

**ESTRANGED INTIMACIES
COLONIAL INTERACTION IN ASIF CURRIMBHOY'S
'GOA' AND 'MONSOON'**

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation attempts to study Goa (1964) and Monsoon (1965), two plays of Asif Currimbhoy within the framework of the psychology of colonialism. The scope of this dissertation does not include an analysis of the plays in terms of dramaturgy, it is confined to a thematic analysis of the above mentioned texts. Drama being essentially a performance based genre, the present study is thus limited. It may however be added that owing to the lack of any contemporary productions of Asif Currimbhoy's plays and limited material on the previous performances (to the best of this researcher's knowledge), a performance oriented study would have had to rest heavily on conjectures. Confining itself to the written play as text, this study seeks to examine the politics of colonial encounter and interaction as seen in the plays Goa and Monsoon.

Asif Currimbhoy started writing in the late fifties and has since then written prolifically, his plays exhibiting a variety and richness in terms of themes and dramatic technique. This Alien... Native Land (1975) is the last play he has written. In terms of thematic concerns, the complex fate of individuals, societies and cultures seeking to define their identity in a milieu which is characterised

by flux and change than by order and stability is a recurring theme of his plays. In his eternal quest for freedom - in physical and metaphysical terms - Man sometimes resists and overcomes, sometimes succumbs to the conditions in which he is placed. In the search for liberation, crossing confining mental boundaries is a pre-requisite for the recovery of lost selves. Colonialism, as one such confining condition implies not just the loss of political freedom; its tentacles of power and control penetrate the labyrinths of the mind and consciousness. Colonising is thus an invasion of the mind as well.

The issue of coloniality is relevant in the present times for understanding "the intersections of culture, knowledge and power",¹ the politics of cultural colonialism and the hegemony of the West in the colonial and post-colonial contexts. While political independence implies the breakdown of the visible imperial structure, engaging with the colonial experience in a post-colonial state of mind is an attempt at dismantling the invisible imperial structures of control.

Goa and Monsoon have been chosen for study since they engage with the colonial experience and highlight the psychological phenomena that govern the imperial-colonial relations. The plays also throw up for scrutiny the

essentially confining nature of the terms colonised and coloniser and attempt to dissolve the binary rigidity of the counterpoised terms. Their concern is with the psychology of circumscribed individuals and their so-called rulers in a colonial ethos. They also address themselves to the issues of cross-cultural contacts, hybridized sites and ambivalent boundaries.

"No one colonises innocently... no one colonises with impunity either"² Post-colonial discourse is a critical and theoretical revision of a Eurocentric or Orientalist colonial discourse. Eurocentric discourse employed the master -slave, adult-child and man-woman paradigm to suggest the hierarchical framework of colonialism. Edward Said's analysis of orientalism as the discourse which constituted the Orient in the consciousness of the West suggests the manner in which the world was constructed in the European mind. The Orient is not merely there; "Just as the Occident itself is not just there. We must take seriously Vico's great observation that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography as both geographical and cultural entities - to say nothing of historical entities - such locales, regions, geographical sectors as 'Orient' and 'Occident' are man-made".³ While the Oriental was seen as "irrational

depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different, the European is rational, virtuous, mature 'normal"⁴. Thus the essential relationship as seen in the West, was one between a strong and weak partner. However the East was seen to be in need of corrective study by the West, thus legitimising (for the West) the project of colonization.

Foucault says, "we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth".⁵ Truth is what counts as truth within the system of rules for a particular discourse; the production of truth is a function of power.⁶ "The various forms of neo-Marxism, the various versions of women's liberation movement, the numerous attempts to build alternative philosophies of science and technology by giving up the insane search for total control and predictability are but a recognition that the gaps between the so-called privileged and under-privileged of the world are mostly notional."⁷

Post-colonial discourse is a rereading of the counterpoised oppositions which inform and sustain the dialectic of colonialism to reveal the structures and matrices of power and knowledge which shape consciousness and modes of thought. By displacing notions of 'centre' and 'periphery', it attempts to dismantle the colonial constructs', thereby providing the impetus for a decentering

pluralistic perspective on the colonial encounter. It rereads the paradigm of master and victim as a figure of colonial estranged intimacy, thereby establishing a continuum between the so-called exploiter and exploited. O. Mannoni by presenting a psychological account of colonialism projected an opposition between Prospero the archetypal coloniser and Caliban the archetypal colonized. While Prospero is invested with the inferiority complex termed 'Prospero complex' which requires him and by analogy the coloniser to patronise dependents to appease an insecure ego, Caliban is the archetypal dependent native.⁸ Aimé Césaire, contradicting Mannoni's thesis, views Prospero as the complete totalitarian who signifies the European world's 'will to power.'⁹

It is in this area of the relationship between coloniser and colonised that European structuralist, post-structuralist and Marxist criticism has made significant inputs. Abdul Jan Mohammed has formulated a code of fixed oppositions such as self/other, white/black, good/evil, rationality/sensuality, civilization/savagery and subject/object - underlying colonialism's domination of the other which when decoded pronounce the 'putative' superiority of the coloniser's culture over the supposed inferiority of that of the colonized.¹⁰ Feminist theory has links with post-colonial theory, apparent in the dismantling of the

association of femininity with primitivism, passivity and cowardice.¹¹ The feminization of the colonial territory though remains the most sustained metaphor shared by colonial and post-colonial narratives. The geography of rape is a dominant trope for the act of colonization. While Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Gauri Viswanathan engage with the issue of the complicity of language, literature and power in the production of 'truth'¹², using the language of the coloniser for shaping the post-colonial discourse can be read as an indication of the displacement of the imperial discourse, thus confirming the precariousness of power.

C.L.R. James remarks that the post-colonial prerogative consisted in reinterpreting and rewriting the forms and effects of an 'older' colonial consciousness from the later experience of the cultural displacement that marks the more recent, post-war histories of the Western metropolis.¹³ Post-Colonial writing also concerns itself with place and displacement, the development and recovery of identity between self and place.

The danger colonial cultural studies is perhaps prone to is a mere theoretical repetitiveness that by reversing the fact of cultural difference establishes the rigidity of the very self/other binarism which it seeks to dismantle. As Edward Said warns, "A double kind of exclusivism could

set in : the sense of being an excluding insider by virtue of experience (only women can write for and about women and only literature that treats women or Orientals well is good literature), and second, being an excluding insider by virtue of method (only Marxists anti - Orientalists, feminists can write about economics, Orientalism, women's literature)".¹⁴

By culture is implied, not just the "canonization of the 'idea' of aesthetics"¹⁵, language, literature, art, music, ritual etc. as channels of cultural transmission and forming a tradition, but also cultural practice as a continuous engagement with the production of meaning, "...and the social specificity of each of these productions of meaning as they circulate as signs within specific contextual locations and social systems of value."¹⁶ Viewed thus, "culture is pre-eminently the site of the political."¹⁷ Production of meaning, whether in the interests of the dominant group or directed towards an undoing of the hegemonic culture, thus needs to be recognized as a political activity. While 'culture' is a major site of domination and resistance, "cultural contradictions within the imperialised formations", warns Aijaz Ahmad, "tend to be so very numerous - sometimes along class lines but also in cross - class configurations as in the religious modes of

social authorization - that the totality of indigenous culture can hardly be posited as a unified transparent site of anti-imperialist resistance."¹⁸

The intimacies of colonialism result in an ambivalent space in which the colonial hybrid sustains itself. The hybrid, comments Homi K. Bhabha, becomes "the sign of the productivity of colonial power, which may no more be interested in the noisy command of the colonial or the silent repression of the native tradition because, the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects... a negative transparency."¹⁹ Hybridity, as also seen in the post-colonial texts, produces a "a representation of the colonial self that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority - the rules of recognition."²⁰ Hybridity is thus at once, "a mode of appropriation and of resistance."²¹ This dissertation hence seeks to read Currimbhoy's plays in terms of the nature of psychological and cultural appropriation and resistance implicit in the colonial encounter.

The first chapter provides a glimpse into the world of Asif Currimbhoy, highlighting the themes and theatre

potential of his plays. The second and third chapters provide an analysis of Goa and Monsoon respectively. Though Monsoon lacks the dramatic symmetry of Goa, both plays engage with the subject of the psychological and cultural formations of the colonial encounter.

NOTES

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CHAPTER I

FACES AND FACETS: THE WORLD OF ASIF CURRIMBHOY

Asif Currimbhoy's sheer fecundity as a playwright is amazing: over a span of seventeen years (1959-1975) he has written as many as twenty-nine plays,¹ A "dramatist of the public event"², Asif Currimbhoy has almost always woven his plays around a significant public event of the times. His plays with a few exceptions knit the public event with the private moment and are rooted in a distinctly Indian experience. Primarily concerned with the issues of the contemporary world, Currimbhoy has also explored the nuances of myth and history to reveal their contemporary relevance. A man with a keen observation and concern for the deeper social realities and vital issues of human existence, Currimbhoy strives to achieve "that intrinsic balance of having a structural framework for a play and yet being able to get under the skin of each character speaking for them."³ A distinguishing feature of his plays is the tremendous range and variation in themes and technique. Speaking about his plays, Currimbhoy says, "I'm experimenting continuously with new forms, each play of mine is different from the other play not only in subject matter, often in style, in presentation, in structure, in organic development. These are all subconscious factors, I don't know where they spring from, but as far as I'm concerned it has to be a new experience everytime."⁴

Currimbhoy's plays reveal his perception of the common pattern underlying the diverse 'acts' and 'scenes' of life - where hope and despair, pain and pleasure, love and hate, selfless devotion and mindless violence co-inhabit an individual and collective world - life is in the ultimate analysis a juxtapositioning of opposites, a theatre of paradoxes where each man strives for self-fulfillment. And it is the picture of man struggling in conflict with forces within and without that captures the imagination of playwright time and again.

That language is a major hurdle in the context of an essentially performance oriented art is acknowledged by Currimbhoy - "Of this I'm convinced. That if you want to seep into a sense of Indian consciousness as far as the theatre is concerned you cannot reach it quite in English in terms of the audience that you have today".⁵ Currimbhoy suggests that with the exception of Goa (1964) The Great Indian Bustard (1970) and The Doldrummers (1960) none of his plays ought to be performed in English, instead, a regional production would add to the credibility of the plays.⁶

To the exception of some plays such as The Miracle Seed (1973), Inquilab (1970) and Sonar Bangla (1972), most of Currimbhoy's plays could perhaps be performed in English without diminishing the credibility of the play. Even a

play like The Miracle Seed which deals with the peasant class could be produced in English if the language used was appropriately inflected and idiomatic thereby capturing the flavour of the local language. Though Currimbhoy seems to attempt at a flexible use of the language in the play he is not very successful.

Currimbhoy's plays are his responses to the most disturbing and vital strains of contemporary life.

Asif Currimbhoy interweaves the public event with the private to create exciting drama which asks moral questions about humanity in the cataclysmic period of decolonization.⁷

Articulating his creative vision of the complex human situation he sees everywhere around him, Currimbhoy writes among other things about man struggling against an impersonal world, freedom, bondage, liberation, salvation, alienation, violence, insanity, crisis in self-image and identity, invasion, corruption, refugees, state control, the conflict between the ideal and the material and man-woman relationships. Thus the socio-political and psycho-spiritual world of contemporary man engages the mind of the playwright time and again. While Currimbhoy is sympathetic to the universal human condition, he critically scrutinises particular situations as they exist within their specific environments with their tensions, conflicts and rewards. It is the manner in which the forces within man and pressures

from without stimulate him to action, despair, violence, revolt, contentment, disillusionment, hope and fear that is of central interest to Currimbhoy.

Currimbhoy's plays have been divided thematically into various categories - Inquilab (1970), The Refugee (1971) and Sonar Bangla (1972) form the Bengal trilogy, The Tourist Mecca (1959), The Doldrummers (1960) Darjeeling Tea? (1971) and This Alien... Native Land (1975) form the romantic plays; Goa (1964) An Experiment with Truth (1969) and Om Mane Padme Hum! are the political plays, while Thorns on a Canvas (1962), The Hungry Ones (1965), The Miracle Seed (1973) and The Dissident M.L.A. (1974) are his social plays.⁸ Om (1961) is a trilogy dealing with religion and the metaphysical quest. P. Bayapa Reddy divides Currimbhoy's literary career into two periods - the first period ranging from 1959-68 and the second from 1969-75.⁹ He adds that during "the second period of his literary career, Currimbhoy was able to bring a new thrust of seriousness to bear upon his dramatic art".¹⁰ Referring to the Bengal trilogy, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar comments that "Currimbhoy does seem to have wrestled closer still with the human condition and found appropriate means for the agonised expression of his social conscience."¹¹ Sonar Bangla however lacks the dramatic compactness of an earlier play like Goa or

The Doldrummers. Currimbhoy's plays range from one act plays like The Refugee to the four act play Sonar Bangla and to the exception of comedy, experiment with tragedy, farce, allegory, symbol, satire, history, myth and fantasy. Currimbhoy's concerns are serious, he finds very little comedy in life. His play's express his protest against an inhuman world and its collaborators. His plays are a passionate outburst against the hypocrisy, stifling conformist attitudes, a corrupt society which generates alienated and cynical members and the man-made disasters like war and invasion.

Conflict and revolt are twin themes Currimbhoy frequently engages with in his plays: "In other words, a conflict in theatre, conflict at every level, physical, mental, emotional - because from the time really you meet with other people, what is called human relationships, it's not a rapport, not a homogenous experience. It's striking sparks with each other that brings about a feeling of life. I cannot think of anything that in complete agreement ever blossomed out into anything meaningful."¹² Revolt as Currimbhoy conceives of it is "merely the fact that they react to life. And by react to life I should explain further they test themselves against forces of nature or against forces of each other."¹³ The pattern of conflict and revolt is inherent in life and contains within itself

the seeds of change. In their wide ranging explorations of social and individual behaviour and relationships, Currimbhoy's plays become an authentic indices of the "deeper mainsprings of dominant social and personal antagonisms of contradictions which often crystallize into or find expression in one or two strong impulses."¹⁴ And violence is one of them.

Currimbhoy extensively scrutinises the nature and effects of violence in its individual and collective manifestations. The violence of silence, of control and dependence, and violence in love is viewed with as much gravity as its more explicit images - riots, revolt, rape, oppression, rebellion and war. Violence with its brutal and senseless destruction of human life, material objects and moral values leaves the perpetrator morally bankrupt and equally maimed as the vanquished. Inquilab and The Dissident M.L.A. are an indictment of a society encouraging violence and its collaborators within the social system. The corrupt government of Bengal and the MLA's of Gujarat who sponsor riots highlight the fact that "violence is inbuilt in any social system with its establishment and vested interests."¹⁵ Currimbhoy comments, "the closest to violence is peace. It's not less violence."¹⁶ History with its patterns of violence bears testimony to the paradoxical

traits in human nature - its need to adopt violence as the means to preserve essential human values and the dignity of man. The irony lies in the fact that it is the same Man who cherishes peace and non-violence:

Such is our mould, sometimes heroic, sometimes selfish too in those obsessive human ideals of the future, the frantic struggles of the present, that moves us on and on and on until death and fulfilment... So I search for the ultimate: the cause and effect. The cycle of generations that revolt. The great burning desire within us that is prepared to kill and recreate. Build the new world that is as close to God's image as Man is..."¹⁷

Inquilab centred around the naxal movement that upsurged in West Bengal in the Seventies underscores the relation between violence and power. Violence is the means used for gaining power, retaining it or maintaining the status-quo. The conflict is centred in the mind of Amar who is caught between his father's advocacy of democratic means of change and the passionate pleas of the enigmatic naxal leader Ahmed. The play highlights the fact that the naxals are no less power greedy than the government in power, they too are caught in the vortex of power and violence. While Amar at the end of the play affirms his faith in non-violence, Ahmed concludes, "Perhaps, one day you'll battle

each other again, on the methods but not on the cause, because both of you believe in equality and social justice, and who's to say who's right and who's wrong". (Plays, p.132).

In the portrayal of Manu, in The Dissident M.L.A., the playwright mocks the shaky 'idealism' of the power hungry politicians who attempt to conceal their hideous selves under a mask of constructed 'images'. In such an untrue world hope lies in those diminishing few who cherish truth and peace as essential human goals. The play is a scathing comment on the degenerate state of political systems - "there'd be a new election and new corrupt M.L.A's would come instead of old corrupt ones."¹⁸

Goa juxtaposes violence with counter violence and with tremendous irony and sympathy views the tragic predicament of the "victims of survival" (Plays, p.36), Rose, Senhora Miranda and Krishna. An allegory of colonial rule in Goa and the invasion of Indian troops leading to its liberation from colonial tutelage, Goa highlights the psychological contours of colonialism. It also asserts the point that a relationship underpinned with violence and oppression leaves both sides impoverished. At the play's conclusion Krishna and Senhora are both dehumanized on account of the violence they generate. While Senhora unleashes the violence of

terror and oppression, Krishna rapes Rose, a symbolic representation of the invasion of Goa by Indian troops. The play presents a situation "which exposes the morally crude colonialist and morally refined anti-colonialist and shows them to be much of a muchness without denying the humanity of either."¹⁹ And in the conflict between the two, the innocent victim is Rose who we are told is Goa: "Rose is Goa. Goa is Rose." (Plays, p.25).

Monsoon (1965) employs the metaphor of a 'cultural' experiment to suggest the imperial project of colonizing minds and conditioning cultures. Andrew is an educationist who aspires to realize the potential of the Immaculate Conception in a native child Monsoon. The play unfolds the psychological phenomena that govern colonization and decolonization and stresses the continuum between the colonizer and colonized.

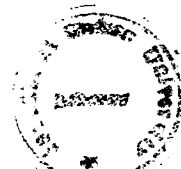
Fact and fiction, reality and imagination coalesce as historical and political figures interact with fictive characters in pursuit of one common goal - the union with their motherland - in Sonar Bangla a play chartering the course of the struggle for liberation and birth of a new identity - Bangladesh. Individual and collective destinies overlap in the character of Sumita who symbolizes the motherland waiting for her lost sons and daughters - lost in

the noisy confusion of power politics and war games. Bangladesh epitomizes the trauma and pain involved in a nation's birth of identity and liberation from bondage. The beauty and strength of Sumita, her sacrifice and commitment, the large scale destruction leaving a trail of dead and destitute, the patriot's stoic endurance and the final realization of the goal represent the motherland's pain scarred journey to freedom and fulfilment.

Forcible occupation of land effected through terror and coercion is quite apart from the invasion of a community's mind and soul. This is the realization which dawns on the Chinese General who spearheads the invasion of Tibet in Om Mane Padme Hum!. The General's desire to effect a cultural reformation is unfulfilled and he realizes that beliefs which come from within are lasting and do not erode under pressure. In the confrontation between Rimpoche the duplicate of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese general is polarized the conflict between Lamaism and Communism, non-violence and force and the spirit and body. The play concludes with the observation by the Dalai Lama that "in any human conflict the ultimate interests of the combatants are same: the interests they fight for are only ephemeral."²⁰

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Exploring the various socio-cultural forces of the environment in which his characters are placed, Currimbhoy centres his interest upon the individual's response to the collective reality. In the conflict between the individual and society some convert to the 'conformist' values sponsored by the state, while those who resist find themselves in the doldrums as outcasts and aliens in their native land. While outcasts like Yakub the artist upholding the freedom of art in Thorns on a Canvas mock the pseudo - world of state sponsored art which is, "a public sector enterprise with its bureaucratized rewards,"²¹ others like Tony and Joe in the Doldrummers turn a cynical eye on the "hyena-like red bottoms and curly tops" (Plays, p.167) - the stereotypes society manufactures. However Tony, Joe and Rita live in an illusory world of their own thus totally alienated from their real selves. The play exposes the cracks in their self-images and implicates them in the structures of hypocrisy and compromised relationships which underlie the larger society. The Doldrummers is a protest against the immorality and bartered relationships which a prudish complacent and hypocritical society gives birth to. Distorted priorities and values lead to a feeling of alienation culminating in a identity crisis. Thorns on a Canvas written as a response to the ban on The Doldrummers is a biting satire on the tyranny of state sponsored art,

its patrons and willing artists. Bukay is the very anti-thesis of Yakub - a yes-man to the State Patron he enjoys the dividends of having sold his soul to the "gentle art of Patronage".²² Faced with the inevitability of making a choice, Malti the daughter of the State Patron decides to strive with Yakub for a solution that is not a compromise and frees the creative self.

While Yakub decides to struggle and fight, Henry the tired salesman in The Clock (1959) compromises in order to survive. The play also highlights the dehumanizing effects of the ruthless patterns of profit and loss, perks and promotions which engage the contemporary psyche. The cruel irony of automated living is that it generates a society of impersonal relationships and alienated selves who have lost touch with their own selves:

There's always a little window in the prison of life. And it looks out into a wider world and into an infinite heaven. Nothing filthy up there. I could sit and watch the stars all my life... and be happy. It is... a mere quiet solitude that beckons me within my self... or rather away from all of you... I just want to be left alone...²³

Another captive of sorts is Mehtab, the old Congressman in The Captives (1963) who dominates the political scene under a self imposed code of moral values which the play suggests, is no more than an image. The play also portrays the precarious mental dilemma of the Indian Muslim in the

background of deteriorating relations between India and Pakistan. Mehtab's doubting of Hasan his Indian Muslim guard at a moment of crisis reveals the cracks within his self-image. The crisis is not just Mehtab's, it's a moral crisis confronting the nation as old images crumble to reveal captive selves. Mehtab however dies an enlightened man: "Knowledge was never a matter of geography. Quite the reverse it overflows all maps that exist. Perhaps true knowledge only comes of death by torture in the country of the mind".²⁴

History bears testimony to the eternal quest of man - searching, finding, losing - it is the very rhythm of life. And change is the quintessence of life as Darjeeling Tea? suggests in the transfer of power from the white sahibs Big Mac and Big Hugh to the new inheritors Bunty and the new administrators. As in Darjeeling Tea?, Currimbhoy's This Alien...Native Land addresses the issues of alienation and belonging in the portrayal of the submerged tensions and insecurities of an Indian Jewish family. While highlighting a minority community's ambivalent feelings towards their new homeland, the play ironically points out the estrangement and alienation within the family.

While the quest for identity is viewed within a spiritual framework in Om, it is interpreted as a search for

perfection, for total identification with the character ideal by Bhima the Kathakali dancer and protagonist of The Dumb Dancer (1961). As an exploration of abnormal psychology the play throws up for speculation the view that notions of the 'sane' 'insane' 'real' and 'mythical' have arbitrary mental boundaries which perhaps can be dissolved by the fusing power of the Imagination. Yassin in The Refugee must search for his identity and conscience in a war-ravaged world of refugees, while Al and Sam in the Hungry Ones realize at the end of their futile search that to know is to experience.

"Every man dreams that's hoping. And everyone must hope."²⁵ It is on the nature and strength of the human spirit that Currimbhoy ultimately pins his faith. And therein lies the significance of his plays for by dramatizing the moment of crisis they drive home the point that in every crisis in life there is a battle to be won and a battle to be lost. And hope as The Miracle Seed suggests is like a small patch of wet earth in a parched field - it spurts forth a new lease of life eventually.

Caught within the epicentre of a crisis, Currimbhoy's characters exemplify man's inherent strengths and weaknesses. Currimbhoy's world is peopled by characters drawn from practically every strata and section of society -

kings, political and spiritual heads, the simple rural folk, the urban elite, the state patrons, the compulsive rebels, the idealistic patriots, the disillusioned youth, the alienated selves, the committed citizens, the 'outsiders' and the captive selves. Currimbhoy views man with his hopes, ambitions, fears, flaws and strengths with a gentle tolerance or biting irony. Juxtaposing opposites within themselves his characters are essentially human and therein lies their appeal.

Bharata in his Natyashastra explains that theatre involves the conventions of stylization (Natya-dharmi) more than the conventions of the representational world. (Loka-dharmi).²⁶ The numerous stage innovations, experimentation in structure and form, use of 'space' and the minute stage details reveal Currimbhoy's interest in the conventions of stage and theatre. Pantomime, dual scenes, echoes, stylized action and striking visual effects are the other features of a Currimbhoy play. They are not innovations in themselves but their centrality to the plays is an interesting detail. While Goa, The Dumb Dancer and The Doldrummers have a dramatic neatness, Om Mane Padme Hum! is an instance of a play being burdened on account of an overdose of theatrical devices and visual effects where "aeons of Tibetan history are run into series of tableaux which often both stagger and bewilder"²⁷ combined with a loosely knit plot. Sonar Bangla

and Om Mane Padme Hum! have numerous and rapid scene changes which might be better realized on celluloid. Currimbhoy's one-act plays are tautly constructed. The Clock employs a novel technique - a single set, a single actor, an almost continuous use of spotlight while the rest of the stage is in darkness and the presence of other characters felt through voice and shadow.

The Doldrummers, The Dumb Dancer, Goa and The Hungry Ones try to achieve a balance between dramatic action and language, between form and content. The Doldrummers suggests the violence underlying the relationships between the central characters through its pungent and racy dialogues. Choreography and dramatic art form equally significant parts in the structural mosaic of The Dumb Dancer. Juxtapositionings and parallelisms follow a patterned movement in the play reflecting the stylized dance movements of the Kathakali dancer thus contributing to the structural symmetry of the play. Similarly in Goa the allegorical content is sustained throughout in the statement "Rose is Goa. Goa is Rose" (Plays, p.25) and "the insinuating rhythm is paralleled by the studied stylization in the play - the patio walks, the exercises in equalization, the enormities of brutalization and the haunting echoes of the tragic ending"²⁸. Pantomime is used for symbolic effect in The

Hungry Ones, and dance operates as a metaphor for the fusion of the real/sane with the ideal/ mythical/ unreal/ insane in the mind of Bhima in The Dumb Dancer. In The Doldrummers the opening scene evokes an image of leisure and romance which the play reveals to be as deceptive a picture as the happy conversational voices that raise the curtain on This Alien.. Native Land. Thorns on a Canvas employs the technique of dual scenes to juxtapose the coexistence of incongruous realities - the world of the art patrons and critics with its pretentious critical jargon and hypocritical attitudes and the world of Yakub the life-affirming artist.

Despite the fact that a number of Currimbhoy's plays are eminently stageable, very few have had stage productions. Currimbhoy definitely has the distinction of having some of his plays performed at home and abroad with considerable success. The Michigan State University production of Goa in 1965 was the first ever production of any of Currimbhoy's plays. The other plays which have been performed abroad include The Dumb Dancer (1966), The Hungry Ones (1966) which was dismissed by the Village Voice as revealing "ex-colonial resentments"²⁹ and Monsoon (1965).³⁰ Productions of Currimbhoy's plays at home include Goa, (1970) The Doldrummers (1969,1970), Inquilab (1972, 1973), Thorns on a Canvas (1969), and The Dumb Dancer (1966,

1969).³¹ Inquilab, Sonar Bangla, The Refugee and The Dumb Dancer have been translated for local productions in the regional languages - the former three in Bengali and the last in Malayalam. The Miracle Seed has been televised in Hindi, Marathi and Bengali.

Critical estimates of Currimbhoy as a playwright have been varied. While M.K. Naik considers Currimbhoy's dramatic output to be a "Half-God's Plenty",³² K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar opines, "Currimbhoy has certainly brought an exceptional talent, an utter seriousness and lots of industry into this difficult craft of playwriting in English".³³ Faubion Bowers considers Currimbhoy to be India's first authentic voice in theatre who has written its "first plays of dissent"³⁴ While Arthur Miller calls him "a forceful playwright",³⁵ Graham Greene considers Currimbhoy's Goa "a most remarkable piece of work".³⁶ H.H. Anniah Gowda and Krishna Bhatt subscribe to the view that Currimbhoy pays no attention to language and dialogue in his plays: "Asif Currimbhoy seems to be totally unconcerned with the proprieties of language" and "does not seek dramatic consistency in his dialogue anywhere, nor does he care much for the dramatic effect of the speeches."³⁷ Though the above mentioned charge holds good for plays like Om Mane Padme Hum!, Sonar Bangla and An Experiment with Truth, Currimbhoy's Goa, The Dumb Dancer,

The Doldrummers, The Hungry Ones, and The Clock are some of the plays which testify to the playwright's ability to use language with restraint and for dramatic effect. Another charge frequently leveled against Currimbhoy is his tendency to subject "the dramatic art to a strain it cannot bear"³⁸ by an overdose of technical and stage innovations. It is by and large in his later plays that Currimbhoy indulges in excessive experimentation within a single play. P. Bayapa Reddy is of the opinion that "the theatrical vitality coupled with Currimbhoy's commitment to social and artistic values can override his occasional lapses and missed targets"³⁹ Dr. A.K. Bhatt's observation that Currimbhoy's plays are "for the most part badly conceived, badly constructed"⁴⁰ does not read like a fair assessment.

Currimbhoy denies that he writes for a foreign audience and adds, "it's a different, an alien environment that has always excited me whether it's Bengal or Britain"⁴¹ The possibility of his plays having a non-Indian sensibility which could account for the rather lukewarm enthusiasm of Indian theatre groups to stage his plays hold little water considering the fact that theatre groups at home perform any number of Western plays in the original, in translation and in adaptation. Though there are occasions when Currimbhoy fails to treat his plays as performance texts and keep in mind the possibilities and limitations of performance and

the modern stage, a number of his plays seem ideal for performance in terms of dramatic content and technique. Despite their 'topicality', Currimbhoy's plays deal with issues and themes which are increasingly relevant to present times. Currimbhoy is perhaps not a great dramatist. But he cannot be dismissed as a playwright of little or no competence either. His contribution to the cause of Indian English Drama is by no means meagre. His plays then deserve to be treated with a lot more enthusiasm than has been displayed so far.

The following two chapters attempt to look closely at Goa and Monsoon which deal with colonial and post - colonial encounter respectively and offer insights into the psychology of colonialism and the politics of culture in colonial and post-colonial contexts.

NOTES

1. Of the twenty-nine plays, The Restaurant (1960), And Never the Twain Shall Meet (1964), The Kaleidoscope (1964), The Temple Dancers (1967), The Lotus Eater (1967), The Mercenary (1968) and The Great Indian Bustard (1970) have been staged but not published. P. Bayapa Reddy in The Plays of Asif Currimbhoy (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1985) p. 26 includes Monsoon (1965) among the unpublished plays. Monsoon however was published by Writers Workshop in 1992.
2. Peter Nazareth quoted in P. Bayapa Reddy, The Plays of Asif Currimbhoy (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1985), p.39.
3. Rajinder Paul and Paul Jacob, "Asif Currimbhoy Interviewed", Enact, No. 48 (Dec. 1970).
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*
7. Peter Nazareth quoted in P. Bayapa Reddy, Studies in Indian Writing in English: With a Focus on Indian English Drama (Delhi: Prestige, 1990), p.37.
8. P. Bayapa Reddy, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.
9. P. Bayapa Reddy, The Plays of Asif Currimbhoy (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1985), p. 25.
10. *ibid.* p. 27.
11. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "The Dramatic Art of Asif Currimbhoy" in K.K. Sharma (ed.) Indo-English Literature: A Collection of Critical Essays (Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1977), p. 255.
12. Rajinder Paul and Paul Jacob, "Asif Currimbhoy Interviewed", Enact, No. 48 (Dec. 1970).
13. *ibid.*
14. Nemi Chandra Jain, "Violence as Theme in Contemporary Indian Drama", Sangeet Natak No. 83 (Jan-March, 1987), p. 59.

15. *ibid.*, p. 63.
16. Rajinder Paul and Paul Jacob, "Asif Currimbhoy Interviewed", Enact, No. 48.
17. Asif Currimbhoy, Plays: Goa, Inquilab, The Doldrummers, The Refugee, "Darjeeling Tea?," Sonar Bangla (Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1972), p.97. All future references to any of the above mentioned six plays will be sourced as Plays in this chapter.
18. Asif Currimbhoy, The Dissident M.L.A. (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1974), p. 55.
19. R.L. Nigam, "Asif's Plays", Enact, Second Annual Number (Jan - Feb 1969).
20. Asif Currimbhoy, "Om Mane Padme Hum!" ["Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus!"] (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1972), p.67.
21. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "The Dramatic Art of Asif Currimbhoy" in K.K. Sharma (ed.) Indo-English Literature: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 250.
22. Asif Currimbhoy, Thorns on a Canvas (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1992), p. 31.
23. Asif Currimbhoy, The Clock, (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1993), p. 18.
24. Patrick White, Voss (London: Penguin, 1983), p. 446.
25. Asif Currimbhoy, The Miracle Seed (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1973), p. 33.
26. Bharatamuni, The Nāṭya Śāstra trans. A Board of Scholars. (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, n.d), p.72.
27. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "The Dramatic Art of Asif Currimbhoy" in K.K. Sharma (ed.) Indo-English Literature: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 247.
28. *ibid.*, p. 245.
29. Asif Currimbhoy, "Preface" to The Dumb Dancer (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1992), p. 8.

30. Monsoon was written & performed in the same year-1965. In the subsequent sentence the years indicated in parenthesis refer to the years of performance.
31. In the "Acknowledgments" to the The Dumb Dancer (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1992), p.6, Asif Currimbhoy mentions a forthcoming local production of the play in Kerala. Details regarding place and year of performance are not available.
32. M.K. Naik, "Half-God's Plenty: The Drama of Asif Currimbhoy." in Studies in Indian English Literature (Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1987), p.121.
33. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "The Dramatic Art of Asif Currimbhoy" in K. K. Sharma (ed.), Indo-English Literature: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 254.
34. Faubion Bowers, "Introduction" to Asif Currimbhoy's Plays, p. xii.
35. Quoted in P. Bayapa Reddy, Studies in Indian Writing in English: with a focus on Indian English Drama, p. 40.
36. In a letter to Asif Currimbhoy reproduced in the blurb of The Hungry Ones (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1992).
37. A.K. Bhatt, "A Theatre of Journalism", The Indian P.E.N. Vol. 40, No. 12 (Dec. 1974), pp. 2-3.
38. M.K. Naik, Dimensions of Indian English Literature (Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1984), p.157.
39. P. Bayapa Reddy, The Plays of Asif Currimbhoy, p.158.
40. A.K. Bhatt, "A Theatre of Journalism", The Indian P.E.N., p. 4.
41. Rajinder Paul and Paul Jacob, "Asif Currimbhoy Interviewed", Enact No. 48.

CHAPTER II

VICTIMS OF SURVIVAL? - GOA

In Goa (1964) Asif Currimbhoy attempts to explore the psychology of colonialism and the imperial conquest. Is the coloniser as much a victim as the colonised? Is the liberator who resorts to violence as the means to effect change also the aggressor? Is the coloniser - colonised relationship a clearly demarcated dominating - dominated relationship or one of ambivalence and inter-dependence? Does colonialism carry within itself the seeds of decolonization? In the colonial interaction is the birth of the colonial hybrid as inevitable as its fragile and sometimes temporary life? Currimbhoy speculates on these questions in the play, an allegorical love story retelling the story of the colonization and liberation of Goa from Portuguese rule, which functions as a metaphor for the struggle that informs the history of mankind: the need for liberty and freedom, the desire for power, the use of violence, the struggle for survival and the salvaging of fractured identities in the period of post - colonial self-definition. In the stifling stillness of the colonised world of Rose who in the play represents Goa, is an agonised articulation of the indictment of a culture. The play thus translates itself into a language of cultural

questioning of lost and new forged identities and the possibilities of the birth of a cultural schizophrenia. The play is ultimately about colonization and decolonization, of land and more importantly of mind, for, "colonization is first of all a matter of consciousness and needs to be defeated ultimately in the minds of men."¹

First performed in India at the Centre for the Performing Arts at New Delhi in 1970, Goa a tragic love story revolving around the motives, feelings and actions of the central characters Rose, Senhora Miranda and Krishna, is an allegory of colonial interaction in the Portuguese colony of Goa and the invasion of Goa by Indian troops on December 18th 1961, leading to its liberation from colonial tutelage. Operating simultaneously at the level of the private individual destiny and the collective destiny, the play constantly reiterates the point that "Rose is Goa. Goa is Rose."² The play is about invasion leading to liberation, the path to freedom from colonial tutelage and control streaked with pain and violence. Freedom and bondage whether a person or a state is all a question of losing and finding oneself. Pain and tragedy are the result of the tendency to transgress boundaries, Senhora's "point of equalization" (Plays, p.32). It comes, perhaps inevitably from a lack of awareness of the danger within us, not necessarily without. The play also concerns itself with

the idea of aggression and invasion as the outcome of the potential within us, with the least provocation from outside. The known-unknown range of human nature, the play of opposites inherent in human nature, the potential invader and victim in each of us are also issues Goa lays its scrutiny on.

Goa is thus a metaphor for the loss and recovery of self. It exemplifies the fact that freedom can be won at a price and in the process one can lose what one was looking for; freedom and violence have almost always allied themselves.

The plot unfolds a history of Goa, under imperial rule, its invasion by Indian troops and its aftermath. Rose is introduced as a young girl, "dark-looking and about fourteen with a beautiful innocent face and a strange voice," (Plays, p.8) all the more strange since it's rarely heard. Her mother Senhora Miranda represents Goa which is totally Portugalized, thereby she represents the coloniser. Articulating the coloniser's desire for control and also a fear of the loss of that control, Senhora who is a prostitute engages herself in the task of keeping both Alphonso, the typical Portuguese beachcomber type and Krishna, the dark skinned outsider representing India interested in her by offering Rose, her daughter as a bait.

By her clever strategy she successfully thwarts Krishna's plans of wooing Rose with his 'pure and innocent love'. While Alphonso desires Rose, Krishna hopes to free Rose from Senhora's stranglehold and be united with her in love. A fall-out of her cunning machinations is the murder of Alphonso, and the rape of Rose by Krishna, committed in a state of fury and desperation. In the aftermath of the rape, suggestive of the invasion of Goa by the Indian army, there is only darkness and despair. Rose, now reduced to a whore like her mother, however, takes her first step towards an assertion of her selfhood by rejecting Krishna who desires to relive the past rather than face the painful present.

The action of the play commences sometime before the liberation of Goa; it deals with the various events and factors leading to the invasion and the events in its aftermath. The entire action is centered around the patio, a large square representing perhaps the village square, which therefore forms the centre of the stage and is surrounded on three sides by the Taverna, the church, and the trellis balcony of the house of Senhora Miranda. Viewed in the context of the colonial encounter in the play, the patio assumes great significance. It symbolizes the 'colonial space', the construction and handiwork of the

imperial powers in Goa. The imperial strategy of domination and indoctrination is suggested in the arrangement of the Taverna, the church and Senhora's house around the patio, representing the different areas of domination and the apparatus for sustaining these interests and their nexus within the colonial bureaucracy. "To colonize meant at first-the identification-indeed, the creation of - interests; these could be commercial, communicational, religious, military, cultural."³ The patio represents the colonial terrain and stage for the coloniser to project his constructed image or role as missionary, guardian and protector concealing his project of control and exploitation. As motivated and deliberate as Senhora Miranda's patio walk, the coloniser's 'role-play' camouflages a history of colonialist expropriation, material exploitation and class and race oppression behind a theory of progress.⁴ Underlying the patio scenes revealing a cultural overlapping, is a complex process of cultural hybridization which has its historical roots in the phenomena of colonialism. While the patio represents the psycho-social space within which the two cultures intersect, interact and subtly confront, the action within Senhora's house gives an inside view of the power equations between coloniser and colonised and the outsider Krishna. It also sheds the veil off the displayed image of the coloniser.

With Rose to the most part of the play being confined to the upper portions of the house and making her appearance on stage only on command, the play reveals that the sharing of space within the home is not done on the basis of mutual respect but on control and coercion.

The relationship between Senhora and Rose is dominated by what Paulo Friere calls, 'the culture of silence'. It "presupposes on analysis of dependence as a relational phenomena, which gives rise to different forms of being, of thinking of expression those of the cultures of silence and those of the culture which has a voice. The dependent society is by definition a silent society. Its voice is not an authentic voice but merely an echo of the voice of the metropolis in every way: the metropolis speaks, the dependent society listens. The silence of the object society in relation to the director society is repeated in the relationship within the object society itself. Its power elites, silent in the face of the metropolis, silence their own people in turn."⁵ Rose has very little to say in Senhora's presence. Not only is she mute, she sees only what she is allowed to see and speaks only under Senhora's command, merely echoing her words and thoughts. Her congenital handicap deafens her to the sounds and rumblings of the power games and conflict between Senhora, Alphonso and Krishna. Caught in the crossfire between them, she is a

helpless spectator, pawn and victim. Senhora's deliberate manipulation of her walk, taking care to walk behind Rose when verbally confronting and challenging Krishna to a duel of power and strength is suggestive of the imperial powers' strategy of concealing their deep seated motives of imperial conquest under a veneer of altruistic motives. The relationship of Senhora and Rose suggests the psychic subordination implicit in the history of colonial encounter, the strategies of domination, manipulation, and exploitation which informs the colonial project and the construction of its regime of truth.

To the extent that Rose is aware of only the sponsored 'truth', the constructed reality, her claim that:

But when it's light I know for I can then see
myself in other people's faces... I can see...
what I must be saying to them for they can
hear.... (Plays, p.9)

is that much less authentic. The implicit meaning is that Rose has perhaps always been kept in the dark, it is also significant that her brief meetings with Krishna are always at nightfall.

Senhora's almost hypnotic influence over Rose is tellingly portrayed in the dual scenes where at Senhora's behest, Rose tells Alphonso and later, Krishna to leave the

house. Her articulation of Senhora's command is thus presented: "At first Rose's mouth quivers, then it catches the vowels of her mother's mouth like the young. Gradually it becomes articulate... Her mother nods her head, like instructions to a child." (Plays, p. 34)

It is in their relationship that Senhora unleashes the violence of subjugation, subordination and control. By her maintenance of a state of oppression, "... colonial encounter becomes domesticated into the familiarity of everyday facticity, so that terror becomes the norm rather than the exception."⁶ As for instance, "Rose cannot see all, nor hear anything, but she guesses intuitively, claps her hands before her eyes, her ears, her face, pathetically, moaning slightly like some dumb animal, who not being able to stand the torture, dashes away..." (Plays, p.34). Rose's deafness is neither congenital nor accidental as Senhora contends. It is a deliberate act by Senhora to reach her point of equalization, an euphemism for a relationship of control and domination, with Rose. It is colonial domination that similarly silences Rose's voice and frames her in colonial imprisonment, to the extent that her movements within the house are also a part of Senhora's grand plan.

Rose's collaboration in the strategies of Senhora is emblematic not so much of an absence of conflict, but the

terrifying absence of choice in the operations of colonialism. Rose is born as a result of the rape of Senhora by a dark-coloured stranger. The birth of Rose, "She came from my womb. Dark and bloody as the night when she was conceived. Oh, the pain; the dreadful pain. They say it should give rise to love when it's cut out from your own flesh. But the colour is different. A constant reminder..." (Plays p. 26), only manifests the illegitimacy of possession, the play ultimately being about cultural possession and dispossession.

Rose, a child fourteen years of age and a constant reminder of Senhora's past innocence and pain is also a metaphor for loss of identity on account of oppression and violence. The homology between an adult-child and coloniser-colonised relationship used by colonialism⁷ can be applied to the relationship between Senhora and Rose, only to seek parallels and not as a justification. Currimbhoy does not attempt to append any notions of hierarchy, of superiority and inferiority, to their relationship. On the contrary, the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is a relationship of interdependence, thereby contracting the conceptual distance between the two. The play supports the idea that the coloniser and colonised cannot be viewed as two separate factors, as totally

autonomous entities inhabiting a shared space. Instead, as seen in the experience of Goa, the colonial interaction alters them both. Besides a certain measure of internalization is only but inevitable. Yet there is a definite tendency to maintain their original identities which accounts for the conflict in the colonial arena. This dual response to a relationship of complex interdependence yet desiring independence accounts for the ambivalence of response and attitudes towards each other. It is exemplified in Senhora's ambivalent feelings towards Rose, who at one and the same time reminds her of past innocence and the loss of that innocence on a dark bloody night.

Senhora tutors Rose thus: "I speak softly but you don't need sound. You only need me. Understand? (Rose nods her head like one hypnotised. Krishna shifts uneasily)" (Plays, p.34). O.Mannoni observes, "Colonial society, however gives the dependent society nothing but his dependence."⁸ However, in course of time, the colonised transfer to their coloniser the feelings of dependence the prototype of which is seen in the affective bond between mother and daughter in the play. The impoverishment of Rose is complete when after her rape she attempts to blot out her identity, she doesn't see, hear or speak. To come into her own, Rose has to face reality and redefine her identity. Senhora teaches Rose to identify with her. Bound in a dyadic relationship, Senhora

too identifies with Rose, to thus extent that she too is torn by pain on account of the rape of Rose.

One moment he was offering a rose with the beauty and simplicity of young lovers; the next he was monstrous and horrible, fertilizing madness, while the blood oozed... (Her voice going up shrilly) in the rape, tore through me twice... twice in one lifetime. (Plays. p. 64)

In the relationship between Senhora and Rose is projected the ambivalence inherent in the colonial situation, the ambivalence of feeling between the colonised and the coloniser, and the psychological phenomena of fear, conflict, dependence and exploitation, that govern the relationship between them.

Ashis Nandy comments on colonialism's "frequent use of childhood as a design of cultural and political immaturity or, it comes to the same thing, inferiority".⁹ Senhora creates a situation which requires unconditional obedience to her authority and legitimises the violence of control as necessary protection for a desired goal. Thus, to the coloniser, the metaphor of childhood operates as a justification for exploitation. Senhora's remembrance of past innocence is linked to Rose's innocence as a child, thus childhood also serves as a symbol for a lost utopia: "To feel new and strange and different. Secret to the touch, violent too, yet tender. It comes from freshness and

innocence." (Plays p.20). The repression of the child under the guise of protection is therefore a device used to blot out memories of the past - the memories of Senhora's rape and the consequent prostitution of her self-identity. Repression within is transformed into repression without, under a garb of legitimacy.

In Senhora are revealed shades of both the coloniser and colonised. Having internalised the coloniser's code, she is both the seductress and violated woman. The burden of internalised violation transform the woman into the violator, into the destructive and dominating power that pours its vengeance on Rose. Representing the accumulation of violence by the colonised, she literally becomes the violence. It is difficult to draw the line between Senhora's collusion with and confinement in the colonization of the land. Yet the play sufficiently implicates her in the power structures of colonialism.

Senhora's aping of the coloniser's methods betrays another facet of her own colonised status, where the colonised identifies 'dignity' with "resemblance to the oppressor"¹⁰ Through her desire to model herself on her oppressor, Senhora eventually becomes one herself. She represents Goa which had merged its identity with the imperial power Portugal.

Senhora's love of everything Portuguese and contempt of the locals is a typical colonial stance, rather, an attitude perhaps given currency by the colonial powers. The Senhora-Alphonso relationship is based on mutual benefit; while Senhora's desire to escape to Portugal can be actualised only through Alphonso, Rose as Alphonso's final goal sustains Alphonso's interest in Senhora. Torn between her dreams and reality, her past and present, Senhora reveals the basic contradictions in her nature- her desire for innocence and her role as whore and seductress, her love for Portugal and her possessiveness about Goa, her claims that "My love (for Rose) is tender" (Plays, p. 26) and her brutal control over her, her professing love to Alphonso and her bitter judgment of him

Oh, have I offended your inherent Portuguese nature? You are not used to these kinds of tortures are you? You're full of sensibilities, you damned Portuguese. Don't give me that about loving Goa and all. I know what goes on.. and on.. and on... (Plays, p. 27)

It is her need to break away from her past that transforms itself into a sadistic pleasure of raking up the issue of Rose's parentage. By doing so, she seeks catharsis from it. While she represents the spirit of Goa which had been raped by colonial domination, she also manifests in her behaviour the coloniser's role in Goa, evident in her snobbish disdain

for the locals the Goans, her notions of hierarchy and 'point of equalization' thereby, projecting the racist world view and ethnocentrism that underlies colonialism. In Senhora's aspirations to be more Portuguese than the Portuguese, the coloniser's racial and socio-cultural discriminatory policy is underlined. Her contempt for the locals also reveals her aggressive rejection of reminders of her own deficiencies, her loss of innocence and the accompanying trauma. It also sharpens the pain of desire to be fresh and innocent again like Rose. "Now you know why I don't like coloured people. They make me feel dirty". (Plays, p.25).

By internalising the colonial policy of her oppressor, Senhora, is a victim who becomes a willing collaborator in the oppressive rule. The colonial woman in her thus becomes the feminine counter-part of Prospero.¹¹ Her intuitive awareness of Krishna's potential for violence and hate is an unconscious admittance of her own oppressive rule. Her eagerness for an informal relationship with Krishna stems basically from her desire to control both Alphonso and Rose. Besides, she realizes, "it would be interesting, wouldn't it... to be occupied instead of... available... with more strings..." (Plays. p30). In offering Rose as a bait to keep Alphonso and Krishna under her control, Senhora triggers off

a confrontation between them over the question of legitimacy and rights precipitating the murder of Alphonso by Krishna.

Thus, though Senhora's aggressiveness is obliquely linked to her shame, it more significantly symbolises the colonisers' fear of loss of control and power, to which their own sense of meaning and identity are attached. Their dependence on this 'colonial factor' suggests that the colonisers' sense of security and identity is linked to the colonised's perception of them. The play highlights the dependence of the coloniser on the 'colonial factor'. However playing a role has its accompanying burdens too. As Senhora admits, "I hate it here, I dread having to cross that patio. Day in and night out, like something predatory." (Plays, p 18). The coloniser's fear of the colonised and of the 'outsider' to the patio, by extension, any potential opponent, is an externalization of the coloniser's fear of his own self, of his role as oppressor. Krishna tells Senhora, "What you fear is only yourself, Maria... It comes from within from the darkest recesses of your own soul... From all you want to hide about your real self, from all you want to tear out of others". (Plays p.44). What Senhora wants to tear out of others is what she sees within herself too; at the same time she also desires to tear out of others what she has lost. As Krishna points out, "So you, Maria, not I, started the game.

Dangled Rose before us, not through competition for you, but for her. Made us whore with you, not for yourself, but for her. Used us, not to rape one who had already been raped, but to rape one who had not been raped!" (Plays,p.55).

Caught in the vortex of hate and guilt, Senhora is a victim of her own self. Hatred too, after all, is a form of bondage. Thus, Senhora too needs to be liberated. Through her power tactics, she initiates a chain of events that lead to the final tragedy of Goa in the rape of Rose, and account for her own further degeneration. She creates a society of confrontation, violence, political and cultural coalitions which subjugate its colonised members. Her desire to feel like Rose conceals her desire to make Rose feel like her, she therefore acts in collusion with Krishna who eventually rapes Rose. By stressing the continuum between oppressor and oppressed, the play reveals the consequent degeneration and impoverishment of the characters concerned who are caught within their own actions: Senhora bereft of peace and tranquillity at the conclusion of the play, shows visible signs of guilt:

Above all, she's a virgin, Sir - I should know I was there, I was there when her innocence was born. You see, I taught her to be innocent, to fear the touch, to be afraid of peace, to have horror of love. Isn't that what a mother should do to equalize her love? She's not a whore. Sir, I am that but not her. She is Rose, and Rose is Goa, and Goa is Rose. (Plays, p 65)

By stressing the continuum between oppressor and oppressed, the play reiterates the point that ultimately the so-called victors are also the vanquished. In the death of Alphonso, the killing of Krishna and the pain of Senhora is testified the fact that, the "oppressors are the ultimate victims of their own systems of violence."¹²

But my heart is full of love: the more for you are unknown to me and I would love.. this secrecy.. were it not for the absolute dread of this loneliness in the dark when I can no longer see your lips and know not whether I whisper or shout in this stifling stillness... (Plays, p 9)

Echoing against the stillness of the night is this poignant plea of Rose, and her offer of conditional love to the stranger in the night. It reverberates with the underlying desire to see her own self with clarity, a desire controlled and muffled by Senhora. Her request for distance from Krishna with no semblance of intimacy, except the intimacy of silent understanding, is grounded in her indoctrination by Senhora: "You see, I taught her to be innocent, to fear the touch to be afraid of peace, to have horror of love." (Plays, p.63). It also indicates Rose's inclination to ward off the reality of her fate; distancing thereby becomes a psychologically comforting device. Rose is thus the carrier of a culture which is politically and socially vulnerable. And in the interaction of the cultures it is the dominant culture which controls the process of interaction and one-sided dialogue, thereby giving birth to

a mute, low-keyed culture. In Rose's mute survival, is represented the loss of political and cultural selfhood of the colonised. Projecting an image as Rose's protector warding off any threat to her deliberately insulated cultural identity, Senhora forces Rose to adjust to the norms of the dominant culture.

By precipitating the submerged conflict between the two, Krishna desires to free and liberate Goa from, "the institutionalised violence which used the metaphor of childhood and the doctrine of progress as spelt out in the dominant post - medieval concept of history."¹³ As Krishna realizes, it is only by appeasing Senhora that he can acquire Rose. Senhora warns him suitably thus: "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..." (Plays, pp.33-34). It is Senhora's condition of "I come first, Krishna or else you go..." (Plays, p.34), that results in her reaching the point of equalization with him, in other words, blemishing his pure love for Rose by seducing him. Taking the long patio walk alone towards Senhora, Krishna is little but Senhora's "victim of survival" (Plays, p 36).

"Everything you say sounds like an expediency, like bringing in an outsider. Like an unnatural alliance" (Plays, p. 38). Krishna the outsider to the patio acts as the catalytic element precipitating change in the hope of altering the existing power equations and dynamics of control. However the violence of his actions, the murder of Alphonso and the rape of Rose leaves Goa liberated but badly scarred. The outsider does expedite the process of liberation but the traumatic experience of being forcibly liberated, though viewed by the Goan nationalist in the play, as inevitable, is a violation of Rose's self dignity and innocence.

To Krishna, Rose is an alien to herself. Being caged within the colonial grid of domination, results in her losing touch with herself, and her identity, like her voice, is reduced to a memory of what once was - "Like I'm a stranger, she is not like she is" (Plays, p 32). Having waited with patience, and understanding for long, hoping to be united in love with Rose, Krishna's determination to liberate Goa conflicts with Senhora's machinations to neither let him leave her nor secure Rose. Krishna's act of raping Rose strikes the death-knell for their relationship and highlights the fragility of their love. It also parallels India's act of liberating Goa from Portuguese rule.

In the confrontation between Krishna and Senhora, it is Rose who is victimised. Senhora's words come to mind - "Dark you are Krishna darker your thoughts are too, inspite of the light which you claim to shed on her..." (Plays, p.33). Rose is eventually reduced to the status of sacrificial victim. She is thus the imprisoned victim, a picture of the conventional image of woman - dependent, helpless and requiring only domination, be it by Senhora or Krishna. However, in her final act, one of self-assertion she surfaces from her position as victim and asserts her autonomous identity. A feminist reading makes it analogous to a woman's emancipation from oppression and control, a refusal to be psychologically hemmed in by conventional notions and images of the 'feminine'.

A victim of his own self, Krishna is shocked by the knowledge that he too can oppress. The play calls for a re-examination of image and reality, of a deeper awareness of the play of opposites within oneself. Senhora's query, "How far... are you conscious of everything within you, Krishna?" (Plays, p.43) leaves a lot unsaid than said. Confronted by his tarnished and fallen self, Krishna despairs:

For this heat within me drives me further wanting to drain the last vestige of purity in a revival of innocence where nothing ever mattered any more... than... to go deeper and deeper... beyond sanity... even if necessary into its deepest horror (Plays, p. 66).

However cherishing his former innocent self, like "scavengers who chew on tarnished bones" (Plays, p.66), is not to be. Krishna faces rejection by Rose, who is now eager to assert herself.

Caught in the vortex of violence and terror, the protagonists of the play lose themselves and are transformed. The pain and gloom that descends over Goa in the aftermath of its invasion by Indian troops, the pain of loss and the trauma of survival which is the common burden of Krishna, Senhora and Rose, bears testimony to the dehumanising effects of colonialism and violence.

The play follows a pattern of oppression and counter oppression, violence and counter-violence. The potential for violence in Senhora and Krishna is triggered by their subjugation by control, deceit and violence, as in Senhore's rape by a stranger and Krishna's seduction by Senhora. It is the violence done to Rose that compels her to kill Krishna in an act of self-defence. The outer violence also becomes the only means of making a break with a part of one's self. Violence, though not the best solution, is viewed to be inevitable and natural in the course of events. Perhaps herein lies the answer to the pattern of violence in human history, in the movement of humanity up to its self-fulfillment. Frantz Fanon's interpretation of violence

suggests that it results from an internalization of the oppressor. Fanon proposes an "exorcism in which the ghost outside has to be finally confronted in violence for it carries the burden of the ghost within."¹⁴

The pattern of violence and counter-violence in history testifies to its operation in a vicious circle. In the conflict between India and Portugal, it is Goa who is trampled upon and left to come to terms with her battered self and the resultant trauma. Her killing of Krishna is thus an act of self-preservation:

Those who have been crushed manage, to regain their self-esteem only by violence against him, who has so to speak, deprived them of their being. Otherwise they will turn their violence against themselves and will hate themselves by hating others.¹⁵

While Rose kills Krishna in an attempt to salvage the remnants of her torn self, Senhora's colonial conquests reveal her desire for a revival of her past self-esteem which is submerged beneath her hatred of the local people and her harsh treatment of Rose. As Senhora sums up, "Aren't we after all victims of survival?" (Plays, p 36). By her project of exploitation and oppression, Senhora lends credibility to the argument that "...the colonisers are at least as much affected by the ideology of colonialism, that their degradation too, can sometimes be terrifying."¹⁶

Senhora and Krishna too like Rose are captives all, and desirous of their liberation. While Senhora represents the tyrannical coloniser, Krishna is transformed from being an outsider, calm, peaceful and full of love into a violent, hard and inhuman oppressor who takes his revenge on Senhora by raping Rose. It is in the course of the power games Senhora and Krishna play, that they are totally brutalised; colonialism "works to decivilize the coloniser, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word".¹⁷

In the context of the play, rape operates as the central symbol for oppression and forcible possession, of land, mind and body.¹⁸ The play operates within the paradigm of colonialism as rape, and the colonised as feminine, where the fate of the colonised body in a colonial configuration is a forced ravishment and possession of its land/self, thus accounting for the loss of freedom, dignity and privacy.

Feminist criticism sees an analogy between political and sexual colonialism in that both are relationships of exploitation. The disempowerment of both groups-economic, political and socio-cultural results in a psychic impoverishment and a relationship of dependence thus resulting in what Sheila Rowbotham refers to as "economic dependence", "cultural takeover" and "the identification of

dignity with resemblance to the oppressor,¹⁹ these being some of the similarities that exist between the colonization of a land and the oppression of women. Rape only highlights the imbalance of power between the sexes and reinforces the thesis that women's lives constitute an experience of colonialism with the male seeking to possess a feminized territory. Ashis Nandy observes that Western colonialism invariably used the homology between sexual and political dominance and internalised the idea of colonial rule as a manly prerogative.²⁰

In the play, Senhora's loss of innocence and her assumed role as a whore symbolises the prostitution of her dignity and self respect to and by the Portuguese. She is reduced to the role of a mistress who satisfies the carnal appetite of her customers. The poignancy of such a role is emphasised in Senhore's testimonial for the efficiency of Rose, in satisfying her clients.

There she is, Sir. Do you approve? I've taught her everything I know. It was almost like teaching, myself over again. It took a bit of help, of course. A bit of remembering too. But she's a fine girl. She's like me, though we may see opposite. She does everything the customer wants everything. (Plays, p 64)

While the rape of Senhora and Rose can be viewed as operating within the colonised as feminine paradigm suggesting the political and socio-economic dominance

symbolised in the dominance of men over women, Senhora's act of whoring Krishna's love signifies her dominance over Krishna; it is an act of aggression which however stems from fear of loss of possession and control. Thus in the play violence is countered by violence, rape by seduction and oppression by counter oppression.

Goa enacts the story of colonial encounter and interaction of two cultures yoked together by violence and the commonality of loss, thus dissolving the binarism between coloniser and colonised. It can also be interpreted as "an enactment of a cultural unrecognizability as to what may constitute the marginal or the centre."²¹ The play points out that in any conflict where violence is the agent of domination and liberation, there are no victors. Besides the occasional profit and loss, any cultural encounter imbued with the seeds of oppression and control eventually leaves both sides impoverished. The polarity of periphery and centre is dissolved as the colonised and coloniser are viewed as subjects of the 'colonial space'. There is no binary rigidity between their worlds. They are co-inhabitant's of an indivisible world.

Ashis Nandy comments, "...freedom is indivisible, not only in the popular sense that the oppressed of the world are one, but also in the unpopular sense that the oppressor

too is caught in the culture of oppression."²² Absolute freedom is non-existent, the victor too is after all, a victim of bondage. The Mahabharata says, "Alas, having defeated the enemy, we have ourselves been defeated...The.. defeated have become victorious... Misery appears like prosperity and prosperity looks like misery. This our victory is turned into defeat."²³ In the colonial interaction the coloniser and colonised are bound in a dyadic relationship. It results in the birth of a colonial hybrid, thus further binding the two in a relationship of interdependence. The intimacies of colonialism are thereby translated into the cultural and social peculiarity represented by the social space in which the hybrid sustains itself. However as the play demonstrates, the cultural hybrid is defective and short-lived as a result of the curious imbalance and the inner compulsions which brings about the inevitable break from each other. "Thus the problem of colonialism included not only the interrelations of objective historical conditions but also human attitudes towards these conditions."²⁴ The trauma resulting from the violent, yet inevitable, breaking away cannot be neatly partitioned between the coloniser and colonised. It informs the lives and destinies of everyone concerned as the play, going beyond any conventional interpretation of the confrontation between a dominating and dominated culture,

exemplifies.

The colonial hybrid born as a result of the interaction on the colonial terrain is as beautiful and fragile as the 'froth on the beer shining in the sun' (Plays, p.13) short-lived, yet beautiful while it lasts. The precarious vulnerability of the colonial hybrid is aptly symbolised in the fragile innocence of Rose and the moments of fraternity shared by the Goan nationalist and the Portuguese administrator. As the Portuguese administrator observes, the hybrid culture born as a result of intimate interaction has made them a part and parcel of each other's lives. They are "on different sides of the fence and yet have so much in common with each other." (Plays, p 38)

The Portuguese claim that Goa means more than just a political conquest to them:

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... a... Nationalist insists we made this into a... colony... instead of a small part of part of Portugal. (Takes a gulp of beer looking across to the Nationalist continues to talk in soliloquy - it is apparent through play of lights that his speech is reflective of his thought process and cannot be heard by others on the patio). Then what even if we did? We feel the same way about Goa, despite our political differences... Goa... Goa... this is Goa, my own, nestling amidst green hills and valleys, the rice fields and rivers that make this paradisaal land... (Plays, p. 9)

Yet this very own Goa will have to lose its innocence on its way to freedom and selfhood. As Senhora observes, "Time may come when she's no different from me. Only I'm fair and she's dark " (Plays, p. 25). Breaking away is inevitable and much desired, even if it means acting in collusion with an outsider. The Goan Nationalist articulates the desire of the people:

there's nothing... nothing... you can do to stop the basic desire. You could float this enclave in milk and honey and yet we would want for ourselves that abstraction with all our hearts, and nobody, no-one will ever be able to stop us, even though we may be ruthless to ourselves and others in getting it. And if freedom cannot be won alone, I'd be willing to join the devil himself to get it. (Plays, p 38)

The colonial condition thus produces a proleptic understanding of the inevitability of self-assertion and liberation, and the situatedness of nationalism in the colonial encounter. It encompasses all the permutations of what friendship may be within the context of empire and further anticipates the necessary realization of desired goals that impels the text's conclusion.

The patio as a point of cultural contact is, "...a peculiar meeting point... of cultures and religions... of different political attitudes..." (Plays, p 12). Yet there is a curious imbalance to it, which is manifested as cracks beneath the surface amity and gaiety of the patio 'scenes'.

It accounts for the absence of a long-lasting friendship within the parameters of colonial exchange and by implication exploitation: "I sometimes get the feeling that this curious imbalance... cannot last, beautiful though it is." (Plays, p 12). The peculiar meeting point is evinced in the relationship between the Portuguese administrator and the Goan Nationalist who can share a drink of beer over animated arguments which reveal their political differences. However, the Goan nationalist does not envisage an unchanging, eternal Goa, "unchanging and attractive, as an eternally integral part of the empire."²⁵ In the coloniser's admittance of an imbalance is the articulation of the acquisition of power and perhaps an anticipation of the transfer of power too, thereby emphasising the precariousness of power.

The imbalance is inherent in the superimposition of one culture over another in the Portugalization of Goa, in the construction of the church over the temple, which though vindicating the coloniser's missionary role camouflages the politics of power. To the colonisers the civilising mission provides the ameliorative motive and self-righteous justification for colonial intervention. The tripartite nexus between the church, the Taverna and Senhora in consolidating and sustaining the colonial space, which indicates the theatrical space of the coloniser, suggests

the multi-pronged imperial project, highlighting religion and culture as areas and instruments of domination and control. In the purposeful arrangement, is represented the nexus between what C.F. Andrews calls "Capitalism, Imperialism and Christianity."²⁶

The encounter between Kipling's 'twain' underlines a complex cultural hegemony as seen in the relationship between Senhora and Rose and in the indoctrinated responses of the benchwatchers who represent the people of Goa. It is also evident in the smuggler's claim to being smart, rich and fashionable, by analogy, thoroughly Portuguese:

Ah, but look at my clothes; the latest striped shirt from Portugal, and pointed black shoes that set me up as the first in fashions in old-fashioned Goa... I came from the fields and wore a loin cloth. But I was smart. I can now speak Portuguese like the Portuguese, not the locals. Yet I am more nationalist than the nationalist. I worship the Church from inside and the temple from outside. So now I am filthy...rich! (Plays, p.15).

The smuggler with his ostensible mobility and cultural dexterity is more than aware of the colonial framework within which he must operate. The smuggler is thus a representative product of the culture sustained on the colonial terrain, the defective cultural hybrid where underlying the 'civilizing' roles, pimp, smuggler and publican from a nexus to appropriate power and exploit the local people thereby operating like the smuggler - as

commission agents. To the smuggler and Senhora, exploiting the colony is just a business like any other, in which they seek to perpetuate the conditions which are advantageous to them and resist changes which would disempower them. Once a colonial situation has been established, it can be exploited profitably. However, the coloniser too is part and parcel of the colonial situation, thereby inevitably falling within the circle of exploitation he creates and sustains. It is thus the imperialist's policy resulting in a dislocation of identity and deprivation of human dignity for the colonised, that accounts for the imbalance on the patio which represents the site upon which the drama of colonial complicity is enacted.

The imbalance stems from the real motives and submerged desires of the coloniser and colonised alike - the Portuguese project of exploitation under a programme of progress and the Goans' desire for freedom submerged beneath their fear and respect for the coloniser seen in their 'genuine' hellos to Alphonso. Juxtaposed with the gaiety and camaraderie displayed at the patio is the Goans' feeling of hurt and anger at their subjugation and exploitation and a deep yearning for liberation, for as the Goan nationalist says, "there is a breaking point to all patience." (Plays, p.37)

Juxtaposed with a reckoning of the inevitability of change is a strong note of nostalgia for the past, "... the meetings here were always loud and lively, but with the advent of freedom of speech (after liberation) they have become violent and vociferous" (Plays, p.3), a nostalgia for the paradisaical land of Goa prior to the liberation, an evocation of the ambience and romance of life in Goa with its church feasts, the village band, the taverna with its capito of finim and urraca, the animated meetings at the village square and the noise and bustle, scents and smells of the marketplace. Yet as Big Mac, the expatriate garden manager in Darjeeling Tea? (1971) realizes, change however painful is inevitable. Dejection and reminiscence is the mood which sets in as Big Mac confronts the ground realities of the change in authority, from the old colonisers like Big Hugh and himself to the new pioneers, the brown sahib Bunty. Like Yassin in The Refugee (1971) he realizes that "Man really has little choice in life. He is often forced into a situation...where there is no way out... A decision, an action... gets destined, almost involuntarily."²⁷

In the context of the play, the inevitability of change is the inevitability of colonial disempowerment as a result of "the increasing unrest which would culminate in decolonization and independence."²⁸ At an individual level the desire for freedom and independence is mirrored in

Henry, the protagonist in The Clock (1959) who desires release from society-sponsored obligations and commitments.

He soliloquizes thus:

All I want out of life is the right to live as I choose. Is that asking for too much? I don't want to be bullied and I don't want to play second fiddle. Somehow it's always been a fight because I happened to be the underdog everytime... and now I'm tired.²⁹

Rose too at the conclusion of the play is tired, she therefore decides to act on her own. The desire to be oneself, to seek one's own identity, is the basic desire which, having been obscured by hundreds of years of foreign domination, asserts itself with calamity in the course of the play's action. The process of decolonization begins when the colonized develop a sense of historical consciousness from which a distinct identity is shaped. It is at the stage of heightened consciousness that Krishna, the 'outsider' in the play, acts as the catalyst in the movement towards liberation. In the process, the violence and struggle leaves Goa badly scarred, a fate similar to that of Bangladesh in Sonar Banqla (1972), where the nation conceptualised as a mother fettered by alien rule, is pain and trauma-scarred at the end of her journey towards self-fulfillment and liberation. In both instances however, the process is seen as inevitable.

It is ironical that in the process of decolonization Rose rejects her so-called liberator. Tired of being trampled upon, she rejects Krishna's terms of intimacy. The play also testifies to the fact that the attempt to retrieve the past is near impossible; Goa in its pain riddled path to freedom is thus transformed. Post-colonial identity does not necessarily imply the reconstitution of pre-colonial reality. Implicit in the tragedy is a cultural perception of the essential temporality of the colonial hybrid in a state of coercive control. Though it is not easy to wipe out the scars of this man-made suffering and smoothly glide over the past, the play subtly recognizes the fact that the process of renewal too is a part of the chain of events to be.

Liberation too, like decolonization is a process that has to begin from within. Frantz Fanon notes, "Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men ... the thing which has been colonised becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself"³⁰ A shadow of their original selves, the initial impulse of Senhora, Krishna and Rose is to blot out their senses in an attempt to forget; reality however, impinges painfully on them. While Senhora is condemned to live with the burden of guilt, Rose is forced to come to terms with her battered self. Unable to neither face nor lose himself, Krishna dies at the hands of Rose. The play's conclusion suggests that true liberation

comes from facing oneself, from tearing off the blind fold around one's eyes and finding one's peace within oneself. Human consciousness is thus the arena where liberation must first and last be sought, where the battle against oneself must ultimately be fought.

NOTES

1. Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.63.
2. Asif Currimbhoy, Plays (Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1972) p.25. All future references to the text will be sourced as Plays.
3. Edward W. Said, Orientalism (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p.100.
4. Ashis Nandy, op.cit., p.12. Nandy discusses the West's conception of a homology between childhood, primitivism and colonial subjugation, "conceptualizing colonialism as a necessary step to progress and as a remedy for feudalism and... generally trying to fit the colonial experience within the mould of a doctrine of progress", p.12.
5. Santo Dutta, "A Collision of Class Cultures", Journal of Arts & Ideas (Number 22), April 1992.
6. Sara Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.112.
7. Ashis Nandy, Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.56-57.
8. O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, trans. Pamela Powesland (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956), p.195.
9. Ashis Nandy, op.cit., p.51.
10. Lois C. Gottlieb & Wendy Keitner, "Colonialism as Metaphor and Experience in 'The Grass is Singing' and 'Surfacing'" in C.D. Narasimhaiah (ed.), Awakened Conscience: Studies in Commonwealth Literature (Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1978), p.307.
11. O. Mannoni, op.cit., pp.97-109.
12. Ashis Nandy, Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness, p.29.
13. Ashis Nandy, op.cit., p.72.

14. Ashis Nandy, *op.cit.*, p.33.
15. Raymond Aron, History and the Dialectic of Violence, trans. Barry Cooper (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), p.215.
16. Ashis Nandy, Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness, p.35.
17. Aimé Césaire, quoted in Ashis Nandy, Traditions Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness, p.29.
18. Sara Suleri in The Rhetoric of English India (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.17, quotes Nehru, who described the colonization of the subcontinent thus: "They seized her body and possessed her, but it was a possession of violence. They did not know her or try to know her. They never looked into her eyes, for theirs were averted and hers cast down through shame and humiliation". (Jawaharlal Nehru, Towards Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, p.272).
19. Lois C. Gottlieb & Wendy Keitner, "Colonialism as Metaphor and Experience in 'The Grass is Singing' and 'Surfacing'" in C.D. Narasimhaiah (ed.), Awakened Conscience: Studies in Commonwealth Literature, p.307.
20. Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism, pp.4-5.
21. Sara Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India, p.2.
22. Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism, p.63.
23. The Mahabharata, trans. Manmatha Nath Dutt quoted in Ashis Nandy, Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness, p.20.
24. Frantz Fanon, Black Skin White Masks, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New Delhi:Grove Press, Inc., 1967), p.84.
25. Edward Said quoted in Sara Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India, p.128.
26. Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism, p.47.

27. Asif Currimbhoy, The Refugee in Plays (Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1972), p.229.
28. Edward Said quoted in Sara Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India, p.114.
29. Asif Currimbhoy, The Clock (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1993), p.17.
30. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.28.

CHAPTER III

THE IMPERIAL ANXIETY - MONSOON

Located in an island where the colonisers got 'squeezed out of this colony not long ago'¹, Monsoon (1965) explores the complexities in colonial-imperial relations and the psychological effects of colonizing on the imperial and colonial participants. The play's concern is also centered around the politics of power and the hegemonic activity that informs the post-colonial scenario of the island. Monsoon exposes the mesh of collusion and contradiction underlying the relations between the coloniser and colonised as they are locked in a perpetual relation of dominance and resistance. The revelation of these significant aspects of the colonial experience makes the play an absorbing study of the complex psychology of colonialism.

The play though set against the backdrop of a post-colonial period picks up the threads of left-over habits and weaves the tragic story of Andrew and Monsoon. While it seeks to explore the dynamics of colonial rule, it concludes that the pattern of control, fear, resistance and violence negates the possibility of any ultimate victors.

First produced in 1965 at the Dallas Theater Centre Monsoon is the harrowing tale of a white man who isolates

himself completely with a heathen child Monsoon in an attempt to educate her in terms of his own perspective of the Christian religion. Initially titled 'A Noah's Ark', it is a full length play in three acts set against the exotic backdrop of one of the tropical islands in the Malaysian archipelago. While the colonisers as a political force have left the island, some left-over habits of colonialism survive in people like Andrew, the educationist who stays on because he like it there. The play revolves around Andrew's project of educating a native child whom he rechristens Monsoon. To Andrew, who is fascinated by the idea of experimenting with life, this is his grandest project and holds, as he believes, the key to his own salvation. Appointing himself as Monsoon's guardian angel, Andrew initiates her into a study of the Bible, steadily nurturing the select stimuli required to condition her growth in their isolated world, the recreated world of the house-on-stilts, with Dr. Juan his friend as the sole link between the outside world and them. The impediment to the realization of his goal lies in his fear of the evil effects of Monsoon's grandmother's spell on him, or so he believes, and Monsoon's stubborn resistance to his teachings. In his desire to realize the immaculate conception in Monsoon he spurs into action events that "began to shape themselves in the form of destiny, coming in rapid sequence, like labour

pains - the curse of the old woman, the baptism of the virgin, the conception of the girl, the birth of the child, the rape of the whore." (Monsoon, p.142) Ultimately what is planned to be a Noah's Ark of regeneration for both, turns out to be a nightmarish experience of horror and futility - "His maddened subterfuges only entangle him more and more in fresh obliquities"² - and finally claims Andrew, Monsoon and their child as its victims.

The significant motifs in the play are of learning and unlearning, colonising and decolonising, masking and unmasking, controlling and being controlled, of experimenting and experiencing.

Unlike Dr. Juan's experience of love, "In the snow and sun, in the intimate warmth of the room, a precious and strange love, between two so different, that it became at once... mysterious" (Monsoon, p.4), the relationship between Andrew and Monsoon is underpinned with fear, conflict and violence. There is no mystique attached to their relationship, on the contrary it involves a struggle for survival and salvation, a tenacious holding on to one's beliefs and tradition, a desire to overwhelm and oppress and a determination to counter the cultural and psychological onslaught of the oppressor. The play understands the dynamics of colonialism as a dialogue between competing

cultural anxieties. Monsoon explores the dynamics of colonial interaction and suggests that the colonised too exercise an influence over their colonisers. The play supports the idea that the colonised need not be totally appropriated by their overwhelming alien rulers. The final comment by Dr. Juan on the possibility of Andrew's fears being partly imagined lends credibility to the location of cultural fear, misrepresentation and fallacies within a colonial situation. In the encounter between Andrew and Monsoon is represented the tension inherent in cultural and colonial interaction, which is manifested in the play in the opposition between rationality and instincts, learning and intuition, scientific analysis and native beliefs. The events in the play endorse the view that in the interaction between two cultures, neither is totally immune to the other, nevertheless, the possibility of one culture generating the 'vocabularies of dominance'³ exists.

While in the play the colonising presence is male and the colonised territory is represented as female⁴, Monsoon is no obscure native who converted to a new faith secures and cherishes her new name and new identity bestowed on her by her benevolent colonising master. In her, one sees none of the stereotypical colonial obsequiousness, on the contrary her resistance to the white man's learning is as powerful as the overwhelming monsoons which lash against the

island. In Andrew's attitude towards Monsoon and her grandmother is reflected the coloniser's attitude towards "his.. other the Orient as at bottom something either to be feared or to be controlled, as powerful and insinuating danger. "⁵ Andrew's ambivalent attitude towards the native traditions, charms, curses and fortune tellers indicates not just his fear of something he cannot fully comprehend, but also his crumbling resistance to the 'native' influence he is constantly exposed to, and ironically, voluntarily closets himself with in his 'constructed' world. Like the monsoons which his massive artefact the house-on-stilts with a massive wall surrounding it cannot keep out, what is natural will come to be, the play reveals. In a relationship of close interaction, voluntary or forced, to be at least partially influenced and affected by the other is only but inevitable. And therein lies the quintessence of the psychology of colonizing and decolonizing.

In Andrew's growing obsession with his 'experiment' and Monsoon's fear and tension is a vindication of the psychological contours of colonialism and its implications for the coloniser and colonised. The underlying links between the experiment and real living, establishes the deeper connotations of the 'colonizing' act and negates the primacy of economic and political factors over emotional and

psychological ones. The interaction between the coloniser and colonised reveals the ambivalence at the heart of the colonial situation thus making any rigid attitudinal compartmentalization difficult and moreover inadequate. Within this framework, the play draws attention to the politics of desire and resistance and the inevitability of colonial disempowerment.

Colonialism can be understood as a strategy to gain autonomy and control over those colonised for certain desired benefits. The coloniser's plan besides including the encouragement of dependence in the political and economic fields, revolved around a psychological and emotional puncturing of the sense of self-sufficiency of the colonised, thereby justifying their indispensable role and the missionary framework to which colonialism was seemingly committed. Colonialism therefore sustained itself on a constructed and sponsored reality as in shown in the play.

Monsoon exposes the complicity of language, education and religion in the project of colonial domination, and cultural appropriation. It is the politics of their tripartite alliance that is constantly reaffirmed in Andrew's project of 'sublimating' the potential of immaculate conception of Monsoon. Authority is defined and redefined on the island on account of Andrew's experiment.

It recalls Edward Said's argument that 'the Orient' is not the Orient as it actually is, but as the West represented its 'other'⁶ the alternative world, thereby suggesting at the undercurrents of a biased view which justified the whole enterprise of colonialism in the East. Not only does Andrew conduct his 'experiment' in a ruthless manner, he adds patronizing, "but let me tell you that it was necessary and good for them" (Monsoon, p.45). Dr. Juan's observation: "I returned long ago to my island, heaving a sigh of relief at finding it there, unchanged" (Monsoon, p.9) carries the ironic suggestions of the persistence of the colonial situation in the ex-colony, thus reinforcing the fact that, "National freedom, however, does not automatically reinstate the authentic self-hood of a culture."⁷

Elia Kazan comments, "Your play has great meaning and significance in the environment in which you wrote it."⁸ Couched within the experiment to chasten and elevate and underlying Andrew's peculiar intensity of feeling for his project are undercurrents of the psychological gains and losses of the colonial project. Andrew observes: "the concept of the old missionary is over, no less than that of the old colonialist. But some peculiar traces remain in a revisionist environment..." (Monsoon, p.16). Andrew is thus the neo-colonialist with his civilizing mission of morally uplifting his native subjects. The play dramatises the

post-colonial experiment in a revisionist environment, an experiment reminiscent of colonial rule. "As a result of the 'winds of change' in Britain's colonial policy, the island has just shed its 'slavery', but not much is really changed."⁹

Andrew's experiment, a neo-imperialist enterprise, is aimed at asserting the superiority of his culture of rationality, of scientific analysis and of learning over the culture of instincts. His motive in playing the hot and cold guessing game with Daisy the prostitute 'full of instincts' (Monsoon, p.19), his subtle manoeuvring of Dr. Juan's moods is only to prove his capacity to control their behaviour by determining their reactions thus asserting the superiority of his belief in an objective empirical reality apprehended solely by the mind. In the notion of superiority lies the justification for the experiment he plans to conduct and by analogy, the imperial project of conquest and domination:

I was experimenting the other day with life. Like it was a research, in my teaching profession. How cultures affect the amoeba. Come close to medicine, doesn't it, doc? In the accelerated growth of an environment, how does life respond? Can you condition life to particular stimuli? Can you isolate... completely... (Monsoon, p.11)

Andrew's mind is also triggered by the juxtapositioning of beauty and wretchedness in the tropical island where the monsoon "blows, generously, cruelly, expanding life to uncontrollable proportions, expecting us to remain unaffected " (Monsoon, p.11). This interest in ascertaining the possibilities of conditioning life to particular stimuli metamorphosises into the experiment of conditioning the growth of a heathen child "... so that purer life springs... within itself " (Monsoon, p.31). Seeing the potential of an immaculate conception in the child, Andrew christens her Monsoon and takes her under his fold with the intention of teaching her the Gospel. Dr. Juan, Andrew's friend rightly comprehends Andrew's motive :

... to take heathen child.... chemically innocent... subject it... to your teaching ... in this revisionist environment... where missionaries and colonialists are no more in subconsciously left-over habits... bring about conditioned growth... (Monsoon, p.30)

Andrew's efforts, are directed towards generating a 'conditioned' culture artificially in the laboratory of his house -on -stilts. "I've brought every form of life within, everything that duplicates nature and man..." (Monsoon, p.87). By selecting Monsoon for his experiment, Andrew circulates a notion of privilege and hierarchy with Monsoon as the privileged heathen who has access to the learning of the white Tuan. The 'privileging' of Monsoon draws

attention to the complicity between language, education and cultural incorporation in a colonial situation¹⁰ to dominate the so-called privileged. It is perhaps the same hierarchy at work which produces anglicised natives like Andrew's friend Dr. Juan, who receives his education from his mother country:

To instruct (for its own benefit) the Orient in the ways of the modern West;... to aggrandize the project of glorious knowledge acquired in the process of political domination of the Orient; to formulate the Orient, to give it shape, identity, definition with full recognition of its place, in memory, its importance to imperial strategy and its 'natural' role as an appendage to Europe... to dignify all the knowledge collected during colonial occupation with the title 'contribution to modern learning', when the native had neither been consulted nor treated as anything except as pretexts for a text whose usefulness was not to the natives...¹¹

As Andrew remarks, "the revelations are more mine than yours." (Monsoon, p.29) Be it education or religion, as tools of imperial conquest, they attempt to endorse and perpetuate relations of dominance and subordination. As an alternative to the supposedly irrational, immature and depraved world view of the native is the new morality sponsored by the colonisers.

The analogy between the training of the love-birds and the cultural indoctrination of a subject people is suggested in Andrew's explanation to Monsoon that training the birds

involves among other things spending time with them to -

Gain their confidence... give them a bit of ... natural incentive, like grain, from time to time. Observe them when they don't know you're looking at them. Oh yes, their instinct may baffle you from time to time, but there's no mystery to it that can't be solved if you have the patience and understanding to analyse it... (Monsoon, p.85)

The imperial confidence in thus ensuring the total dependence of the colonised on their dependent status is further expressed in Andrew's conviction that, "... Gradually you'll be able to train them... even perhaps get rid of the cage after a while when you're sure that habit will keep them here..." (Monsoon, p.85) However, his confidence, the play reveals, is misplaced.

Andrew's attempts to convert Monsoon to his faith are uniformly frustrated. Notwithstanding the initial progress he makes in training Monsoon to respond to his select stimuli, his learning is inadequate to penetrate the innermost core of her mind which is convinced that 'Grandma is always right' (Monsoon, p.38). Justifying his experiment to others, Andrew claims that his intervention by tutoring Monsoon could elevate her, a claim echoing the West's belief that it could solve, "the problems of the Orient either by restoring it to its former glory or by helping it to acquire rationality and achieve progress"¹². The experiment is thus intended as an agency of "social control in the guise of a humanistic program of enlightenment".¹³

By implying the need to enlist the superior guidance of Andrew, a hierarchy in the imperial - colonised relations is also suggested. And in Monsoon's refusal to appreciate the hierarchy, instead viewing Andrew as a white Tuan with his black magic book, lies the ultimate obstacle to Andrew's learning and mental calculations. Monsoon's voluntary confinement to Andrew's home stems only partially from habit, it rests greatly upon her sense of unfulfilled purpose of taking her revenge on Andrew. The play thus reinforces the idea that in the tutoring lies the seeds of unlearning, in the colonising the process of decolonising.

By seeking to isolate Monsoon from her native environment, by wrenching her from her native group and transplanting her in an alien surrounding, Andrew hopes to successfully uproot her from her tradition and cast her in a new mould. However, he is enmeshed in this very process of cultural grafting. As he admits in despair: "How can you separate what you call as experiment... from real living?" (Monsoon, p.97). Unable to actualize "his dream of love in isolation" (Monsoon, p.130) through Monsoon on account of her loss of innocence through rape by a syphilitic man, he transfers his hopes to the child he wants through Monsoon:

I want you, Monsoon, I want you now more than anything in this world. I want of you... my salvation... in the form of a child... the same as you... the part of me... originally there... I shall build a new world for this child, Monsoon. An incomparably new world. (Monsoon, p.102)

Viewed within the context of Andrew's imperial project, the child is crucial to Andrew's scheme of breaking the resistance of Monsoon. "Doesn't the good within you want to break the spell, so that revenge no longer becomes a compulsion..." (Monsoon, p.101), Andrew asks Monsoon. The child, Andrew hopes, would compel Monsoon to give up her resistance. His experiment is a form of oppression and it acts internally too, in its culmination it includes Andrew among its victims. Andrew's 'imperial' experiment thus has a destabilizing effect on his own pre-occupations and power. That the experiment is in reality intended for realizing his dream of personal salvation, suggests that, "the colonial is not looking for profit only; he is also greedy for certain other - psychological satisfactions and that is much more dangerous."¹⁴ In the failing of the experiment is a vindication of the futility of empire. Andrew's plans of making Monsoon an object of his scientific analysis and experiment fail as the experiment metamorphosises into an experience which grows on him. The experiment, intended as an instrument of colonial oppression, boomerangs on him.

The learning process is symbolic of the vocabularies of dominance that operate within a colonial framework. Colonialism also predicated that domination established the cultural inferiority of the colonised whose burden it was, the white man's duty to carry. The 'civilizing' role

attributed to the practice of racism and exploitation by the imperialist vindicates the hegemony of Western education and learning with its ingredients like modern science, technology and industrialization. Gauri Vishwanathan asks in the context of English literary study in India -

What accounts for the British readiness to turn to a disciplinary branch of knowledge to perform the task of administering their colonial subjects? What was the assurance that a disguised form of authority would be more successful in quelling potential rebellion among the natives than a direct show by force? Why introduce English in the first place only to work at strategies to balance its secular tendencies with moral and religious ones?¹⁵

It is a similar disguised form of authority and oppression that operates within the framework of the experiment in the process of teaching Monsoon.

One of the crucial devices the coloniser deploys to achieve and extend his authority, is the control over the language of the colonised.¹⁶ In the control over language lies the key to the conquest of the minds of the ruled and it is through such conquest that colonial empires are found and sustained. As Andrew tells Nooroo, the native child desirous of baptism by any white man who can read the Bible, "... then with loss of language, there can be no learning, can there, child " (Monsoon, p.80). "The domination of people's language by the languages of the

colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised."¹⁷ Johannes Fabian opines that one of the "pre-conditions for establishing regimes of colonial power"¹⁸ was communication with the colonised, the controlling of communication was thus one of the first expressions of colonial authority. Andrew's 'sacred world' thus attempts to establish the patterns of control over Monsoon's communication in an attempt to direct its course: "And as for company, she gets plenty of my company. She's an amazingly self-contained child, Juan, and I really doubt very much if she'd want to leave even if the wall were not there " (Monsoon, p.67). The idea is not merely to control modes of communication, but, "through such control, the very modes of thought and perception that determine the daily lives of people."¹⁹ Andrew's inability to ensure predictable reactions from Monsoon indicates the steady loss of the little control he has over Monsoon's thought processes manifested in his labouring to converse with Monsoon who grows increasingly uncommunicative, it is also apparent in his failure to impress upon Monsoon the superiority and indispensability of 'reason' over everything else.

Language thus becomes a medium through which a hierarchical structure of power relations is constructed.

It is also the agency through which imperial perceptions of 'truth' 'order' and 'reality' are given currency.²⁰ To Andrew, "Truth is only relative to one's own conceptions, as our scientific teachings do prove to us, Doctor, and relative to the person to whom one speaks..." (Monsoon, p.45). The teaching of the Gospel thus operates as a strategy to indoctrinate Monsoon in Andrew's conception of reality and image, good and evil, sin and salvation.

The imperial systems of education through which the colonised were encouraged to acquired fluency in an alien culture is represented in the play through the acquisition of language and learning by Monsoon:

Girl nods her head with a trace of enthusiasm forgetting herself for the moment peering at the pieces of paper and trying to put them together, trying to read words while Andrew watches her silently and carefully and with a sense of satisfaction. (Monsoon, p.36)

Monsoon's education which begins thus is however hindered by her association with her grandmother spanning over "a hundred hundred years!" (Monsoon, p.39), thus making the task of unlearning the lessons of the past very difficult, if not impossible. By her continuous resistance to the white man's learning, Monsoon gives her grandmother "long life. It is a transfer.. from the young to the old. It drives away the demons of old age " (Monsoon, p.41). In Andrew's desperation to teach her the Gospel as his own

salvation is inextricably linked to it, is dispelled the fallacy of colonial education as a source of enlightenment. The play reveals that the process of educating Monsoon is central to the cultural enterprise of the coloniser in Andrew.

In Monsoon's initiation into a study of the Gospel is visible the patterns of domination and authority sought to be legitimized through religion. The whole project of teaching Monsoon the essence of the Bible in an effort to sublimate the potential of a immaculate conception in her, has suggestions of "the Christian pattern of the Fall, the redemption and the emergence of a new earth, the 'recreated world', which constitute a restored paradise".²¹ The imperialists viewed the colonised world as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction and redemption.²² The superimposition of the 'ethics' of the Christian religion is used as a tool of conquest, of entangling the colonised in a network of coercion and domination.

Andrew attempts to achieve what General Chang Chin-wu the General spearheading the Chinese invasion of Tibet in Om Mane Padme Hum! (1972) calls "the ritualization of belief", adding, "from Buddhism to Communism, we're all creatures of ritual. So we... (laughs) 'reform' one into another".²³

Like the General, Andrew too believes in the efficacy of coercive persuasion in bringing about a cultural revolution. By appointing himself Monsoon's guardian angel, a divinely ordained role, Andrew attempts to construct a new cultural universe which however, is unable to sustain itself for very long on account of the fissures in the colonial - imperial relations.

I want to make her the closest thing to perfection. And I want to ally myself in this experiment that no church dare perform, for divinity is sacred not only to God but also to man. (Monsoon, p.43)

Andrew's lofty claims carry the undertones of the desire to rule and wield power. Religion is used to legitimise the power structure embedded in the colonial situation. In aiming at his own salvation through the experiment, the Eurocentric bias of the coloniser is revealed. Andrew's purpose in conducting the experiment is to create an image of his own greatness thereby stressing the coloniser's exalted self image, "... for as guardian angel I am no less the third person than He... who makes us in His own image". (Monsoon, p.37)

That religion has its place in perpetuating the structures of oppression in a colonial scenario is revealed in Andrew's claim "that my black book is more powerful... Think back, old woman, didn't you feel the lash of it in the

old days, when you refused conversion?" (Monsoon, p.44)

The religious conversion is analogous to the psychological domination of a subject peoples. Andrew's project is an instance of the pious schema providing to the coloniser the moral basis for colonizing. It is the missionary role which couches within its greater moral design the coloniser's desire to rule, by giving it a moral sanction it makes the acquisition of political power over the colonised a legitimate possession.²⁴

In the initial reactions of Monsoon to her new world - the conditioned physical and psychological world - is registered the colonised's initial apprehension of an overwhelming alien culture. "Girl looks up, her eyes, unblinkingly open, awed by his voice, and benign though authoritative presence, quiet, obedient.. though at times showings traces of fear and extreme tension" (Monsoon, p.33). Though initially shaken by her encounter with Andrew, Monsoon is strong enough to survive it and her initial fears quietened she silently nurtures her resistance to Andrew.

In a parallel movement, Andrew is plagued by vague fears and forebodings which take the form of an obsession with his dream of 'the recreated world of love in isolation'

and his salvation. His guilt at having engineered Monsoon's grandmother's death expresses itself in a fear of the potency of Grandma's curse on him and Monsoon's determination to seek revenge on him. The tapping in his mind reminiscent of the tapping sound of Grandma's cane indicates that the tyranny of his experiment is also binding on him. It results in a fractured psyche on account of which Andrew is caught between his own beliefs and an 'irrational' and perverse interest in the native culture of spells, curses and fortune-telling by cards. "Andrew's point is that... a person is always afraid of something he doesn't understand." (Monsoon, p.112) Andrew's inability to fathom or penetrate the resistance of Monsoon, steers his mind and actions to the edge of sanity and accounts for the tragedy at the conclusion of the play.

Submerged beneath Andrew's raging fevers and the recurring echo of the tapping sound of Grandma's cane in his subconscious is the coloniser's "anxiety of empire".²⁵ An extension of this anxiety is his fear of Monsoon's revenge. His hallucinations are thus perhaps a summary of "the intense fears, of aggression and annihilation"²⁶, a refusal to be psychologically marginalised. Nagged by a persistent sense of insecurity and fear he senses his recreated world

to be a house divided against itself. As he admits to
Dr. Juan:

She might be staying here out of sheer habit, Juan, or perhaps even a fear of the unknown outside... or may be she prefers to stay here out of a sense of... unfulfilled purpose... her grandmother was a very strong influence in her life, and may have instilled in her a sense of purpose which will not allow her to leave until her mission is fulfilled. (Monsoon, p.97)

The hysteria and cultural terror embodied in Andrew's abnormal obsession and fear and in his 'irrational' belief in superstitious remedies document the dubious empowerment of the coloniser, and underline the complexity in the relations between the coloniser and colonised that invalidates any interpretation of the confrontation as between a dominating and a subordinated culture. It also suggests that the colonising imagination is both dependent on and mistrustful of its own devices of control. Andrew's fear is a manifestation of his guilt, of colonialism's "great theater [of] abuse:"²⁷

We remained creatures of experiment... and I thought back how it all began.. Remember, Monsoon, remember... it was like a first love, whose freshness and innocence overwhelms, giving rise to tenderness... the tenderness which was shattered by immeasurable violence! (Monsoon, p.141)

The imperial anxiety of desire and possession also accounts for the subconscious struggle in Andrew's mind:

Don't go near that girl, grandma; she's mine..
Don't touch her hand, don't contaminate her thoughts;
she's mine.
Don't do anything that will come in my way; she's all
mine... (Monsoon, p.53)

Andrew's act of raping Nooroo the prostitute he had baptised in the past, and of marrying Monsoon in order to make her beget his child, falls within the 'logic' of his perverse belief that "the evil within me had to be broken. And the only way to cure black magic is through superstitious remedies. The two are equal and opposite, and therefore the evil spell could only be cured through black magic.." (Monsoon, pp.128-129). Andrew's claim to Nooroo, "For you can be my shepherd.. as I shall not want... so also may you baptise me to the harsh repentance of your religion..." (Monsoon, p.81) indicates a dependence born out of fear and an obsession with his aim. The play thus offers a picture of the cultural and psychological pathologies produced by colonialism. At the play's conclusion Andrew is a picture of "the defeated imperialist, lonely, depressed"²⁸ and on the verge of insanity. Fearing that he has no clue to the workings of Monsoon's mind Andrew lives in a state of perpetual tension. Monsoon and Andrew are thereby yoked together in a relationship underpinned with the violence of fear, oppression and isolation; while Monsoon is imprisoned within Andrew's home, he too is caught within his 'recreated' world. Like Mehtab the old Congressman trapped

within an image of his own making in The Captives (1963), Andrew too is a captive of his own self.

Caught within the network of oppression Andrew is a changed man. Monsoon explores the psychology of victimization and oppression, exposing the patterns of violence which inform the lives of Andrew and Monsoon. Though oppressed, Monsoon does not succumb to a feeling of inferiority, "the feelings of national and cultural inferiority which full-blown colonialism invariably creates".²⁹ Andrew's fears born out of insecurity underline his dependence on his 'role' as Monsoon's guardian. It proves that "hanging on to an image of the centre in other words was as important a guarantee of identity and stability to those in the 'centre' as it was for many on the 'periphery'".³⁰ However the possibility of partial complicity of the victims in the structures of oppression is indicated in Grandma's exchange of Monsoon for a few coins. As Antonio Gramsci analyses, "cultural domination works by consent and can (and often does) precede conquest by force".³¹

The violence in the play is symptomatic of the degrees of oppression generated in a colonial situation. Gregory Zilboorg concludes that "oppression results from attempts to deny one's deepest anxieties which are projected to an

exploitative relationship."³² It is Andrew's obsession with his unrealised goal of salvation that sustains the pattern of oppression in his relationship with Monsoon. Obsessed with Monsoon and later his dream of their child as a panacea for all evil, he asks:

All I want of you... is your fertility.... that purer life may spring therefrom, for even ignorant of you, there is a perfecting within... a soil from which my image can grow... This image will be mine, no less than that of Man above, God-like in its perfection... (Monsoon, p.91)

In the violence of Andrew's experiment is underwritten a pathetic attempt "to compensate for unfulfilled and unrealised self-images and private ideals".³³ Like Rose in Goa, Monsoon is a young child when Andrew decides to transform her into something of his own formulation. "And that the repression of children in the name of socialization and education was the basic model of all 'legitimate' modern repression exactly as the ideology of adulthood... was the prototypical theory of progress, designed to co-opt on behalf of the oppressors the visions of the future of their victims."³⁴ The theory of repression understands that the "situation created is in some way similar to paranoia - it is oneself whom one condemns in the other, whom one wishes to convert, to civilize and to educate."³⁵ Violence therefore indicates Andrew's weakness and vulnerability, not

his strength or superiority.

Oppression is significant to an understanding of the politics of cultural self-affirmation. In Monsoon's refusal to be psychologically swamped, co-opted and penetrated lies her resistance to the oppressive control of the coloniser: "She's a peculiar child... unusually receptive to all my teachings, but with a deeper hidden reserve of her own which I am unable to fathom" (Monsoon, p.67). Although confined to Andrew's house, Monsoon guards her right to assert herself. "Freedom is a matter of being able to see through and to challenge the condition that divert living subjects from a real understanding of their interest and their conditions of existence."³⁶ Monsoon's resistance is to an erosion of her self-identity by a process of cultural denigration, dislocation of self and repression of her personality. Her initial fear and bewilderment stem from a crisis of self-image and identity which is overcome by her faith in Grandma's teachings: "Child, do what comes within you. It's stronger than the rest. Remember your father's father's father. The seed within you must grow though you may not have conceived it yet... Good takes bad. You will overcome all that's evil. Make instinct stronger than learning" (Monsoon, p.54). Monsoon's disenchantment with Andrew's actions is on account of the expanding distinction between

the 'self-elevation' promised by him and the oppressive conditions under which her 'moral' growth is conditioned.

By refusing to be subjected to the cultural and intellectual erosion initiated by the overwhelming culture of the coloniser, Monsoon prevents Andrew from achieving his desired goal:

... A certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning to the Great Asiatic mystery, as Disraeli once called it.³⁷

Andrew's failure to fathom the deeper hidden reserve of Monsoon suggests that the Westerner's 'privilege' was perhaps a fallacy. Monsoon's silence and her physical submission to Andrew do not speak of dependence, they are part of her strategy for survival:

We live within overselves. Fear not the great wall. Fear not the detachment. Fear not the isolation. Surround yourself with the spirits of your ancestors. Build up your resistance to the learning of the white Tuan... who is to be revenged. (Monsoon, p.55)

Andrew with his black magic book is a reminder of imperial ownership, condescension, interference and a denial of a separate cultural identity to the colonised, thereby implicitly diminishing their self-esteem. Monsoon's resistance "like a rock, that years of tide will not wear

out..." (Monsoon, p.86) is thus, the undoing of the hegemonic culture of the colonisers.

In the conflict between Andrew and Monsoon over salvation and survival, the child a product of their interaction is the innocent victim. Caught in the crossfire between the two the child is a symbol of the fragmented and confused shaping of identities in the colonial hybrid. A cross cultural hybrid, she is a symbol of cultural syncreticity, as also of cultural appropriation and resistance. Such a cultural by-product, the play suggests, is likely to be malformed, symbolically represented in the infertility of the child. The child also represents the proposed utopia of Andrew which turns into a dystopia on account of the immeasurable violence of the imperial conquest. Though defective in formation, she serves as an agency of hope and self-fulfillment for Andrew and Monsoon. While Andrew hopes to re-enact his experiment with the child, Monsoon tells her "to close her eyes... for ever and forever..." (Monsoon, p.147) "because I had also promised child that I would protect her... protect her from pain and harm and from a horror worse than death..." (Monsoon, p.147). The play suggests that a malformed hybrid born out of a relationship underpinned by coercion and violence is shortlived. By deciding the fate of the child Monsoon not only reveals her control of the cultural hybrid, but also

reinforces the fact that the hybrid is often the site of cultural resistance.

The play suggests that delinking is inevitable, the urge for freedom being only natural and yet, the violence inherent in such a breaking away from each other is the harbinger of pain and destruction. Yoked to a pattern of violence and destruction, Andrew and Monsoon by the commonality of their loss, reinforce the idea of a continuum between the exploiter and exploited, the aggressor and victim.

The action of the play is polarised between the open sea front with Ling's restaurant and Andrew's house-on-stilts with a massive wall separating it from the outside world. The house-on-stilts and the wall operate as crucial symbols in the contextual mosaic of the colonial interaction in the play. The construction of the house is symbolic of the construction of identity in a colonial and post-colonial location. The political and cultural monocentrism of the construction of facts by the coloniser is also suggested in the image of the house: "Except for my line of communication from behind, the world stands centred to these four 'corners of the house... Hallowed the plinth that was to support the original life... the recreated world "(Monsoon, p.47). As a

symbol of 'designed' reality the house suggests the dislocation of identity upon which colonialism is dependent on for its effective functioning. The play suggests that colonialism attempts at altering and redefining social and cultural boundaries, at translating the constructed values into colonial patterns of thought, it thus seeks to colonise minds:

I thought of this house... and of this wall. And again in my mind it was neither a house nor a wall but a conditioned circumstance... a mystical image of a giant Ark... And I repeated to myself all the words of the Bible, believing in its greater reality, believing in its greater image, for image and reality are one to me. (Monsoon, p.140)

The house is also the site where the "grotesque psychodrama of everyday life in colonial societies is enacted."³⁸ By uprooting Monsoon from her 'heathen' surroundings and confining her within the precincts of his 'recreated' world, Andrew hopes to "immunize her from her past"³⁹ and colonize her mind with a view to transforming it. The construction of the wall evokes images of repression and psychological conditioning and confinement. To the extent that the house and wall are removed from Monsoon's immediate world they are artificial constructs. However, neither the house nor the wall keep the outside world, the native world of Monsoon, at bay. In the final analysis, the 'constructs' are more

binding on Andrew than on the object of his experiment, they push Andrew to the edge of sanity and deprive him from the attainment of his goals.

The psycho-social area of the home thus represents the site of cultural appropriation and resistance. Monsoon's resistance to the monocentric influence of the house, effectively begins the process of decentering. Like the waters which silently and steadily flow beneath the 'elevated' house-on-stilts, Monsoon resists Andrew's learning. Unlike Nooroo, she does not succumb to the temptation of cultural subservience, what Arthur Phillips characterises as the "cultural cringe"⁴⁰

The precarious balance of the house is symbolic of the precariousness of power and hegemony. The futility of construction is emphasised in the powerlessness of the house and the wall to keep the inevitable 'in' or 'out', and is at the heart of the tragic predicament of Andrew. The irony lies in the fact that Monsoon's resistance is not to the world outside but the one inside for as she tells her child "It is inside the wall that you need protection" (Monsoon, p.137).

In an ironic way, the fate of Andrew and Monsoon is similar to that of the love-birds where, if one dies the

other dies too. In the relationship of Andrew and Monsoon, fraught with conflict, struggle, and violence of a forced intimacy, loss is their common fate. The inter dependence of the coloniser and colonised is thus underlined. The final tragedy in the play, occurs when Andrew, on finding his child dead, strangles Monsoon and ends his own life by jumping through the gaping hole in the balcony of the house. It reinforces the fact that the so-called 'perfect' recreated world is not so perfect after all, it has its share of gaping irreconcilables and deficiencies: "She says... the waters with in fact one day rise... but that this house will sink and not float..." (Monsoon, p.136).

NOTES

1. Asif Currimbhoy, Monsoon (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1992), p. 13. All future references to this text will be sourced as Monsoon.
2. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "The Dramatic Art of Asif Currimbhoy", in K.K. Sharma (ed.), Indo-English Literature (Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1977), p. 253.
3. P. Sudhir, "Colonialism and the Vocabularies of Dominance", in Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir and Vivek Dhareshwar (eds.), Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1993) p. 334.
4. Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983) p.4. "Colonialism, too, was congruent with the existing Western sexual stereotypes and the philosophy of life which they represented. It produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity", p.4.
5. Edward W. Said, Orientalism (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 57.
6. Edward W. Said, op.cit., p.5.
7. Ashis Nandy, At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 62.
8. In a letter to Asif Currimbhoy quoted in the blurb of Monsoon (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1992).
9. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "The Dramatic Art of Asif Currimbhoy", in K.K. Sharma (ed.), Indo-English Literature, p. 252.
10. See Gauri Vishwanathan, Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India (London: Faber and Faber, 1990). Gauri Viswanathan's study elucidates "the relationship between the institutionalization of English in India and the exercise of colonial power, between the process of curricular selection and the impulse to dominate and control", (p.3) thus exposing the "structures of cultural domination inherent in the language of educational discourse" (p.5).

11. Edward W. Said, Orientalism, p. 86.
12. Tejaswini Niranjana et.al (eds.), Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India, p. 4.
13. Gauri Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 10.
14. O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, trans. Pamela Powesland (New York: Frederick A, Praeger, 1956), p. 32.
15. Gauri Viswanathan, op. cit., p. 10.
16. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature. (London: Currey, 1986), p. 16.
17. ibid.
18. P.Sudhir, "Colonialism and the Vocabularies of Dominance," in Tejaswini Niranjana, et.al. (eds.), Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India, p. 334.
19. ibid.
- 20 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.), The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (London: Routledge, 1989), p.7.
21. Edward W. Said, Orientalism (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 138.
22. Edward W. Said, op.cit., p. 206.
23. Asif Currimbhoy, "Om Mane Padme Hum!" ["Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus!"] (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1972) p. 55.
24. Ashis Nandy, At The Edge of Psychology; Essays in Politics and Culture, p. 50.
25. Sara Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.1.
26. Ashis Nandy, op. cit., p. 8.

27. Edmund Burke quoted in Sara Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India, p. 45.
28. Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism, p. 39.
29. Ashis Nandy, At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture, p. 58.
30. W.H. New, "Imperial Images: A Prologue to Commonwealth Poetry", in G.S. Amur, S.K. Desai (eds.), Colonial Consciousness in Commonwealth Literature: Essays Presented to Professor C.D. Narasimhaiah (Bombay: Somaiya Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1984), p.74.
31. Gauri Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India, p. 1.
32. Ashis Nandy, At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture. p. 33.
33. Ashis Nandy, Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 74.
34. Ashis Nandy, op. cit., p. 71.
35. O. Mannoni, "Psychoanalysis and the Decolonization of Mankind", in J. Miller (ed.), Freud (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), p. 89.
36. D. Miller, et.al (eds.), 'Domination and Resistance' quoted in Om P. Juneja, "Towards a Theory of the Novel of Colonial Consciousness" in Jaidev (ed.), On Literature (Delhi: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla in association with Allied Publishers Ltd., 1990), p. 30.
37. Edward W. Said, Orientalism, p. 44.
38. Homi K, Bhabha, "The other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen and Diana Loxley (eds.), Literature, Politics and Theory (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 149.
39. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "The Dramatic Art of Asif Currimbhoy", in K.K. Sharma (ed.), Indo-English Literature, p. 252.
40. Bill Ashcroft et. al. (eds.), The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures, p.12.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to understand Asif Currimbhoy the playwright and look closely at two of his plays Goa and Monsoon within the framework of colonial interaction and imperial - colonial relations. While Goa attempts to dismantle the 'centre' and 'periphery' constructs of the Eurocentric colonial discourse by suggesting at a continuum between colonizer and colonized, Monsoon dramatizes the process of cultural appropriation and resistance in the form of a psychological combat thus reinforcing the idea that the mind of the colonized constitutes the ultimate site of colonizing.

The plays throw up for scrutiny a number of issues which can be further explored. The inter-relatedness of politics and culture, the implications of cross-cultural contacts, notions of hybridity and syncreticity and the inter-relations of nationalism and colonialism are issues which require deeper analysis than this study with its limitations has attempted.

The integral unity of the playwright, the actor/producer and the audience, what G. Sankara Pillai terms 'the Author, the Actor and Audience trinity'¹ is essential for the wholesome evolution of a healthy theatre. Exploring the politics of the trinity in the context of the

Indian English stage is essential for an understanding of the lack of a 'living' theatre in the present.

Though some of Currimbhoy's plays fail due to excessive experimentation and inadequate attention to language, there are others which reveal his dramatic talent. His plays whenever performed (though there have been very few) have been very successful. One thus ought to recognize Asif Currimbhoy for his contribution to the field of Indian English drama.

NOTES

- 1 Chaman Ahuja, "In Search of a New Theatre - An Interview with G. Sankara Pillai", Sangeet Natak No. 57. (July - Sept. 1980), p.15.

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- _____. Valley of the Assassins. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1992.
- _____. Om. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1993.
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