

Asif Currimbhoy's Theatrical Portrayal of Political Conflicts in Postcolonial India

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Abstract

This paper examines the intricate relationship between literature and political conflicts, focusing on the works of Indian playwright Asif Currimbhoy. Through a detailed analysis of Currimbhoy's plays, including "Goa," "Om Mane Padme Hum!," and the Bengal Trilogy, we explore how literature serves as a reflective and critical medium for documenting and interrogating political strife and social upheaval. Currimbhoy's dramaturgy, characterized by its vivid portrayal of historical events, political dilemmas, and the human condition, invites audiences to engage with the complexities of liberation movements, identity politics, and the moral ambiguities of power struggles. By situating Currimbhoy's work within the broader discourse of political theory and postcolonial studies, this paper underscores the transformative potential of theater in fostering critical dialogue and empathy towards the multifaceted impacts of political conflicts on individual lives and collective consciousness.

Keywords: Asif Currimbhoy, Indian English Drama, Political Conflicts, Postcolonial Literature, Theater and Politics, Liberation Movements, Historical Dramatization, Socio-Political Commentary, Cultural Revolution.

Introduction

Literature presents the matter of life and reflects the surrounding human life. The life delimited by innumerable socio-cultural and political activities. The literature, therefore, becomes the tool to express social, cultural, and political scenario of the time. It directly or indirectly defines the various aspects of society, which is bound to its history, culture, religion, and politics. Thus, all literary activities, directly or indirectly, remain attached to the influences of these aspects on the lives of men. The literature affected by political situation of the time also gives the traces to the history of political structure of thenation. Writers of all ages have attempted to document political situation of different times in all its colours. During the early years of Post-independence, India was about to change its social, cultural, political and the historical elements, therefore, the Indian writers of Post-colonial time have depicted their feelings of contemporary situations and analysed their work with their own experiences and beliefs. Mahesh Dattani's portrayal of the problem between two dominant religions of India in *The Final Solution* (1993) and Girish Karnad's description of Tughlaq, a Turkey emperor in his play, *Tughlaq* (1964) present the evidence of changing scenario of Indian English Drama in post-independence time. It is possible that political theory might shed light on the root causes of social conflict and violence and provide solutions to these problems. Our social life's difficulties may be better understood and resolved with the help of this idea. It sheds light on how to safeguard societal progress via the use of existing human resources. Additionally, it helps us discover solutions to different kinds of social crises and political instability. What constitutes good and evil in society is central to political thought. As a field of study, literature reveals political theory in order to educate readers about the current state of affairs by way of historical and political theory-based insights. However, only a select few of playwrights possess the requisite degree of expertise to build dramatic art from historical and political sources. Girish Karnad and Asif Currimbhoy are two Indian playwrights who have these abilities. Famous Indian-English playwright Asif Currimbhoy has a keen eye for social and political issues in his works. The increasing commercialization of human connections and the rise of materialism are the two main villains in his plays, which depict several facets of Indian culture and lament their decline. An introspective Indian playwright named Asif Currimbhoy advocated the political philosophy to set the stage for the colonial era and its aftermath.

The world around Currimbhoy was a chaotic place: political unrest, communal strife, struggle, and suffering caused by things like partition themes, the botched implementation of land reformation acts and bills, unparliamentary attempts to gain power, education that didn't matter, faculty mediocrity, student unrest, and most importantly, a complete flip-flop in human values. What Currimbhoy saw was shocking, horrible, and almost savage; it included brutality, violence, haughtiness of authority, and sex. "Art that discredited wonder-box of illusions, finds itself the truth while politicians lie and people look the other way" (Bowers xii) is what Currimbhoy is all about, according to Bowers, who says it in his Introduction. In his plays, Currimbhoy aims to depict individuals from various walks of life, from the most humble to the most privileged. He understood that every political event impacts society in a significant way.

The second phase of Currimbhoy's creative genius comprises of political plays. The major theme he addresses in majority of his plays written during 1969 to 1975 addresses the party politics and border politics of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China. His plays *Goa* (1964), *An Experiment with Truth* (1969), "Om Mane Padme Hum!" (1972), "The Refugee" (1971), *Sonar Bangla* (1972), *The Dissident M.L.A* (1974) and some others fall under this category. Asif Currimbhoy is explicitly not a political writer and his opinions are based on by inference and indirection. He gives us an insight into the political world and assesses the worthlessness of these political events. The overall presentation of his political views can be expressed in the words that generosity of understanding and compromise is essential in life and violence cannot be used to end violence. Hence, he fully understands the socio-economic dimensions of all the political turmoil.

No other city in India used to feel the nation's pulse more profoundly than Calcutta during the early seventies, when Currimbhoy resided there. He honed his political sensibilities and gained an objective perspective on his direct political experience during his time in Calcutta. The projection of political concerns took precedence over other subjects, ushering in a time of great innovation. His works, such as *The Tourist Mecca* and *The Doldrums*, provide new light on the historical and political climate of the time by their faithful treatment of societal problems. Currimbhoy takes on a new persona in the plays that will be covered later on, playing the part of a historian and political imitator. Nearly six of his plays dealt with political themes. Among them was a trilogy centered on the Bengal motif.

By resurrecting pivotal moments in colonial and historical events, Currimbhoy's theatrical approach serves to both record the atrocities of yesteryear and bring them into dialogue with contemporary social and political issues. The linkages between politics and economics, nationalism and colonialism, and other discursive factors are what fuel his prolific imagination, and they may be better understood by delving into some of his plays. The political vision of Currimbhoy is well attuned to modern politics, which enables his plays to transform into potent political texts that are devoted to the cause of the people. *Goa*, a play by Currimbhoy about the violent resistance to a historical event—the 1961 Indian military invasion of Goa—is an outstanding example of his penchant for dramatizing current political and historical events. The political and social events during Portugal's rule in Goa (1964) are intricately weaved by Currimbhoy. Set against the backdrop of Goa's freedom on December 19, 1961, by India, the drama still offers an intriguing depiction of the political, social, and religious ideology of that age. In March 1510, the Portuguese captured Goa with little to no resistance from India. Goa was still a Portuguese colony even after India gained its freedom from centuries of enslavement in 1947. In 1955, Indian revolutionaries tried to seize Goa in an effort to liberate it, but they were unsuccessful. Nonetheless, Goa was seized by Indian soldiers backed by the Indian Navy and Air Force in December 1961. It was eventually admitted into the Indian union in 1962. Goa was later constituted as the 25th state of India in 1987. The scenic splendor, laid-back lifestyle, and social, religious, and political climate of Goa are all well shown in the play. One of the play's characters, the Portuguese administrator, is so taken by Goa and its inhabitants that he remarks: "Goa". "Goa this is Goa, my own, nestling amidst green hills and valleys, the rice fields and rivers that make this a paradisiacal land. Look at the patio in front of you. This is a heart of each village in Goa" (Currimbhoy, *Goa* 11).

People from different walks of life gather on the terrace to have casual conversations over beer or wine, representing the diverse Goan culture. Patio is defined by the Portuguese authorities as: "The meetings here are always loud and lively, with nothing to hide, on market days there is all noise and bustle, scents and smells, a strange mixture of fish and flowers..." (Goa 11).

People in Goan villages often gather on the patio, an open area, to discuss politics, religion, and culture. The church's placement on stage next to the bar represents the integral role of religion in Goans' daily lives. The Goans' easygoing lifestyle, which includes frequent drinking, is inseparable from their religion. Aside from certain incongruities in religious, social, and political beliefs, there is total concord in the area. We discover that the Goan Nationalists, who are Hindus fighting for Goa's emancipation, and the Portuguese Administration, who are Christians responsible for maintaining the colonial, have a harmonious and fulfilling relationship. As they sit on the same seat and drink beer, they discuss different aspects of Goan life and provide their differing viewpoints. The Goan Nationalist is holding out hope that Goa would be liberated soon by the Indian government, while the Portuguese administrator has a different view:

"This is Goa ... my home, no less than Lisbon where I was born. And when we, the Portuguese, came to India almost four centuries ago, we made of Goa an enclave. Ah but my friend here who calls himself a. (Suggestion of a deprecating snigger). Nationalist insists we made this into a colony, instead of a small part of Portugal" (Goa 11).

This is in stark contrast to the beliefs of the Goan nationalist, who accuses the Portuguese of taking advantage of the tranquil and unassuming Goans:

PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATOR: Nice day. I always enjoy a glass of beer in the sun.

GOAN NATIONALIST: Don't you ever work?

PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATOR: Certainly. I'm here to keep you out of mischief.

GOAN NATIONALIST: Your days are numbered, friend.

PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATOR: There's nobody here who knows how to count.

GOAN NATIONALIST: Yes, you made sure of that, didn't you?

PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATOR: No, I give the people what they want. a glass of beer in the sun.

GOAN NATIONALIST: Like me. I like this too. But I want something more. You understand?

PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATOR: Yes.

GOAN NATIONALIST: And you won't let me have it.

PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATOR: I'm here to keep you out of mischief. GOAN NATIONALIST: You're exploiting us.

PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATOR: (Screwing up his nose) That's a dirty word.

GOAN NATIONALIST: You're exploiting us (Goa 12-13)."

Since the freedom of Goa was accomplished by the use of force by the Indian armed forces, the Goan nationalists grow disillusioned. The first violent incident in the process breaks the notion that India would seize Goa quietly, which the Goan Nationalist had been under the assumption that would happen. A new era of freedom has given Goan nationalists faith in the future of their country's economy and society. Opening up the tourist industry and establishing additional sectors and factories, in his view, would lead to economic prosperity for the people. He states: "Tourists will come and industries will develop and this pleasant sleepy town with the languid Portuguese atmosphere will develop into an Indian metropolis, giving opportunities to all" (Goa 58).

Asif Currimbhoy brilliantly portrays the religious peace between Hindus and Christians. The white church "was built on the foundation stone of a temple with Hindu carvings" (Goa 6), according to the stage specifications. Following the Goan administrator's prayer at the church, the Vicar and the Goan nationalist had a talk that highlights the religious tolerance and concord.

VICAR: Don't forget to come to church now, both of you... And when will you come to my church, brother.

GOAN HINDU: I'll worship from outside, father. VICAR: Why from outside?

GOAN HINDU: My temple, father. You built your church on it. VICAR: What do you mean?

GOAN HINDU: (Pointing to the foundations of the church) See the foundation stone of the church, father? Look closely. That ancient carved motif is the lotus flower, and my God's sublime. That was my House of God.

VICAR: and still is, my son. Come inside (Goa 13-14)."

In a roundabout way, the discussion alludes to the foreigners' religious and political goals in India. Various conquerors, mostly Muslims, have used this tactic at various points in history to demolish Hindu temples and mosques and construct new ones, all in an effort to spread their faith throughout India. In addition, they advocated for the adoption of cruel methods to convert the Indian people to their religion. In the annals of Indian colonialism, it was one of the most consequential political events. The horrific destruction and conversion of Hindu temples and both monasteries centuries ago continues to plague India's religious unity.

Many political and social themes are interwoven throughout the play Goa. Plays written by Currimbhoy dealt extensively with issues of politics and public life. One critic, Peter Nazareth, said, "Asif Currimbhoy interweaves the public event with the private to create exciting drama which asks moral questions about humanity in the cataclysmic period of de-colonization" (Nazareth 13). The drama presents a plethora of societal ills, including communalism, parochialism, lechery, smuggling, sexual delights, and the avarice of the wealthy. The character of Senhora Miranda is that of a ruthless prostitute who would sell her daughter for a necklace of gold if she could. Everyone knows about her transgressions because of the frequent gatherings on the patio seats. As she walks by them, they mutter something about how flirtatious she is.

SENHORA MIRANDA, a fair-looking WOMAN of about forty, splendidly dressed in the latest Portuguese fashion with colourful parasol in hand, comes down the steps of the bar-tavern (West side of stage) slightly tipsy, and walks slowly across the patio to her residence (East side of the stage) in the course of which SHE finds herself obliged to pass by the benches in the middle of the square" (Currimbhoy, Goa 7).

When the regulars see Senhora Miranda, they immediately halt what they're doing and look at her nonstop. She is very aware of the impact she is having. Her goal is to draw attention without giving the impression that she is drowsy, so she moves slowly and cautiously. Society heavyweights like the Vicar and Administrator have an impact on her. She gives a little bow in their direction but pays no attention to the locals or the smuggler. Given her innate avarice, Miranda will gladly give herself for as little as the present is worth. Here Miranda's avarice for wealth and gold is laid bare.

SENHORA MIRANDA: Oh, let me guess. ALPHONSO: I'll give you a hint.

SENHORA MIRANDA: More expensive than the last one? ALPHONSO: Yes.

SENHORA MIRANDA: (Delighted, Kissing him) of silver? ALPHONSO: No, gold.

SENHORA MIRANDA: (Squeezing him joyfully) Oh, you need more than a kiss for that." (Goa 19)

If it means keeping Alphonso close to her, she is willing to give up her daughter Rose. The thought of Alphonso leaving her makes her nervous since she values her customers very highly. Readers are neither surprised nor shocked by Miranda's lack of scruples.

SENHORA MIRANDA: Rose. (Turning ROSE around to face her). see me, dear. Rose, we've got a guest. He wants to go but I want him to stay. You understand? (Rose nods) He talks a lot about you. Calls you an innocent white flower..." (Goa 28).

Miranda says to Krishna, without flinching an eye, that he must satisfy her sexual need before he can consider seeing Rose.

"It's not going to be easy, Krishna. (Softly) You see, Krishna, I come first, like two spoons of sugar before three. No one's going to stop you, Krishna. but you'll have to pass by me first". (Goa 34)

The smuggler persona reveals another side of Goa. Despite the smuggler's little position in Goa, his introduction serves to highlight the negative aspects of smuggling in the state. As an explanation for his employment, he says that smuggling is really a kind of commission-based importation, not an illegal occupation. The smuggler rationalizes his illicit trade by saying he supplies them with essential imported goods at low prices. He claims to have an alternative viewpoint:

"Who said I was a smuggler! I'm a commission agent. Why, some of the best families, are my friends. After all, it is I who risk imprisonment for them" (Goa 14).

A long-lasting source of social and political unrest in the West, the drama introduces the color paradigm. Discrimination has always been a part of White people's lives. Even though we live in a contemporary society, many White people still suffer from the mental illness of racism. Indeed, the exact idea that White people are inherently superior to all others is what allowed the British to conquer almost half of the globe for so long, all the while posing as "God's men" sent to free the non-White population. In Goa, Currimbhoy investigates the White psychology paradigm. It is analyzed in the play how the so-called colored people were treated cruelly by the Whites, who claimed to be superior, strong, and masters. Miranda, a white Portuguese, believes that having a different color of skin is a genetic sin. The inhumane treatment of the colonized people by the Portuguese administration is evidence of his authority. He maintains his position that the West is invincible while the East is in decline. The Portuguese administrator's actions demonstrate the "hegemonies of possessing minorities which is central to any colonialist intervention" (Said 44). The Portuguese administrator seems to think that people from the West can easily manage those from the East. It demonstrates that White people's social and political advantages stem from their superiority mindset. Using The Portuguese Administrator as an example, another character named Alphonso claims that the Goans are naive and easily governed by a common White guy. Miranda has often warned Alphonso from interacting with locals. Because of their race, she claims, they are considered to be of a distinct class. The indigenous, in her view, are beneath her since they do not share her family's history or social standing. White supremacy is brought to light throughout the conversation.

"MIRANDA: Oh, it's alright I suppose if you occasionally meet them, but this idea of being too friendly with all and sundry isn't exactly becoming.

ALPHONSO: why not?

MIRANDA: Well, I don't have to keep repeating myself do I? We...we're different." (Currimbhoy, Goa 24)

Krishna, the hero of the play is a native who presents the resistance to the prevailing racial differences in Goa. Because he has a dark skin, he is being treated badly by Sanhora and Alphonso. But Krishna makes it clear that being a white does not make a person superior over others. He loves Rose and for her, he is ready to rebel. When Miranda tries to judge him on his colour, he defends it by saying: "You may have white skin, but also so have albinos. It doesn't prove a thing." (Goa 42). He means for these statements to be an attempt at self-reflection; then, he brings up Sanhora's "Black" shades and says: "You have got shades of black within you Maria. Rose wouldn't come out dark unless these were dark blood somewhere..." (Goa 42).

The analysis of the play *Goa* visibly introduces the idea that Asif Currimbhoy "writes plays like bullets needing only the trigger of a national event" (Swarnalatha 199). Several significant sociopolitical concerns, such as religious harmony, nationalism, communal harmony, prostitution, and smuggling, are brought up against the background of the Goa liberation, which is the national event in this case.

In his next significant historical endeavor, "Om Mane Padme Hum!", Currimbhoy picks up a topic from the modern political spectrum. (the pearl in the lotus blossom) was praised in 1972. The historical event of China's invasion of Tibet is depicted in the drama. Bombay hosted the 1972 staging of the play. This play is an expression of Currimbhoy's love of unconventional subject matter and his ravenous appetite for romantic themes. The drama is with the 1959 Chinese invasion of Tibet and the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, the Dalai Lama, fleeing to India. The play's title is derived from a Buddhist chant, which is considered very holy. In this drama, Currimbhoy combines religious and political themes to highlight the tension between traditional faiths and contemporary political ideologies. Currimbhoy takes great pleasure in pitting seemingly incompatible events against one another in his work as a playwright. On a thematic level, the drama pits spiritualism against materialism and religion against Communist dogma. The playwright stays neutral on the issue of communism and Buddhism.

"Om Mane Padme Hum!" (1972) is a dramatization of the Dalai Lama's exile from Tibet during China's 1950s occupation. This dramatization dramatizes the internal struggle of the Dalai Lama and offers a concise history of the Chinese conquest, occupation, and cultural change in Tibet. In this case, Currimbhoy has done an excellent job of incorporating a current political incident into a dramatic performance. The drama is accurately described by K.A. Agrawal as;

"It is the play on the religion of Lamaism. In 1950 the Dalai Lama, the Chief Guru of the followers of Lamaism, left Tibet secretly for some political reason. In the play, Asif Currimbhoy has presented the Dalai Lama as a child and as a man, as a spiritual leader. He always cares for the Orders of God and not of human beings. But even then he thinks that he should keep himself safe from the tyrant rulers of China, only then he can do some service to his followers" (Agrawal 143).

The opening scene of "Om Mane Padme Hum!" takes place in the prayer chamber of the monastery in the Potala in Lhasa, where the young Rimpoche and the monks dressed in red and yellow recite the Buddhist song. In the face of an impending uprising among the Tibetan people against the Chinese rule, the three abbots of the renowned monasteries of Ganden, Sera, and Drepung meet to convince the Dalai Lama to flee. The Lama, however, is opposed to the notion of leaving Tibet. The Lama is told by even the ministers to flee Tibet by the Chinese military, who have more soldiers and better weaponry.

The dramatist sets the stage for the present political climate in Tibet through a discussion between two prominent Tibetan religious figures, Lukhangwa and Loshang Tashi. They broach topics such as Tibet's treatment by the United Nations and India's rejection of the region, which allowed China to expand into Tibet. When it comes to building infrastructure and implementing economic changes, a tiny nation like Tibet relies heavily on its neighboring countries. China began democratic reforms in Tibet by constructing more roads, hospitals, and schools, taking advantage of the passivity demonstrated by the United Nations and India. Communism is what the Chinese seek to replace Tibetan spiritualism with. "I too might respect the person of the Dalai Lama" (Currimbhoy, Om Mane. 21)—this is what Chief Political Representative General Chang Chin Wu of China said when asked about the Chinese invasion of Tibet. He said that the goal was not to hurt the Dalai Lama, but to bring about a cultural revolution. General Chang Chin Wu, however, realizes that they may conquer Tibet militarily but cannot transform its people spiritually.

At the play's conclusion, the Chinese army's arrival on the outskirts of Lhasa changes events. Two generals, Tan Kuan San and Chin Had-jan, as well as the top political representative, General Chang Chin-wu, are shown debating the consequences of China's imminent takeover of Tibet. They find out that things are getting dicey when they see a mass of armed monks, some primitive Khamba tribesmen, the personal

bodyguards of the Dalai Lama, and their army's remnants stationed outside the Norbulingka Palace, all trying to stop the kidnapping of their "Living Buddha." Tan Kuan San urges the General to issue the signal to conquer the city because he thinks the swarms of people can't stand a chance against the Chinese's well-oiled armament. Before saying, "We're not here merely to liberate or occupy but to stay, stay and fortify," the general makes it clear that they are not to do anything that may hurt the Dalai Lama. Persist and get assimilated. All of South Asia is ours to protect or grow from our vantage point on Earth (Om Mane. 37). As we see in what follows, the Chinese envision a cultural revolution in South Asia. They encourage the Tibetans to establish a new country via hard labor, since this will bring them closer to their God. Religion should not be "an opium" of the people, they also impose on the Tibet Buddhist Association. Chinese colonialism continues unabated, with new initiatives such as communes, reorientation of educational systems, and the abolition of landed nobility. The story concludes with General Tan Kuan San ordering the destruction of Potala after learning of the Dalai Lama's escape on the day of the sandstorm.

The Chinese resort to the time-honored tactic of "divide and rule" whenever they are unable to disrupt the unwavering religious devotion of the Tibetan people to the Dalai Lama. Upon seeing two distinct factions, the General intends to use a class struggle to separate the religiously affiliated Red Hats from the Yellow Hats. Chang Chin is well aware that the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan people's "living Buddha" (18), must be deposed before his vision of community culture in Tibet can materialize. He thinks the Chinese cultural revolution may be launched from the class struggle. An even loftier goal of his is to use Tibet as a test bed for a cultural revolution. When Ngabo Jigme catches on, he says: "In years to comethere will be a new Tibet I would have thought Peking would need people like me here" (Om Mane. 20).

The Chinese colonization of Tibet is vividly shown in Currimbhoy. Entering the town in large numbers, Chinese forces begin enforcing discipline on the indigenous. Because of their strict dedication to disciplined activity, Tibetans are constantly changing their habits. They treat the monks with no compassion and force them to labor in the fields, ensuring that they will all have to work hard for their food. It becomes clear throughout their discussion that it is:

"Soldier (with gun): (no nonsense about him) get down your knees andwork. Don't look so surprised; pass him your spade never seen a man work?"

A Cultivator: Never seen a monk cultivate.

Soldier: Well, you 'll be seeing a lot more of it. If they can kneel and pray,they can kneel and plough.

(Calling out to a monk who's having difficulty) Get on with it, you there. unlessyou want my boot to help you . . . (laugh out loudly),

A monk: Sir, he's old. Not used to it

Soldier: Used to praying, is he? Used to eating isn't he? well, from nowon he'll have to work to eat.

Monk: There are some who only pray and some who only cultivate. Soldier: Why? Ever asked the cultivator why he should work while you pray? Ever asked the cultivator why the monastery should own the land while he toils? From now on the land belongs to the tiller to the communeswho will make their own decision about sharing? And my advice to you is to work too and build a new nation. by this way come close to your own God". (Om Mane. 43-44).

Using two events, the drama demonstrates how the Chinese are attempting to force communist changes on the Tibetan people in exchange for democratic and traditional reforms. Capitalism is planted in the first occurrence. The oppressed flee to China for safety from the tyrannical landowners, who are using their wealth to repress the people. In a democratic state, landowners are compelled to apologize and embrace equality by force. They state unequivocally that whomever tills the land owns it. They inculcate the belief that labor is a kind of religion and compel the monks to labor in order to become near to God. Tibetan superstitions and reliance on oracles are the second occurrence that the writer brings to light. Observing customs around death that appease nature perplexes the general. He has faith in medical professionals alone, not in oracles or superstitions, to alleviate illness.

Currimbhoy uses a dream sequence to compare and contrast Tibetan and Chinese culture. A lady decked up in richly ornamented, aristocratic Tibetan garb catches the eye of the general. After caring for an infant, she transforms into a beautiful Tibetan lady. A stunning member of China's aristocracy wearing her best garments is another lady he sees. The little boy who looks just like the general is kissed by her. She goes naked when the boy departs, and a large hairy monkey appears with a human face; she becomes one with him. The man's face in the photo is his father. As he watches the two dream sequences, the child is shocked by the jarring contrast between the two ladies he sees: the elegant, well-dressed lady and the lustful, terrifying ogress who is having an affair with the beast.

One Tibetan tribe that supports Chinese rule because of the better living and economic circumstances is seen in Currimbhoy, which illustrates the social and political effects of Chinese invasion. The second camp is hostile to China because its citizens fear the Chinese would enslave the Tibetan people now that they have colonized the region. The line that has been used to conquer nations worldwide is shown by Currimbhoy in this scenario. Those who side with the Chinese are fundamentalists who reject capitalism and hunger for self-determination. Rapid national development is what they aim for. Achieving economic power for their nation and providing the greatest education for their children are two things they seek.

They think that the only way for Tibet to have the education and development it needs is if the locals help the Chinese. However, monks hold salvation in the highest regard and are thus opposed to communalism.

General Chang hopes for political changes and a cultural revolution since he thinks Tibetan customs are outdated and inflexible. The General should not let the reform damage traditional Tibetan culture, says Chin Hao-Jan, since this is a delicate subject for the Tibetan people and might spark a larger uprising. Respect for Tibetan traditions, customs, and beliefs is something that General Chang fully endorses. Fearing colonization, the General feels sorry for the Tibetan people and wishes to set them free. Under Chinese authority, they would be able to practice their religion as they saw fit.

One of the most noticeable aspects of Om Mane Padma Hum! is the contrasting elements and several levels of conflict. Violence and nonviolence, the past and the present, and communism and Buddhism are all juxtaposed in the drama. The conversion of Tibet from a Buddhist to a communist state is the primary goal of the Chinese invasion. Efforts to transform culture by the use of military force are underway. In order to force the Tibetan monks to plow the fields, the Chinese troops resort to brutal means. The Dalai Lama's mother begs him to resort to violence if necessary in order to end the monks' and aristocrats' degrading salute. However, the Dalai Lama is vehemently opposed to this since nonviolence is fundamental to Buddhism. Iyengar, K.R.S., includes:

"*Om Mane Padme Hum!* is the imaginative title given to the play on the Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet. Even on a first reading the play had an overwhelming effect upon me. The Lama and the Double: the two Generals: Fatherand Son: Lamaism and Communism: Beauty and the Beast: The Past and the Future: violence and suffering—the juxtaposition of such opposites in the play is masterly(Iyengar 13).

Throughout the play, conflict is an integral part of the plot. The three abbots beg the Dalai Lama to go to India because of the violence, but he refuses since physical death is more heinous than spiritual murder. His mother then begs him to abandon his divinity. However, before he is reincarnated, the Lama begs her to reject him. He has no desire to return to his childhood in her reassuring embrace. After then, there's tension between Tan Kuan San and General Chin Wu, the top political representative; Tan wants a cultural revolution in Tibet, while General Chin Wu wants a military showdown.

With "Om Mane Padme Hum!", Asif Currimbhoy proves once and for all that he is a masterplay writer. He expertly handles the play's political premise and current events. The conversations between the Dalai Lama, monks, the Chinese top general, and other generals effectively portray the historical events of Tibet. The drama is enhanced by the careful handling of elements such as the past and present, dream sequence, contrast, and conflict. Bayappa Reddy argues that the play's most notable feature is that,

"a recent historical event is viewed in a much wider context, involving something more than the Lamas, or Tibet's fortunes. This has become possible because Currimbhoy intertwines a public event with the private to create exciting drama which asks moral questions about humanity. The moral question Currimbhoy raises in the play is articulated at the end when the Dalai Lama escapes from the Chinese threat... The temporal conflict between Tibet and China is thus elevated to a metaphysical level" (Reddy 101).

Though he was not born into Bengali culture, dramatist Currimbhoy found himself engrossed with Bengali-related issues because of his desire in creating a structural technique for his tragedies. Bengal has long been the epicentre of political turmoil in India. Having spent time in Calcutta in the 1970s as a corporate executive, he was able to readily relate to the revolutionary awareness and agony of Bengali nationalism. The dramatist recognized a reflection of the human predicament in the subjective awareness presented in his Bengal-themed plays. Despite the plays' obvious conceptual and structural flaws, they do justice to a heroic period in contemporary Indian political history. Even if it brought back memories of the sorrow of division that the nation had experienced just a quarter of a century before, the fragmentation of a chronic adversary was a welcome development for the Indian political establishment.

The Bengal Trilogy is the clearest example of Currimbhoy's penchant for dealing with political and historical issues. Two of the three plays in the trilogy explore the historical foundations of Bengali nationalism and how they relate to the current political situation in Bengal. *Inquilab*, the third, focuses on the Naxalite uprising in Bengal, a social issue that the author views less via a political lens.

Conclusion

Currimbhoy's dramaturgy stands out for its unflinching portrayal of the consequences of political conflicts, rendered with a depth of understanding and compassion for the plight of those caught in the crossfire. His characters, ranging from intellectuals and revolutionaries to ordinary citizens turned refugees, embody the broader human struggle against oppression and the pursuit of freedom. Through these vivid characterizations and compelling narratives, Currimbhoy not only chronicles historical events but also delves into the emotional and psychological toll exerted on individuals by political upheavals.

The playwright's work transcends mere documentation of events to question the ethical and moral dilemmas inherent in political struggles. By presenting the complexities of liberation movements, the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities for political gain, and the often blurred lines between right and wrong in the quest for power, Currimbhoy invites the audience to engage in a critical examination of the nature of political conflict and its impact on human values and relationships. This nuanced exploration encourages a reflection on the means through which political objectives are pursued and the ends they aim to achieve, highlighting the moral ambiguities and human costs involved.

Moreover, Currimbhoy's plays critique the mechanisms of political machinery and its capacity to divide and dehumanize. Themes such as displacement, loss, and the search for a sense of belonging resonate with contemporary global issues, making his plays relevant in today's discussions on political conflicts and refugee crises. Through his storytelling, Currimbhoy underscores the interconnectedness of personal and political histories, emphasizing the role of theater as a catalyst for social understanding and change.

Asif Currimbhoy's examination of political conflicts through his plays offers insightful reflections on the human condition, power dynamics, and the quest for justice. His body of work stands as a powerful testament to the role of theater in engaging with social issues, prompting audiences to confront the realities of political violence and its repercussions. Currimbhoy's narratives not only document specific historical moments but also serve as a broader call to empathy, understanding, and action in the face of ongoing political challenges. Through his portrayal of political conflicts, Currimbhoy continues to inspire critical dialogue and reflection, affirming the transformative power of theater in shaping collective consciousness and aspirations for a more equitable world.

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