

# Women in Asif Currimbhoy's Plays

Anshika Panwar

*Received: 12 December 2017 Accepted: 2 January 2018 Published: 15 January 2018*

---

## Abstract

Introduction-Among the most creative playwrights of the Post-colonial era, Asif Currimbhoy is one of the known personalities with his creative pen. He has written and published more than thirty plays. He reveals variety of themes with intelligent characterization in his plays. Social and political issues are the major themes represented by Currimbhoy in most of his plays. His plays are necessarily "Emotional Reaction" of what he feels and sees around him. His plays deal not only with wide ranging of thematic concerns but are also peopled with different characters. Asif Currimbhoy gives more importance to his women characters than the men characters. He shows his different perspective from the usual characterization of women. Women play a central role in Currimbhoy's plays. His female characters are mainly from the lower and middle classes: housewives, teachers, mistresses, daughters, slaves, and servants. Meserves comments thus: "In Asif's best plays the power of his women characters dominate the action? in retrospect one finds Asif Currimbhoy's women character, whether minor or major, stronger and more memorable than his men". (X-XI) His women characters are more courageous and powerful than men characters. Women in his plays protest against male chauvinism and colonized male minds. However in some of his plays the protest confines to the home with a silent protest.

---

*Index terms—*

## 1 Introduction

Among the most creative playwrights of the Postcolonial era, Asif Currimbhoy is one of the known personalities with his creative pen. He has written and published more than thirty plays. He reveals variety of themes with intelligent characterization in his plays. Social and political issues are the major themes represented by Currimbhoy in most of his plays. His plays are necessarily "Emotional Reaction" of what he feels and sees around him. His plays deal not only with wide ranging of thematic concerns but are also peopled with different characters.

Asif Currimbhoy gives more importance to his women characters than the men characters. He shows his different perspective from the usual characterization of women. Women play a central role in Currimbhoy's plays. His female characters are mainly from the lower and middle classes: housewives, teachers, mistresses, daughters, slaves, and servants. Meserves comments thus: "In Asif's best plays the power of his women characters dominate the action? in retrospect one finds Asif Currimbhoy's women character, whether minor or major, stronger and more memorable than his men". (X-XI) His women characters are more courageous and powerful than men characters. Women in his plays protest against male chauvinism and colonized male minds. However in some of his plays the protest confines to the home with a silent protest. His female characters can be classified as submissive or conformist. It is remarkable to note that his each play is dominated by a particular set of female characters.

Being a prolific playwright of the Post Independent era, Currimbhoy did justice to his role. In his plays women try to create their own space for themselves. They don't want to bind themselves in the patriarchal set up of the society. His play "Darjeeling Tea?" represents British women characters who oppose their husbands and consider themselves superior to them. They call their husbands idiotic and illogical. For them their husbands are old fashioned and useless fellows.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

---

46 Through the character of Jennie in *Drajeeling Tea?*. Currimbhoy presents the women of western culture, who  
47 have experienced queen like life in the initial years of the British occupation of India. She thinks that she is  
48 different from other women who always talk about their house and its problems. She is a planter's wife and she  
49 feels superior to the others and thinks that she is not destined to live or work like other women. She has all the  
50 modern ways of living and goes to club and there she does not like to talk about the house and its problems  
51 rather she always talks about fashion and beauty. She is a kind of women who wants to change the men's attitude  
52 towards women. Women is the best creation of God and they should not confine within the four walls of house.  
53 Currimbhoy also shows the polarized notions about family life which result in a direct encounter between wives  
54 and husbands as exemplified thus:

55 Jennie She always questions the existing social status of women. Through this questioning to her husband, she  
56 protests against the male chauvinism in her house and tries to move out of the conventional life which is designed  
57 for them by the society. She always talks about her glorious past of modelling, which had once recognized her  
58 identity as an upper class woman in London. She even goes to the developing a physical infatuation for Bunty.  
59 Through this she reveals a strong protest against her husband with whom she finds it difficult to get along. For  
60 her Mac is an idiotic, selfish and self-centered man who cannot accept a woman's freedom as explained thus:

61 Jennie: Nothing's changed, Mac, nothing's changed. You've gone on and on just the way you started, your  
62 own way, always your own way ? Mac: (defensively) I don't see anything wrong in that. Jennie: You wouldn't.  
63 You're too much man to understand. Too much planter to see over the tea shrubs.

64 Mac: You chose the way of life when you married me. Jennie: I chose a man Mac, not a way of life. Jennie:  
65 True. So like you to say it. Self-contained and self-righteous. (49)

66 When she says that she chose a man, not a way of life, she is protesting against male chauvinistic tendency.  
67 Through the character of Jennie and her strong verbal encounters Currimbhoy exposes the colonization of western  
68 women by western male colonizers.

69 In his play "OM" he shows a different outlook of female character. Through the character of sweeper he  
70 brought out the strong feminist voice. Sweeper questions men in general for taking their own decision without  
71 consulting women and treating her as an insignificant useless thing. According to her women's life is used for  
72 the benefit of men only. Throughout the life woman is always a part of man's life but she doesn't influence man  
73 and his decisions. She says that a woman's life is not destined to follow the rules of patriarchal society, where  
74 the men are the king of the world. In "OM", the muted voice of woman after her death is portrayed as a strong  
75 protest against patriarchy.

76 Through the character of Swetaketu, Currimbhoy again reveals the major role of women in men's life. He says  
77 that without woman, man cannot achieve anything neither in this world nor even in spiritual.

78 In the play "The Dissident M.L.A." Currimbhoy reveals another pattern of feminism linked with power politics.  
79 The play displays how the power hungry politicians treat woman as commodities. The play reveals how badly  
80 the politicians treat their wives as animals. "You? (angrily) Who the hell was cursing you, you cow?"(46). The  
81 statement reveals that a woman is always being treated as a milking cow for the selfish aims of man. Although  
82 she is his wife but he treats her callously and when she tries to give her suggestion or tries to interfere in his  
83 thoughts and asks him to lead a simple life with her, he shouts on her and says " Keep quiet", woman. You  
84 are disturbing my thoughts". (46) It reveals that woman has no value and relevance in man's life. They are  
85 self-centered with an orthodox mentality. The play exposes the truth that women are thus victimized for the  
86 selfish motives of men.

87 In some of his plays he reveals the existence of a strong bond between husband and wife. He shows the woman's  
88 sacrifice for the sake of family. They support their family in every possible way and try to find solution to the  
89 problems encountered by men. In "The Clock", Henry's wife tries to console him and instils confidence in his  
90 mind thus: MARY (V). If you don't make the target, does it mean you get fired from your job! Henry: No, but  
91 it affects my increment, and my future. MARY (V). Is that enough reason to resign? You could make it up next  
92 year.

93 Henry: fiercely turning to her). ?I worry about deadlines and quotas and bigger and better salves drives ? Do  
94 you know I was told the other day by the boss to fire one of my boys merely because he had failed to keep pace  
95 with the others and sold less? I guess he was just unlucky! MARY (V). Did you firm him? HENRY. I didn't  
96 have the heart to do it?. MARY (V). If I were to hire some help around the house, and the job was not done  
97 well, I would not think twice about getting rid of the person. (16-17) Mary clearly expresses her protest against  
98 her husband's carelessness towards his professional life and his laxity in family affairs. She is concerned about  
99 her family and its financial conditions. She always questions her husband about the financial support that he  
100 should have given to his family. Through the actions of Mary, the only woman character of the play Currimbhoy  
101 reveals the silent protest of the woman for her family and also reveals her concern for the future of family. She  
102 insists her husband to be more supportive for the family and tries to maintain the house even at the expense of  
103 her own life.

104 Mary: You have got the kids to think of now. Henry (Angrily): The kids! The kids! The kids! That's all  
105 you can think of? Mary: Then why don't you earn more money? Everyone else does it. Everyone has to do it.  
106 Henry: I'm trying my best. Mary: Well, ain't good enough. You have been speaking about yourself all along but  
107 have you ever thought of me? Why I never ever bought that dress or that hat I desired. Why I never accepted  
108 invitation because we couldn't afford to reciprocate them. I deserve a break too, and every time you throw over

---

109 a job it goes further and further. Henry: It's not been easy for me to do it. Mary: What do you know how  
110 tough it is to be without money? When you run out of money and do without cigarettes and whisky, you feel  
111 you've made one hell of a sacrifice. But you just tell me what you know about running a house? Although Mary  
112 is a woman but she has sacrificed her life for her family and her useless husband's role seems to be relatively  
113 insignificant. Through her protest she reveals the idleness of her husband in the competitive world. She is more  
114 concerned than her husband about" running the house".

115 Yet another play "Goa" revolves around Senhora Miranda and her daughter Rose. Senhora is the most powerful  
116 lady of the play. Though a prostitute by profession but a very bold lady. She is a self-conscious woman and is  
117 fully aware of the effect she has created.

## 118 **2 Year 2018**

119 Volume XVIII Issue V Version I ( G )

120 She drives the lives of her daughter and her lover. Her description given by the author itself is an example  
121 of her personality. Senhora is a fashionable and fair looking woman of forty. Her fair color complexion makes  
122 her over confident and she ill-treats everyone. She is fond of new brand of whisky and new friends with wealthy  
123 background. Even she likes to enjoy sex with boyfriend of her daughter, Krishna. Her daughter Rose is full in  
124 her youth. She is black but still people want to meet her. Both Senhora and Rose are portrayed as a bold lady  
125 in Currimbhoy's play.

126 In his other plays Thorns on a Canvas, The Miracle Seed and Monsoon, Currimbhoy portrays his women  
127 characters on the same platform. Woman has become the center of discussion in most of his plays. Thus women  
128 characters in Asif Currimbhoy's plays are given more importance than men with a different perspective. Having  
129 different level of outlook on familial, political and social level Currimbhoy opposed the existing patriarchal system  
130 of the society.

## 131 **3 Work Cited**

132 Year 2018

133 Volume XVIII Issue V Version I ( G )<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>© 2018 Global Journals Women in Asif Currimbhoy's Plays



- 
- 134 [Goa ()] 'Calcutta: Writers Workshop'. — Goa . *The Dissident M.L.A. Calcutta: Writers Workshop*, 1970. 1974.  
135 (Print. 5) (Print)
- 136 [Currimbhoy and Tea ()] Asif Darjeeling Currimbhoy , Tea . *Calcutta: Writers Workshop*, 1971. (Print)
- 137 [Agrawal (ed.) ()] *Indian English Drama and Contribution to it, Asif Currimbhoy*, Sangeeta Agrawal . K.A.  
138 Agarwal. Jaipur: Book Enclave (ed.) 2004. p. . (Spectrum of IndiaWriting in English. Print)
- 139 [The Doldrums. Calcutta: Writers Workshop ()] *The Doldrums. Calcutta: Writers Workshop*, 1960.  
140 (Print)
- 141 [The Hungry Ones. Calcutta: Writers Workshop ()] *The Hungry Ones. Calcutta: Writers Workshop*, 1965.  
142 (Print)
- 143 [The Miracle Seed. Calcutta: Writers Workshop ()] *The Miracle Seed. Calcutta: Writers Workshop*, 1973.  
144 (Print)
- 145 [Aayalakkandy ()] *The Plays of Asif Currimbhoy: A Reading in Post colonialism*, Yoosaph Aayalakkandy . 2012.  
146 Saarbrücken: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing. (Print)
- 147 [Thorns on a Canvas. Calcutta: Writers Workshop ()] *Thorns on a Canvas. Calcutta: Writers Workshop*, 1962.  
148 (Print)