

## A Study of Post-Colonialism in Asif Currimbhoy's *Thorns on a Canvas*

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**Abstract:** *Asif Currimbhoy's plays reveal the notions and aspects of colonialism in his plays. He highlights the de-humanizing aspects of colonialism by focusing on the influence of capitalism in all walks of the Post-independent Indian life in some plays. The issues of race, class & gender which are prominent in most of Currimbhoy's plays have not been examined in detail. Currimbhoy's constant engagement on vital issues informs and impacts his vision of life.*

**Key-words:** *Post-colonialism.*

### Introduction:

Faubian Bowers comments that Asif currimbhoy was "India first authentic voice in the theatre". Currimbhoy was an outstanding playwright who has successfully portrayed the different aspects of a situation through different characters in order to give it a real touch. Emerged as a notable Indian English playwright Currimbhoy took Indian English drama to new vistas in the Post Independence period. Bayapa ready, in his thematic research on Currimbhoy's plays classifies his plays into social, political and religious ones. He very well reveals the social issues related to India and other countries in the post independence period.

Currimbhoy adopts to write for the theatre because he thought that with this technique it would be easy for him to dramatize the political events like partition, liberation of Goa, Indian freedom struggle, the Naxalite movement and creation of Bangladesh. His plays address such issues as poverty, starvation racial and class conflict refugee's violence superstitious loss of human and moral values etc. Faubian bowers the eminent theatre critic comments: Asif's work helped him in no means measure to understand the spirit of India. (qtd. In Agrawal 4)

Currimbhoy deals with such notions of Post Colonialism in all his plays since they are written in the post independence period of India with their focus on the cultural social and political dimension. In his plays color is claimed as a prime signifies for social identify. The distinction between self and other is reflected in his plays in the form of a dichotomy between the colorized, master and the slave at several instances. He deals with the distinction between the colonizer and the colorized as platform for projecting the self/other concepts in political as well as cultural arenas.

In his play *Thorns on a Canvas* one can see the relationship between an upper class father and some artists who belong to the lower strata of the society. Malti's father is the representative of the elitist class and Yakub and Nafesa are presented as the representative of the downtrodden class. The father is a person of Arts and Yakub and Nafesa are beggars like artists who are treated as ugly and downtrodden. The stage setting of the play itself presents the same.

Now the old man has recognized him, for he lets out a hoarse laugh, and simultaneously removes copper coin from his pocket which he flings towards the gutter. The young man hears the sound alertly like some trained dog, and though he does not give the impression of being a beggar, he quickly scurries on all fours to pick up the coin. The old man laughs again, victorious for having broken the strange spell, and reassuringly continues to conduct his daughter forward. (10)

The play here presents how the upper class people looks towards the lower class people and make them feel inferior. It is the distinction of class that makes the elite intellectually and materially superior and under privileged.

Malti, daughters of the rich Patron gets everything without any struggle. She gets the best studio in the academy without knowing anything about Art. She is being offered a tour to the academy to examine the painting even she has not ever touched the surface of Art. Her father arranges exhibition only for her and the artists who belong to the lower class are not allowed to come in the exhibition.

Yakub and Nafesa do not have entry to the ward of out governed by the rich and upper class people as their ugliness is looked upon as very unusual. She insulted Nafesa by painting her nude picture. She is a girl but she cannot understand the feelings of other girls and hurt them. There are so many instances in the play which are alike. But the self representation of the lower class is in the form of a constant reminder of what the elites have done against the lower class people.

Yakub: Have you forgotten? Have you forgotten so soon, Malti? It wasn't so long ago that Nafesa sobbed as you do now. It wasn't so long ago that I told you ...you shouldn't have done that. Remember my words... "You should have done that". (60)

Yakub reminds Malti of the Nafesa's ugly portrayal made by her by bashing her master piece. He says Malti's tears have the same meaning and scope as Nafesa's tears when she gets insulted. Through this act Asif tries to reveal the strong protest of the lower class people against the elitism of the upper class. It is not just questioning of a minor incident that Yakub does but also exposing his strength and desire to fight against the upper class society. The upper class people consider that they the real connoisseurs of Art and treat the lower class people as aliens. Currimbhoy reveals this incident very clearly when some artists from the elite class society engage in a discourse about the downtrodden.

Artist 1: But...who're they?  
 Artist 2: Aliens.  
 Artist 3: From another planet?  
 Artist 4: They seem to have ears and noses like us.  
 Artist 3: Spies, perhaps. Disguised.  
 Artist 2: They have no right to look like us.  
 Artist 1: Shouldn't we...protest...or something?  
 Artist 2or4: (together) protest??!!  
 Artist 1: (nervously) Well...w...it's...it's...just that I thought we should show our disapproval somehow.  
 Artist1: I...I...I feel afraid of them.  
 Artist 3: Me too.  
 Artist 2: They have no right to look more perfect than us.  
 Artist 4: Imagine what would become of us if they...(looks in the direction of the other group)...were to recognize that fact. (36-37)

The words in the dialogue of the artist 4 reveal the awareness of the colorized about their ill-treatment in the hands of elites.

After this Currimbhoy reveals the scenario of the exhibition which are only meant for the upper class society and people who belong to the lower strata can't exhibit it.

An Exhibition at an Art Gallery.  
 High society bunched around like a cocktail party.  
 Typical.  
 From tail-coats to *dhoties*, evening gowns and cholies, the smart cosmopolitan crowd sets the pace.  
 Here the idle rich meet the idle poor in a brave display of mutual camaraderie, for doesn't Art break all social barriers? (34)

So this reveals that how the masters ill-treat the slaves and always make them feel inferior.

### Conclusion:

Throughout the play, various ramifications of the encounter between the centre and margin could be seen. The Art Academy is the centre where he shows the discrimination between the two classes with the help of his characters. The names of the characters given by him are also very helpful to reveal this difference. Yakub and Bukay are the two characters whose names say many things about the class. Thus the concept of "self and other" dichotomy is analyzed in the play.

The masters feel superior and powerful, suppress the slaves. With all the instances presented in the play *Currimbhoy* proves that this play is a true image of Post-colonialism.

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