...

What

Hannah: You are really ought to go home now to your wife. I need to go to bed. This phone call ....we will just forget this phone call. (82)

From this conversation, Kushner reveals the facts that even the people who have different gender identities beside their biological sex; are not loved by their parents. In such situation they have to leave family, society and forced to come to street. If they stay at home with family, tolering all the discriminations, they have to obey to family .They have to marry, try to live life of husband or wife. Same fate haunts Joe as well.

Ultimately, Joe is able to confess his sexuality and real desire to his mother and his wife. He admits to his wife that he has never attracted to her sexually and his marriage to her was the consequences of desire and force of his family. He also admits that he is the source of all her problems and hallucinations. She gets more and agitated by his confession and finally calls for Mr. Lies-a masculine, handsome international travel agent to take her away.

Joe: Please listen .stay .This is really .We have to talk.

Harper: we are talking .Aren't we? Now please shut up, ok?

Joe: Did you talk pills? How many?

Harper: No pills .Bad for the.... (Pat stomach).

Joe: You are t pregnant called your gynecologist.

....

Joe: forget about that .Just listen. You want the truth. This is the truth.

I knew this when I married you. I have known this I guess for as long as I've known anything ,but ...I don't know ,I thought may be that with enough effort and will I could change myself... but I can't.

....

Joe: My whole life has conspired to bring me to this place, and I can not despise my whole life. I think I believed when I met you I could save you. You at least if not myself, but.... I don't have any sexual feelings for you,

Harper. And I don't think I ever did.

(Little pause)

Harper: I think you should go.

....

Mr. Lies: Right here.

Harper: I want to go away. I can't see him anymore.

Mr. Lies: where?

Harper: Anywhere. Far away. (86)

It shows that, confessing and accepting one own sexuality is the best way of getting ride from the problems. Joe faced a numbers of problems - psychologically and emotionally. Due to his silence two lives were being destroyed - his own and Harpers. Following Joe's confession, Harper also gets chances to select partner of her own choice. When he confesses, both of them become liberated .Our society never allows us to do this. Society makes it a matter of stigma and always tries to hide it. Showing this examples, Kushner tries to redraws the boundaries of gender sexuality and so called social norms and values.

Bring the agony of Harper Kushner has tries to prove that, hiding the sexuality living double life itself is a crime. One should not hide their real sexuality. All of us are god's creation if god creates us as a gay, Lesbian, it is all right. In god's world and in god's creation, there is nothing wrong. Whatever god makes, he makes perfect. If there is problem, problem is with in human society, not with god.

When Prior - goes to Harpers room and starts to do make up, without her permission, she asks him questions about his surprising actions. Prior replies that he is a queer, a homosexual.

Prior: I'm a homosexual.

Harper: Oh! In my church we do not believe in homosexuals.

Prior: In my church, we do not believe in Mormons. (38)

Church, social rules, and all the norms and values are made by majority, mainstream society. They make all the rules according to the values and perceptions of mainstream societies. But they always ignore, marginalize the minorities. Minorities also have their right. They also have equal human rights as majority mainstream societies have. For that they need new vision, new mission. They have to look up. Look up for better future. God has created all equally and has given everyone an equal potentiality and equal right.

Another major character is a voice probably belonging to *Angel*, which also plays very important role to redraw the concept about gender and sexuality. A voice- may be heavenly figure, always urges prior to look up, and always prepare for the great way.

A voice: Look up!

Prior: Who is that?

A voice: Prepare the way

Prior: I don't see any. . .

(There is a dramatic change in lighting from above)

A voice: Look up; look up,

Prepare the way

The infinite descent

A breath in air

floating down

Glory to . . . . (41)

A voice is requesting him to prepare for the new way, new vision the vision of equality. One day there will be equality, no stigmatization and discrimination. All will

have equal right for accepting and enjoying their sexuality and fight against discrimination.

Due to this social stigma and discrimination towards sexual minorities, many problems including HIV/AIDS and STI have spread rapidly. Kushner is also focusing on same issue. Rapid spreading HIV/AIDS among gay people is based on same fact. Because in the society gay men have no right to practice their sexual, family acts openly. Society has restricted to them from making their partner of choice openly. Being such, they have to make their sexual act, love making act in any place especially at dark and isolated place which often uses to be far from city or market place, where people do not visit or where ever they get chance or get partner they use to make intercourse. At such situation, no condom, no safer sex products- that keep them in the risk of HIV infection are available. For the same issue Kushner has projected at stage when Prior was admitted at hospital, his boy friend Louis, become sexually hungry and went at Public Park to look for sex partner. When he got a sex partner, he starts immediately. In act II, scene 4, Louis is in the central park having sex in the bushes with a stranger. When their condom breaks , the horrified Louise tell the man "keep going .Infect me .I do not care". Though the man is frightened away by the Louise's strange behaviour, he keep going on. This is the regular act of gay man in this heterosexual cosmopolitan society. No matter how great the danger of HIV STIs, they may be keep on it, thought they know well about the fatal disaster, they are doomed to practice it. Sexual urge is more powerful than hunger for food. Those hidden and suppressed sexual urges put them under a great risk.

Man: Here, then.

Louis: I ... Do you have rubber?

Man: I don't use rubbers.

[. . . .]

Man: I think it broke. The rubber. You want me to keep going?

Louis: Keep going.

Infect me.

I do not care. I don't care. (63)

Mostly gay men are at risk of HIV/AIDS and many STI. Lubricants and safer sex products are often out of closet gay man's reach. And there is often high risk of rupturing the sexual organ due to lack of proper lubricants. That increases the risk of HIV/AIDS and of many other sexually transmitted infections. This is a consequence result of the high stigma and social discrimination towards sexual minorities. Showing those facts, Kushner is trying to explore the possibility of reducing the harmful effects. For that social sensitization is very essential.

In this way, by showing the facts as how to people are infecting with HIV/AIDS, by showing the possibilities of long life even after HIV infection, and by representing possibilities of different gender identities, sexual orientation apart from social given role, Kushner has redrawn the boundaries gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

## Chapter IV: Conclusion

Tony Kushner, using Prior- the major character and the protagonist of the play - who is gay man in himself and a person infected with HIV/AIDS, as a mouthpiece, has expressed his hope and optimism about the future even though currently there is a great social misunderstanding about homosexuality, gender construction, and HIV/AIDS. No matter, in the past, many people lost their life due to HIV/AIDS. Those happened, just because society was guided by their own canonical and religious beliefs. Due to their social beliefs, misconception, due to their norms and values, religion they never accepted it. But now time is changed, circumstances are different. He is very much hopeful that great work-work of sensitization, work of social reformation of beliefs has already begin.

In the concluding paragraph of the play, Prior -major character and major victim comments happily:

Prior: I'm almost done.

The fountain's not flowing now; they turn off it in the winter, ice in the pipes. But in the summer its' a sight to see. I want to be around to see it. I plan to be. I hope to be. This disease will be end of many of us, but not nearly all, and the dead will commemorated and will struggle on with the living, and we are not going away. We won't die secret deaths anymore.

The world only spins forward. We will be citizen the time has come. Bye now. (280)

Society is gradually changing. No matter how strong the traditional beliefs and conceptions towards gender, and sexuality still remain in force. It will change one day. On that day every concept, beliefs will melts as ice melt during summer and dissolve in the sea. Kushner is very optimistic on that issue. The day, whole society - including

people belonging to mainstream and margins will come on the same will be the day for a new beginning. For that they need great patient. He is very bold and hopeful.

Unable to talk about HIV/AIDS, many of the gay men and heterosexuals too, have lost their life secretly. They are unable to come out. They are born and spend their whole life in the closet due to social stigma and discrimination. Due to it, people who have same problems like Prior - Homos and People living with HIV/AIDS they feared to help and give solidarity like of Roy Cohn -who himself was a famous closet gay and HIV infected person .He has great influence upon government and legislation. He has capacity to change some laws as well. Instead of working for same community, he develops a kind of homophobic attitude towards LGBT and PLWHA community and rejects his own infection. As a result he meets an untimely death. But all have not lost their life. Those who are still living, will fight for their right, their life and for the sake of the coming generation. Those who lost their life, their death will be commemorated. They will struggle for it. Because every one is child of god and every child has equal right to live. Every one is the citizen of the country and they have equal right to enjoy the privileges of right to life, liberty and happiness.

At last, the concluding line of the play is spoken through the voice of *Angel*, symbol of hope and prosperity, who thanks the audience and says:

Bye now.

You are fabulous creatures, each and every one

And I bless you. *More Life*.

The Great Work Begins. (280)

All the audiences are the rightful to thanks. Because every one who like and come to see this play are the part of this great work. They give equal company to this LGBT and PLWHA's Human Right and equality program. God bless them. Because they

are protecting the right of God's own children - Those are depriving from their fundamental human right - right of life, liberty and equality. It is right of a person to choose their sexuality. It is their right to decide about their life no matter he is homo or hetero. He has right to decide about it same thing apply to PLWHA too.

In this way, Kushner has redrawn the history of gender sexuality and HIV/AIDS in his play *Angels in America*.

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