CHAPTER - II
THE ESSENCE OF THE THEATRE
CHAPTER II

THE ESSENCE OF THE THEATRE

Theatre is life. There's no art, no craft, no learning, no yoga, no action which cannot be seen in it.

- Bharata's Natyashastra

Among those definitions of drama, it is possible for one to identify the nature of it with reference to some representative remarks. G.B. Tennyson says, "Drama is a story that people act out on a stage before spectators" (3). Eric Bentley remarks, "The theatrical situation reduced to a minimum, is that A impersonates B while C looks on" (150). Marjorie Boulton states that "a play is not really a piece of literature for reading. A true play is three dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes" (3).

For Tennessee Williams,

... a play in a book is only the shadow of a play and not even a clear shadow of it... The printed script of a play is hardly more than an architect's blue print of a house not yet built. The colour, the grace and elevation, the structural pattern in motion, the quick interplay of live beings, suspended like fitful lightning in a cloud, these things are the play, not words on paper... (122)

All these observations establish the fact that a play is something essentially to be acted. It is a script and not a book. Hence, it necessitates performance
on the stage for its wholesome effect. Drama as a performing art involves real-life people who pretend to be imagined people. It makes a special emphasis on action of a concentrated, often intense, kind.

The pre-eminence of action in drama is the outcome of the peculiarly physical nature of the form. Novel or other narrative forms of writing can fare better than drama with respect to plot and character. But drama, as a visible form, is unique for representing crises. The sudden turning-points of action, which the eyes observe at a glance before the words are spoken, have the two-fold advantage of providing excitement for the spectators, and a saving space for the playwright by excluding him from describing, commenting and analysing directly the different aspects of the situation. Therefore, a successful dramatist, in order to generate moments of triumph, carefully selects actions and arranges them in an ascending scale of excitement enabling the characters to perform the same on the stage in front of an audience.

Analysing the essence of the theatre, in all fairness, one has to define action, the foremost constituent of the play. The term action is preferable to plot, partly because it has not been used nearly as widely and divergently, and partly because it indicates an element exclusive to drama, and generally held to be essential to it.

The action of a play consists of several events, and plot is the arrangement of events, so that, the relationship of the events becomes meaningful to the audience. Events are of two types - outward and inward. Outward events are those in which the characters do things observable to the eyes. Inward events or mental states constitute likes and dislikes, decisions, acceptances and rejections.
The dramatist's emphasis on action may either be internal or external or both, depending on the nature of the theme. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is a challenge to the entire concept of action in the sense, that the characters get nowhere. At best they move in a small circle and end where they began. The end of the play substantiates this:

VLADIMIR. Well? shall we go?

ESTRAGON. Yes, let's go (2.94)

But they do not move and the curtain comes down. Yet there are events in this play. Godot, for whom the two characters are waiting, hardly comes, but POZZO and Lucky do, twice.

T.S. Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral* reflects on the power of action in drama and religion alike:

... action is suffering

And suffering is action. Neither does the agent suffer

or the patient act. But both are fixed

In an internal action, an eternal patience

To which all must consent that it may be willed

And which all must suffer that they may will it ... (209-14)

In such writers as Beckett and Eliot, the isolation from action is achieved through waiting and suffering. Currimbhoy looks upon action in terms of dramatic situations and predicaments which engender conflict in the theatre at every level--physical, mental, emotional and social. For Currimbhoy, theatre is not escapist entertainment. He
has made drama a serious endeavour to visually show us the bitter discord of feelings and thoughts which exist in every man. In an interview he has stated thus:

The essence of the theatre in my opinion is conflict. To have conflict you have different points of view which come head on . . . This clash forms the most vibrant factor of the theatre itself . . . My approach to all my plays is that there is an essential conflict of attitudes.(Enact 1970)

The conflicting points of view in the play, The Clock, are the need to work and the desire to escape work. In other words, the conflict arises between the inclination to efficiently manage time to make good in life and the inability to execute time to acquire the most wanted things in life. In any literary composition, the problems the hero encounters must be of a universal nature so that the answers the respondents seek may project the right way to live in the world which is a home and not a battle ground.

The problems faced by the ancient Greeks were about man's relationship with the internal forces. For the modern man what lies behind him and before him are tiny matters, compared to what lies within him. The Clock, like Arthur Miller's play Death of a Salesman, is concerned with the aspirations, worries and failures of all men, and more especially of little men. Henry reveals to his wife that he is sick of his job and all he wants is to be free for a little while. But Mary chides him thus: "Every man's got to work. There's no other way out . . ." (25). But for Henry, "there's only one life, and it's an awful waste to spend it struggling all the time" (24). As man's efforts are always
circumscribed by time, with a note of overwhelming sorrow, Henry conveys to Jean, his personal secretary and lady love, that he cannot achieve his goals.

Similar to the life of poets who in their youth "... begin in gladness; But thereof come in the end despondency and madness ..." ("Resolution and Independence"), Henry's despondency has succeeded his high spirits. He dreams of “time stealthily stealing the years away . . . feeding on it, like an ugly vulture gnawing on a carcass” (33).

In a psychological play, the struggle is all within. Firmness and courage to complete sales targets on deadlines are expected of him. Henry's employer defines this as “morale” (40). Henry has not quite clicked with his selling organisation for want of morale. The implication of the situation is, the boss expects from every sales man, an irresistible desire to cling to success by all means. Henry cannot become a chip of the block lest he should become another Joe, a hard-core opportunist. Similarly, he cannot trade Jean for promotional prospects with his official. Being unable to control himself any further, Henry gets up with clenched fists and calls his superior: "You lousy fat bastard!" (43).

If zero conscience and priority of basic needs are the frightening and faith-shattering compromises that the hands of the clock demand from him, Henry would better destroy time. With a savage cry, he picks up a stick and smashes the wall-clock. The problem in the traditional sense is not resolved. The play, then, may be said to ask this question. Must Henry for the sake of his survival, take to himself some degree of imperturbability of rock-like fortitude of the Leech-gatherer, even at the cost of
surrendering some of the sensitivity and responsiveness which constitute the essence of his personality? The question has an intrinsic psychological interest. But what gives it its peculiar force in the play is the circumstance in which it is posed, the aura of tragic destiny which attends this confrontation of two modes of human self-realisation.

Currimbhoy's The Dumb Dancer is also psychological in its content. It shows a conflict which arises between the world of sanity and the world of make-believe. A Kathakali dancer, who plays the role of Bhima, completely identifies himself with the mythological character that "it leads him from one misapprehension to another one disaster to another" (Srinivasa Iyengar 245).

The indescribable zest to achieve perfection and superiority in his role as a dancer makes Bhima sever his tongue because speech, as pointed out by his Guru, interferes for him. But for Madhu, a blind pupil, blindness is hardly a problem while he sings. Bhima's insane act of severing his tongue and throwing the same at the feet of his Guru reminds us of the most popular Ekalavyan episode in The Mahabharatha which presents a unique example of guru-disciple devotion, of course, with a difference. Ekalavyan, as demanded by his guru, cuts off his thumb and presents him the same as a sacrificial offering. Therefore, the character achieves adoration, and is worthy of emulation. On the opposite, Bhima being motivated by personal advantages and with the temperament of a competitor, cuts off his tongue on his own. Hence, the character evokes ugliness and not beauty, horror and not admiration. As there is no sacrifice, Bhima does not achieve greatness.
We perceive that in The Dumb Dancer, the conflict between love and vengeance is externalised. The dancer-Bhima's exclusive adoration for Draupadi, the mythical female, and his subsequent responses to devour the supposed enemies are reversed in the case of Prema, the superintendent of the mental asylum, who on account of her magnificent obsession with the dancer Bhima, kills her rival in a fit of frenzy. The dancer-Bhima, and Shakuntala, the Guru's daughter, consider themselves legendary Bhima and Draupadi.

The entire story is an evidence for the concept of role-playing which is deeply absorbed in the spirit of drama itself. Cultural anthropologists and folklorists describe role-playing as the transformation a person or a thing takes from one to the other. Girish Karnad uses the artifice of role playing in most of his plays. To throw more light on the idea of role-playing one has to cite from Sigmund Freud for whom, "The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real" ("Creative Writers and Day-dreaming", 20th Century Literary Criticism, ed. David Lodge 36). While the child as he plays links his imagined objects and situations to the real world, the adult, when he stops playing, gives up his link with real objects because instead of playing he now fantasizes and his imaginative activity is motivated by unsatisfied wishes.

In The Dumb Dancer Bhima fantasizes on grounds of his inclination to be "truly Bhima, the terrible son of Vayu, the wind god, strong, courageous, daring, easy to anger, coarse in many ways, a stalwart fighter ... Afraid of none ... save himself" (24). In consequence, Bhima hovers between three times, the present, the past and the future which are woven together as it were on the thread of the wish that runs through them.
For him all women are Draupadi as all women are one woman for Tiresias, the spokesman of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Therefore, every provoking occasion in the present reminds him of the humiliation experienced by the mythical Draupadi, and Bhima's earnest efforts to safeguard her honour. The wish that forms the basis of heroism is his intense regard for womanhood. The playwright's parenthetical description, as regards the meeting between Prema and Dilip, may help us establish our observation:

[Prema breaks away from Dilip, but the edge of her sari gets caught in his hand, and part of it comes off.]

[By coincidence, at that moment Bhima enters with Shakuntala and the Guru. To Bhima's clouded mind, what he sees is a sharp reminiscence of Drupadi's sari being torn out in public by Duryodhana.]

[His reaction is spontaneous and compelling to him. He reaches on to Dilip and hits him violently. Then like a flash he picks up a paper knife from table and catches Dilip by the hair.] (67)

Instantly, Shakuntala warns him that he is King Jayadratha, and Bhima cannot kill him because his blood is the same as his: "Bhima’s reaction is animal-like, but the words arrest him. His knife swoops . . . to cut part of the hair. Then he puts his foot on Dilip’s body as though compelling him to pay obeisance to Prema" (68). Prema interprets the moods of his patient and gets distracted in the process. Her forbidden
argument is, “if he . . . took Dilip for Duryodhana, it must have been because . . . he looked upon me as . . . [triumphantly] ... his beloved Draupadi” (68).

The pathological symptom of over-luxuriant and over-powerful fantasies is an onset of neurosis or psychosis. Bhima’s undue identification with the role of Roudra-Bhima, and Prema’s identification with that of his beloved Draupadi lead them to a schizophrenic condition, as a case of Schizophrenia. The conflict which exists at the psychological level is reiterated at the metaphysical level too. The whole play is a lesson in mental hygiene, for the Guru instructs us: “We must all learn to be detached” (59).

Prema analyses the statement and expresses to the Guru that Bhima is a god. It is difficult to remain detached from a god. The conflict ends when she kills Shakuntala risking her sanity. Crossing of boundaries is highly injurious. Fantasying, which is a kind of transgression, is tragic in its outcome, for it leads to ruining of the mind.

In addition to psychological themes, Currimbhoy evinces much interest in social problems because society is inside of man and man is inside of society. The dramatist cannot truthfully present a psychological entity on the stage, until he understands his social relations, and their power to make him what he is, and to prevent him from being what he is not. The Doldrummers portrays the hopeless desperation of Tony, Joe, Rita and Liza for whom the end justifies the means.

Rita loves Tony with consuming passion, and there is nothing that she will not do for him. However when Joe asks her to lose her honour like Liza, her rival, in her relationship with Tony to basely gain expensive presents which may help her to hold on to Tony, a man who has got a great fixation for presents, she hesitates and substantiates
her hesitation: "You can't love someone you don't respect . . ." (41). Joe distorts the situation and argues that love and respect are diametrically opposite to each other. Love in the world of The Doldrummers can ill-afford to be "patented and germ-free" (41). Perhaps, it is love "that the whore dispenses around the street corner, and it's the most respectable that pays its price" (41).

Once the mirror of values is turned upside down Rita sees herself similar to Liza. In consequence Rita, the "cleanest of them all " (51), goes through the worst to please Tony. However, the struggle between the real self and the assumed self persists. Another character who journeys inwards to search for identity is Tony. Tony does make an attempt to attribute meaning to their lives. But the conflict between the desire for survival and the desire to live by ideas stifles his efforts. He refuses to do any work except to labour in bed to earn his keep, and this refusal or dumbness is not merely an act of non-conformism but also his way of establishing his identity. Tony is insensitive to Liza's liberal means in matters of sex. When it comes to Rita, Tony cannot remain indifferent. He tells her:

You're tops, Rita, really you are. Y're passionate without being dirty, or pretending . . .what I mean is that you're you, natural and true, and it affects me the same way.... (31)

The news that Rita "is selling her pound of flesh neatly cellophaned" (54), to buy him first hand guitars and lavendered vaseline that grooms his hair, shocks him:
Tony almost doubles up covering his face. His body goes through mute convulsions in the agony of one who feels but cannot speak. (1.2.54)

He whimpers and beats his head on the tree and like an indignant husband he decides to crash in and catch Rita and the client in the act. The moment he recognises the Fat-and-Bald man as his former employer, the anger changes into an awareness. The bitter realisation that earning bread is more vital than championing honour, which is a mere word, for it can never appease one’s basic needs, dawns on him. The boss winks at him lewdly and tells Rita to watch out, for he might take advantage of her. Rita feels humiliated, and in distress seeks Tony’s help. She requests:

Come on, Tony. Come on please. How can you stand it.

Don’t you feel at all? Not at all? Just once. Just once. Why don’t you kill him. I’ll say I did it myself. (1.2.58)

Tony does not make any catechism or parody on honour like Falstaff in Henry IV Part I. He only makes gestures:

Tony falls to his knees, clutching on to the knife now in his hand, but does not move, as though an invisible chain were holding him down. (1.2.58)

The gesture articulates the predicament of those who have drifted into a flotsam existence. Rita regrets Tony’s inability, and decides to tear off her mask of self-sacrifice, which is worn as a symbol of vanity, for she wants to live for herself too. She acquiesces Joe who passionately offers himself as another candidate to claim her love. She gets
herself into tight corners for the pleasure of being out of them. She bears Joe’s child and when Tony is back on the scene, she is unable to face reality. Tony brings a more-drunk idiotic-looking friend with a chain-like lasso tied around the neck of his friend treating him all along, as if he were a dog. He says to Rita:

Stay here and watch, I said! And listen! Listen to the dog whine. He’s got no tongue, but he can still whine. I got me a substitute now. I’m not Tony anymore. I’m Joe. This here is Tony. He’ll serve you well. I’ve even taught him to play the guitar. And he is the hottest thing in bed . . . He’s almost like a portable, do-it-yourself kit. He’ll take my place well, and I’ll be gone far, far away. (2.1.85)

The thought that he is likened to a helpless animal disturbs him beyond measures. The scene serves as a means to reproach himself. Rita is baffled over the discrepancy between Tony who does not object to her receiving presents, and Tony who accusingly sees her as a whore. Rita never realises the real Tony in whom she reigns supreme, and Tony never endeavours to see through Rita who says that she might pretend with every one else and not with him.

The problem of communication arises between Tony and Rita because theirs is not love but only passion. Therefore, it does not rest on faith and conviction, but feeds on indecisions and speculations. Currimbhoy employs sex as one of the theatrical techniques “. . . not simply to exploit the audience’s emotions but to make a point” (L. Meserve, and Walter J. Meserve 18). The Doldrummers exposes the characters’ fancy
for unusual passions which are devoid of a sense of nobility. The ensuing dialogue, through the observation of the intellectual Joe, becomes critical of the situation:

RITA: (to Tony) I'm one step ahead. I understand you, honey.

TONY: That's 'cause I hear music when we kiss.

RITA: Let's kiss

TONY: [They kiss] Ho-hum ... again

[They kiss again]

RITA: Not bored, are you?


JOE: Aww, cut it out!

TONY: [Pre-and-post occupied]

Why ... don't you ... get yourself a girl?

JOE: It's no fun having one ... 

TONY: Then get yourself two.

JOE: The problem's not mathematical Tony. Like one and one makes two. My mind doesn't work that way. It gets deeper and deeper, and love becomes no different from any other four-letter word. (1.1.12-13)

Being galvanised by unusual impulses, Rita rushes to the sea to drown herself. Only then, Tony comprehends the magnitude of the situation and follows Rita recklessly to the rescue. In the attempt, he realises that he cannot swim. Like a child crying out for his mother, he cries out to Rita for help. Rita responds to him, and saves
the life of the half-drowned boy. But the irony of the situation is, it is not Rita who has guarded the life of Tony, it is Tony who becomes the sustaining factor for Rita to hold on to her breath. Liza, Rita’s foe-turned-friend authorises the truth: “If it weren’t for Tony, Rita would be dead today” (2.2.88). In addition to Lizza’s report to the policeman, we are given the strangest news through him that Joe’s body was washed ashore on the previous night.

The official reports conclude that the cause and motive behind the suicide are beyond their conjecture, for there was a blissful expression on the dead man. Rita reads the story from another angle. Joe has deliberately abnegated himself from Rita and Tony, for his presence is no longer necessary. However, in tune with what he has said earlier that an “action initiated finds its own meaning . . .” (1.2.52), Joe leaves behind him a diamond ring as a proof to his relationship with Rita. At a still deeper level, his death can be counted as an act of atonement for what he has done to Rita. Therefore, he achieves peace which transcends all understanding.

The Doldrummers, who have hitherto lived as fragments of the society, whose sole aim is self-gratification, undergo a sea change after the drowning scene. The dramatist shores them against their ruins to mark the truth that there is no desperation but determination. Rita decides that her child shall have a father. Tony sings a melody invoking the spirit of Joe, the dear departed, to accompany him to where the doldrums end, for every end leads up to a new beginning, reminding us of the opening and concluding lines in T.S. Eliot’s “East Coker”: 
In my beginning is my end . . . (1)

. . . In my end is my beginning. (209)

Thorns on a Canvas stages the conflict between institutionalised art and individual art. The state patron of the Academy shows an extraordinary interest in initiating a group of musicians, painters, dancers and sculptors. His beautiful daughter, Malti, a foreign-returned painter, has been promised a studio all to herself in the academy. In opposition to the “exciting and colourful confusion” (1.9), in the institution, the audience are shown an unusual sight of an unshaven youngman in indifferent clothes with a rose in his hand and beside him, an obese, moronic, ugly young woman is found blowing up soap bubbles. The exposition enables the viewers to anticipate an atmosphere of illusion and reality, ugliness and beauty, suffering and realisation. In Currimbhoy's works though the element of thought dominates, man in action is the real spectacle of his dramatic situation.

The conflict between freedom and constraint is externalised when the performers comment on the unemotional and repetitive activities of their centre:

NEELA: . . . Sometimes I fell as a puppet does . . . attached to strings . . .

dancing to a tune (dances jerkily)

MALTl: . . . is that why my brush also sometimes moves against its will . . . (each personally pre occupied)

NEELA: (each personally preoccupied) . . . like the compulsory national anthem in school to which we had to march and I hated it so . . . (2.17)
Malti, the principal character, who at first is enamoured of galleries and art exhibitions which are easily within her reach, understands neither life nor art. Hence, she is shown in disagreement with other characters and artists. Her education begins the moment she draws a caricature of Nafesa exaggerating her ungainly looks and form. Nafesa sheds tears of humility and shame. Yakub, the born artist, who has to disguise himself as Bukay, the manager of the academy to fend for his life, bursts with frightening rage and tells her: “You should not have done that” (2.33).

As a novice of the privileged class she is protected from darkness and poverty of the slum areas where Yakub is raised. Yakub’s claim is that one has to learn art before one is taught. Saying so, he drags Malti to the other side of the hedge to experience art which is unknown to her. Malti observes Yakub in his art form of a Qawali singer, and is thrilled by the dance and the music. In her willingness to learn from life, Malti is activated to choose between her father-patron who obscures her identity, and Yakub who opens new vistas of art and life. She has to decide between dehumanised art and the compassionate art. With great expectation, she goes to Yakub’s room only to learn the truth that they are in an intimate embrace. She sobs with humiliation, anguish and indignation. Yakub questions her:

```
It hurt, didn’t it? or don’t you remember . . . the hurt given to others? Those who have no words . . . remain unseen . . .
mutter only in pain, supported by laughter . . . (5.61)
```

Yakub's intention is to help Malti acquire the depth of life which forms the third dimension of art, while the other two dimensions centre around the surface reality.
Truth of life is perceivable not in isolating and acclaiming joy but in associating it with pain which comes from realisation of life. Without it there can be no awareness: "Without it there can be no birth . . . no greatness in painting" (4.49). Malti studies the implication of the statement and proceeds to focus on all-encompassing art. Thereafter, neither personal joy nor sorrow but the total experiences of humanity get predominance in her approach to art. She desires to share her quest for self-identity with Yakub:

... oh come with me, ... I have so much to show you. A new line, a new colour. I'm no longer tired or sad or hurt. I feel . . . a change. It must express itself . . . urgently. It's like an unknown experience . . . I must share it . . . realize it . . . with you. Won't you come . . . Won't you, please? (6.69)

Akin to Malti who has been tossed between her father and Yakub, Yakub is placed between Nafesa and Malti. Currimbhoy's introduction of more than one woman to comment on the life of a hero reminds us of James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Akilan's Tamil Novel Pavaivillakku and Patrick White's The Vivisector which deal with the theme of life of an artist.

Thorns on a Canvas presents the growth of Malti, the painter, from illusion to illumination. But Malti is only a circumference, the centre is Yakub. Therefore, the play is also about Yakub who has lost his spark of creativity in the mere management of academy activities, and how the women around him create him anew. Fulfilment through art comes to Yakub first through Nafesa who signifies the physical forces, and secondly through Malti who acts as his spiritual complement. It is shown in the
Yakub gives Malti when she asserts that the portrait drawn by him is hers:

**YAKUB:** No, that was hers too. I painted her as she lay naked on the sofa. As it turned out, the image was yours. The reality... hers.

She contained all... you accidentally possessed, but could not realize, for there are as many yours as there are Goddesses we needs must create and idolize... (6.62)

While viewing art in close alliance with religion and sensual pleasure in the novels of White, Chellappan observes that

... the artist-god is an image of the god-artist and in his journey towards his vision and redemption he is assisted by women with whom he is in apparent conflict. (24)

Yakub is in conflict with Malti who has got a beautiful exterior, but an ugly interior which takes delight in ridiculing the underprivileged. As an artist who destroys in order to recreate Yakub destroys Malti’s ego and her superficial outlook on life to recreate her. Therefore, he invites her to come to terms with Yakub-Nafesa association.

Malti is aggrieved by Yakub’s neglect and indifference, but Yakub defends his stance:

Do you understand, Malti? Do you understand! It wasn’t you I hated or loved, simple though it would have been...

(softly) ... and if I brought you pain, it wasn’t because I felt no compassion... (going upto her)... we became...
In a triangular relationship Yakub, the mind, sways between Nafesa, the body, and Malati, the soul. Yakub, as a performing artist, sees the difference in his art in the company of these two women. Though he might have sung over and over again, he acknowledges that his performance had not attained perfection, for it was done to appease one's hunger. In other words, it was Art for life's sake. On the contrary, when he plays the tabla for Malti, he feels the effusion of joy. With a spark of life he confesses to Malti that his earlier performance is not better than hers and if it is remarkably distinct now, the reason is, it is their own: "... it was our own. It even survived because it was our own. Yes, we must. We must try... again" (6.69).

The soul, being purged of its undesirable components, renders wholesome support to the mind to redefine itself in new perspectives. Yakub decides to accompany Malti in a moment. At the other end, Nafesa, the body, re-emerges to assert its possession over the mind. But as the mind has already been convinced of the relevance of the soul to the onward movement of the artist, the protagonist "looks back at her, wistfully, with distant poignancy, unmoving afar... "(6.70).

Thorns on a Canvas does not adopt O' Henry's dramatic twist at the end of the dramatic action. Currimbhoy hardly believes in the doctrine of surprise conclusions. Like all great dramatists, whose mark of genius rests on introducing an element of expectation in the theatre-viewing, Currimbhoy helps us anticipate Yakub's decision to leave Nafesa, not through the character himself but through Nafesa, the person
concerned, who tells him: “I know . . . inspite of what you say . . . that you will not stay with me . . . always (5.63).

Yakub’s leaving off Nafesa may remind us of Prince Hal turning away from Falstaff after getting all he could out of him and then repudiating the debt in Shakespeare’s Henry IV, Part I. But it should be borne in mind that there is no casting off roles but merging of roles in Thorns on a Canvas. The evolution of the artist’s life is linked with four women, “two sensuous and creative, and two spiritual and domestic, and ultimately all merge into one and also identify Beauty with Truth” (Chellappan “Self” 32), in Akilan’s Pavaivillakku. Similarly, the two women, Nafesa and Malti who emphasise physical needs and creative inclination, coalesce into one, enabling Yakub to make new marches and fresh conquests in the field of art.

Another play, which holds a subtle balance of conflicts that has popularly earned its author a privileged distinction of being the first Indian dramatist to have one of his plays performed on Broadway, is Goa. Graham Greene wrote to the playwright: “It would require several readings before I could appreciate it fully, but it strikes me as a most remarkable piece of work” (2 December 1964). The play is acclaimed as most remarkable because it presents a masterful, exciting theatrical event. The main structure that Currimbhoy wants to present in Goa is that the girl whom the hero loves, he rapes. The dramatist combines this love theme with a rich and ambiguous political situation in Goa on the eve of Indian invasion.
The opening scene shows Rose and Krishna on the balcony recalling to our memory a Romeo and Juliet Scene. However, there is something unnatural about the touchingly romantic scene, for Rose tells Krishna:

\[ \ldots \text{But my heart is full of love: the more for you are unknown to me . . . touch me not Stranger . . . and I shall love you all the more. . . . (1.1.15-16)} \]

As a background to this romantic strangeness in the life of individuals, we have the political strangeness when the Goan nationalist expresses his love-hate attitude to the colonial rule in his discussion with the Portuguese Administrator:

\[ \text{GOAN NATIONALIST: Strange that we should be on different sides of the fence and yet have so much in common with each other.} \]

\[ \text{PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATOR: I told you . . . We are part and parcel of each other's lives} \]

\[ \text{GOAN NATIONALIST: And yet it is inevitable that we should break away. There is bound to be a reaction, of course, but that is again unavoidable. . . . (2.1.55)} \]

Similarly, Senhora Maria Miranda's, love for Portugal is exemplified in her heightened consciousness of colour and race. Her claim that her parents are of Portuguese origins, hardly earns recognition, because Rose, her daughter, is dark and
deaf too. And Krishna, the dark Indian, informs Maria that she may have white skin but that does not prove a thing: “You’ve got shades of black within you, Maria. Rose wouldn’t come out dark unless there was dark blood somewhere . . .” (2.1.60).

The Goans like and dislike the colonial rule. Senhora Miranda is caught in a similar mesh of love-hate affinity for Rose. As a protective and loving mother, she keeps her daughter inviolate. In fact, when Krishna and Alphonso rival with each other to love and seek Rose, they are obligated to court the mother first: “You’ll have to pass by me first . . .” (1.2.48) says Maria. At the end, even after Rose turns into a prostitute, she expresses firmly: “She’s not a whore sir. I am that but not her . . .” (2.3.88).

Maria admits the fact that Rose is her child, dark though she is. But her description regarding the birth of Rose stretches to the point of self-hatred.

MARIA: She came from my womb . . . 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. . . . (1.2.37)

Alphonso is aghast and tells her, “what a dreadful love is yours, Maria. It’s frightening” (1.2.37). Another person, to comprehend the depth of Maria’s awful love-hate attitude to Rose, is Krishna. Maria guards Rose against sex hazards. But Krishna perceives in her protectiveness, an unconscious as well as a deliberate attempt to prepare for Roses’ eventual rape, which would be an emotional shock to her purity. Krishna questions Maria thus:
Why was she innocent? When you were fair and blemished yourself? If Rose was he, and he was Rose, what would be the best vengeance? A nail for a nail and tooth for a tooth, Maria. That which cannot remain innocent any longer if blemished. ...(2.2.77)

The conflict between the natural and the distorted has already been introduced by Milton in Satan's perception of the merciful and loving Almighty as unjust and tyrannical in The Paradise Lost. Therefore, the need arises to invade Edenic innocence. The prototype is faithfully re-defined by Currimbhoy in a new social milieu in the plays, The Doldrummers and Goa.

Krishna helps Maria single out her intentions. He tilts her to his favour. He advises her to express her hate not to him but to Rose, for she is the stigma of illegitimacy. Hence, by assisting him to rape Rose, she would see Rose suffer the same pain and horror she herself felt, and thereby relieve her of the guilt. In the process, she would have the satisfaction of having her revenge on Rose.

Being ensnared by Krishna, Maria much against her will, complies with him to rape Rose and the event thus becomes an act of collusion. Just as Joe, in The Doldrummers, who chooses Rita "... the cleanest of them all to go through the worst" (1.2.51), Maria has to choose Rose, the purest of them all, to complete the cycle of horror.

Maria embodies masochism for she frequently tortures herself with the thoughts of her ignominy, and witnessing Rose's rape is in equal effect to being
disgraced vicariously. Her sexual escapades with Krishna is an uncharitable violation of the self. It is a deliberate psychological assault on the persona: “Maria is perhaps one of the best and most intriguing pieces of characterisation within the play and certainly one that demands a talented and resourceful actress” (Daphne Pan. “Asif Currimbhoy’s Goa: A Consideration”. The Journal of Indian Writing in English 77-97).

Another character, who shows psychological complexity, and an apparently unfathomable nature, is Krishna. Maria sees him as a mixture of polarities. She asks him gently and softly:

Why are you so full of opposites, Krishna? Soft and hard. Love and hate. Young and old. Peaceful and violent. Yes, you have potential. You cover the full range of the known and unknown. But there is also that crack within you, Krishna. You don’t let your opposites come into full play, you’re pushing one side too hard. So be careful, Krishna... (2.1.62)

Currimbhoy’s portrayal of the Indian mind is essentially peace-loving: “But because it is peace-loving it is frequently obliged to make compromise and to acquiesce so that eventually it cracks under the strain” (Pan 78).

For Krishna, Rose is the only desired object in his life, and he will stop at nothing to be with her. Maria sees the vulnerable in him, and works it to her advantage. Consequently, Krishna does what he thinks expedient. The greatest tragedy is the circularity of thought process. Thinking in unhealthy ways leads to unhappiness and
being unhappy fosters unhealthy ways of thinking. A vicious circle develops, which produces and maintains a depressive syndrome. Krishna kills that one instinct of pure love which has to be whored in order to get pure love. In the processes, it gets stained.

Currimbhoy's The Doldrummers evinces the tragic consequences of a similar paradoxical situation, when Rita, the principal character whores her love to get to Tony. Krishna, in Goa, proves himself a victim of survival finding it hard to cope with forces which are beyond his control. When Maria discloses his blemished love to Rose, at a crucial moment, Krishna loses self-control, and the man that subsequently re-emerges is terrifying in his nature. He kills Alphonso and blames Maria for having robbed him of that innocence and blemished him with compulsion greater than his own. He then moves on to rape Rose and as a final diabolical touch he seeks her mother's assistance at the rape:

The rape is indeed a monumental violation-of Rose, the innocent girl, who had been taught to fear, even the touch of man-of Maria who relived the deepest horror of her own rape and most of all, of his own essentially gentle nature... (Pan 81)

Similar to the character of Yakub in The Thorns on a Canvas who seeks fulfilment through two women, Krishna in Goa does develop relationship with two female characters. Of them, Maria, the mother wrecks his peace and Rose, the daughter, drains the last vestige of impurity in him by murdering him. The cultivating process of death enables the character to rest in peace. In most of his plays, Currimbhoy expresses
“the realities of people who are different and who are continuously demanding things of each other creating intricate human relationships and subconscious tragedies . . .” (Pan 78)

Currimbhoy has used the political and the socio-realistic setting as an allegory for the human tragedy. The two-fold actions, the historical event and the gruesome personal tragedies of the main characters in the play, disclose and highlight each other reiterating their respective significance. Alphonso’s words “… Rose is Goa. Goa is Rose” (1.2.37) stand as an evidence. The fourteen-year old Rose recalls to us the fourteen long years of slavery that Goa had experienced even after India had attained her freedom. Krishna awaiting fourteen years for Rose parallels India awaiting 14 years (from 1947 to 1961) for Goa to become one with it. The day (18th December 1961) on which Krishna violates Rose is the day, the Indian troops march in, and liberate Goa thereby ending the four hundred years of Portuguese rule. But in the process, as regretted by the Goan nationalist, “the innocent and peaceful and moral image of India was blemished with her first act of violence . . . tarnished was the rose worn in the lapel …” (2.3.79)

That the play has a political scenario as its background is strengthened by its covert and overt references to the national leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru. Conspicuously, “the rose worn in the lapel” points out to Nehru and his historical role in the invasion of Goa. Apart from that, the word “Rose” glows with many meanings simultaneously on more than one level of reference. Language is not merely indicative, but also expressive: “It never expresses except by means of a likeness” (qtd. in
Dictionary of World Literary Terms 1993). Likeness does not mean visual resemblance but representation of abstract ideas: "The symbol is imitating (in the sense that all art is mimetic) something invisible" (1993). Currimbhoy introduces figures of thought for three reasons: to create atmosphere, to establish a pattern within the play, and to focus the meaning of the play as a whole.

Rose has been given that name because she is described as "the fairest flower", and "an innocent white flower" (1.2.33-37), evoking an atmosphere of purity and beauty. But like Goa her innocence is unguarded. A symbol shares in the reality for which it stands, and it also stands for a reality beyond itself. The name Rose suggests an innocent loveliness. But the corresponding reality on the other level suggests something different to Maria:

The bud unfurled itself like a flower. That's why I called her Rose, the colour of blood that broke when she was conceived. Now you understand why she's immaculate . . . purity, like the rose flower, always comes from the dung-filled soil. . . . (2.1.64)

Krishna extends the connotation of the word Rose, an inch above, and questions Maria:

Who took your innocence, in that night fertile with horror . . . innocence reminded only . . . by Rose? Bringing back that memory; constantly reminding. Rose. Rose. Who was born of your original sin. Rose. Dark Rose. . . .(2.2.76)
Rose is considered as the stigma of bastardy in close association with Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*, who "had sprung a lovely and immortal flower", out of the "rank luxuriance" (Waggoner "The Scarlet Letter", *Interpretations of American Literature* 15) of a guilty passion.

Pearl grows into a happy womanhood. But Rose, the prospective flower is nibbed in the bud; the sole reason being her own mother, Maria, who is seen as more sinning than sinned against. Maria utters curses at the stranger who has made her impure. The situation recapitulates Blake's *London* where everything is given over to trade:

```
But most through midnight streets the poet hears
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse. . .(13-16)
```

The quality of ambivalence is ingeniously given more force and attention by the symbol of the cross. Maria puts the necklace with a gold cross that Alphonso gave her around Rose's neck. Rose is as beautiful as the cross. At the same time, she signifies the "heavy cross" (2.3.87) that Maria has to bear. Suggestively, on the night of the invasion and rape, lightning strikes the cross atop the church which falls. And Rose screams, with pain and horror.

As Maria has turned the noble and the ideal in the relationship between Krishna and Rose into something ugly, loathsome and disheartening, she is associated with a
beast. Maria uses the word predatory to describe herself. Her eyes sparkle snake-like when she preys upon others. Currimbhoy's clever use of flower imagery to describe the loveliness of Rose, and the animal imagery to refer to the fearful symmetry of Maria may make the audience question him to justify the ways of the artist in introducing the wonderful and the terrible human characters in the play. Blake raised a similar question, "Did he who made the lamb make thee" on looking at the tiger. The awareness is, beauty and ugliness, love and fear, good and evil, innocence and experience constitute the composite nature of human existence.

Currimbhoy hardly makes any explicit moral judgement: "Values of relatives and there are invariably factors at work over which one may have little or no control . . ." (Pan 89). Men are beasts of burden. They are victims of their own nature of half-good and half-bad. The Patio walks in the play embody the concept. Greene has stated in his letter to Currimbhoy that he finds "the atmosphere of the Patio extraordinarily moving" (2 December 1964).

In the first scene, Maria makes her grand entrance through the long Patio walk, and in the last Krishna hides behind the Smuggler, due to moral degradation expressing his inability to make that walk anymore. Goa is a finely balanced and structured play and Currimbhoy's strength lies in the economy of style:

The scenes move with relentless momentum, alternating between fierce confrontations and temporary respites, culminating in the artistically wrought rape scene with its mind-boggling intensity. . . .(Pan 86)
Currimbhoy's forte as a playwright is seen in his ability to create dramatic scenes in Goa which are non-linear in their progression. Each scene reflects on other scenes which both precede and follow it. The first scene which depicts the heart warming romance of the young lovers is balanced by the last scene which closes with the traumatic experience. Similarities, repetition, and transverse parallelisms among scenes are essential to create a dense texture of the play. But good artistry lies in the spicy variation with which Currimbhoy overcomes the stifling sense of monotony.

The three main characters, Maria, Alphonso and Krishna, are made to take the long Patio walk before the eyes of the bench-watchers. But each performs it in a singular way which elicits different reactions from those who have assembled. As an accomplished playwright, Currimbhoy provides ample scope for vivid actions that compel attention. While offering coffee to Krishna, Maria tells him that she always takes two spoons of sugar; but Rose takes only two:

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. ... (1.3. 48)

A diabolic wish that she has to be courted first, is revealed in the dialogue, that is simple, situational, expressive, natural, and relatively free from affectation and awkwardness.

After the rape, Rose is found "... like some living quivering animal that lies helplessly in the dark, with her eyes and ears closed..." (2.3.90), But she is still warm and very tender to the touch of sense. Throughout the play, the dramatist takes
advantage of the tactile strength of the characters, especially of Rose, in the final scene, when she says,

\begin{verbatim}
Don't touch me. . . Don't touch me.(screaming) DON'T TOUCH ME. . . MOTHER! DON'T HOLD ME! IT'S HIM,
MOTHER! IT'S HIM! (2.3.92)
\end{verbatim}

The dramatist's introduction of typographical changes at moments of crisis can be realised on the stage by tonal variation which may increase the tempo of the play. Rose screams, and emerges still with blind over her face, "the negligee torn and blood-stained, to her mother's arms" (2.3.92) crying: "Take the blind off, mother! take the blind off! I want to see... I won't have to wait any longer ..." (92).

Having spent the emotions of revenge and murder on Krishna's death, Rose may come to realise that the alternative measure to violence is peace, and not more violence. In her desire to see again, Rose reverts to her earlier noble self with an intense urge to learn to live and not merely exist.

The orchestration of action and thought is manifested in the effective handling of symbols which lends unity to most of his plays. For instance Currimbhoy's pre-occupation with Rose as a symbol and character finds its germination in the play Thorns on a Canvas which satirises the totalitarian attitude of the art academy. The Parton, who ironically wears a Gandhi-cap, does not promote autonomy, but attaches thorny strings to the artist. In all figures of thought,

\begin{verbatim}
... the validity of the image is one of a true analogy, rather than verisimilitude; it is, as Plato says, not a mere
\end{verbatim}
resemblance... but a real adequacy... that effectively reminds us of the intended referent... (World Literary Terms 322)

The title Thorns on a Canvas refers to two different worlds that an artist traverses. One is fancy and the other is reality. An artist, who rejects reality in favour of fancy, a "deceiving elf," to escape from the burden of life may have to ultimately fall upon the thorns of life and cry in anguish: "Was it a vision or a waking dream / Fled is that music-Do I wake or sleep?" ("Nightingale" 79-80).

Reality which admits the actuality of the pain of human life should be enforced upon imagination because it is but a state in the process of life in general. The first scene in Thorns on a Canvas ends up with Yakub coaxing Malti to take the rose from him:

As soon as she touches the stalk, she utters a sharp cry as the thorn pierces her finger. The rose falls and she looks frightened and tearful at the bright blood on her finger... (1,12)

The mime pictures the inevitable picking that every one in general and Malti in particular has to experience in the rest of the play. On an erotic level, it portends the eventual desertion of characters. Initially, Yakub deserts Malti which pricks her inflated sensibility. But realisation helps her shed redemptive tears. After due purgation, Malti, like Dante's Beatrice, invites Yakub to paradise in her optimistic words that she has a new line and a new colour to show him.
In the concluding scene, Yakub leaves Nafesa who has but only a bare thorny stalk of a rose. The play shows Nafesa plucking the petals of the rose. As she cannot offer a new hope and a new promise, Yakub who desires to evolve into a higher being accepts Malti, for she stands for the totality of life. The pricking quality of the title has yet another meaning to convey to the readers. It is on a biographical level of the playwright.

The stage censor placed a total ban on the public performance of The Doldrummers without attributing any reason. Many protested against the ban. Currimbhoy fought tooth and nail and succeeded in having the ban lifted by the State government. The placing of the ban recalls to us what Ernst Toller who once said:

The increasing persecution of the products of the mind indicates that the dictators of this world have realised the power of the word and the moral nature of art and are afraid. (qtd. in Nigam 25-26)

The censor argued that the play, The Doldrummers, was indecent and immoral. But that is only a superficial view. None can ignore the artist's strong protest against a prudish and complacent society which gives birth to immorality and indecency. The doldrummers are shown wearing hats and ties carrying umbrellas and are working from ten to five: "The red bottoms and curly tops" (1.1.24) expose the death in life state of the dropouts. Joe says thus: "And some things within us also die. For while nothing in the dead can live something in the living can die..." (1.1.27). These lines are identical with Eliot's account of the difficulty in rousing oneself from the death in life in which
the people of the wasteland live. A living death is one in which men have lost the awareness of good and evil.

The doldrummers are morally depraved people, and therefore they exist as breathing animals in human shape. Currimbhoy, it is evident, makes extensive use of the idea of death by water as an integral part of the play. The scene of action is a shack at Juhu beach in the suburbs of metropolitan Bombay, and in the climax, Rita and Tony emerge as riders to the sea to suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange. Joe's death brings new dimensions to the existence of Tony and Rita. The anthropological idea of death by water is part of the explication of the fertility rites narrated by Jessie Weston in From Ritual to Romance.

The death of Joe, which carries the suggestion of rebirth, adds authenticity to Rita's determination to have his child. Water as in The Waste Land becomes an instrument of destruction as well as rejuvenation. The end of the play confirms Nietzsche's observation:

Everything goes, everything returns,
the wheel of existence rolls for ever.

Every thing dies, everything blossoms anew,
the year of existence runs on for ever.

Currimbhoy handles varied topics in his plays. Yet, there is a unity of vision, and a unity of approach that correlate his plays. In the conflict between the priestly and the beastly tendencies, the dramatist expresses compassion for the condition of man:
Perhaps compassion is that force which unifies the drama of Asif Currimbhoy. (L. Meserve, and J. Meserve Foreword 9-20)

The third world dramatists are much fascinated by social realism which gives them maximum opportunity for protest and comment. But Currimbhoy's focus is not on localised and immediate problems alone. His dramas are intensely concerned with the problems of man everywhere. The flight of the Dalai Lama in Om Mane Padme Hum, the invasion of Goa, the plight of the anguish-ridden people in The Refugee, Sonar Bangla and Inquilab, Gandhiji's inner conflict in An Experiment With Truth, the problems faced by the English tea planters in Darjeeling Tea? and the disintegration of the Jewish family in This Alien. . . Native Land, are some of the agonising problems encountered by the dramatic characters in particular and humanity in general, for every man is a refugee, a captive, and an object of violence looking forward to the world which

. . . has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out form the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action. . .("Gitanjali" 35)
Into that heaven of freedom and fraternity, Currimbhoy intends to lead his viewers. Action, through thought, then, is principal key to his artistry. The Hungry Ones represents the same. It reminds us of Bhabani Bhattacharya’s novel So Many Hungers which unfolds the story of “a largely man-made hunger” arising on account of the atrocities committed by pitiless “hoarders, profiteers and blacketeers” (Srinivasa Iyengar 412), in compliance with the Government which was blindly devilish in its operations.

Currimbhoy’s hungry ones reveal their hunger for life and hunger for death. So the writer expects us to have compassion not only for their sufferings but also for their sense of “pride and shame, ‘their’ privacy and reserve”, their “personal failure” and “secret” (3.38).

The American beatnik-poet Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky come to Calcutta, the riot-torn and famine-stricken capital of Bengal. On the other side, we are shown two Bengalis, a man and a woman, wearing beggar-like tattered clothes. The man begins to perform “a monkey act” (26), which is often played in India: “He drags himself on the pavement, like a deformed hungry beggar slapping his stomach, inviting pity, revulsion, charity” (26).

The Americans, on the contrary, do all sorts of funny things; from yoga to atheletics, and from carpet prayer to frug-dance to draw the attention of Razia, the beggar woman. They want to break through the mystery of the hungry act whereupon the voices of the two Indians echo softly:
... so you want to become
one of us, stranger,
hungry one...?
then learn: stranger, learn...
HUNGER! (1.30)

Sam and Al try to come to terms with the abject suffering of Ramesh, the beggar, while performing the monkey act. Yet they cannot understand why the beggar has refused to accept the food and the money they have offered him. They see the beggar dragging himself up to an urchin child to get food from him. The child, out of pity, takes out some of his own food (possibly from mouth), and puts it in the mouth of the man. The idea is, the intensity of hunger can be identified and acknowledged only by people who are sailing in the same boat of distress. Accordingly, we see the beggar-man distributing food to the poor and the needy. Being unable to comprehend the uncommon trait in the common, Sam comments,

Strange, isn't it, Al, that at one point of time we see them begging for food, and at the other they are giving alms. ...(9.52)

Sam realises that they have to earn their food the same way as Ramesh has earned with his blood. Meanwhile, Al sees Ramesh practising yoga and meditation which give him inner strength to stand against all privations. Al tries to challenge the mental strength of Ramesh, the beggar-man, by attempting to rape Razia. When he is
about to perform the act, Sam barges in, saves Razia, and tries to murder Al. But the woman begs him to spare Al. Sam explains to Al,

He's not faking, Al. It's true what he does. It's real.

Not like us, faking strength and superiority,

pretending to know about their religion and yoga...

She still wants to save us, Al save us both from our goddammed selves, when it would be so much easier for both of us to kill ourselves... (9.50)

But Sam and Al do not kill themselves. Instead Ramesh kills himself on account of the humiliation experienced by his wife in the hands of Al. He, who sat silent, when Al tears open Razia's bed-sheet in his attempt to molest her, kills himself behind the screen leaving Razia to crave for his love in vain. The two Americans return to their soil acknowledging their inability to understand the mystery of India which is a land of contradictions.

As in other plays, Currimbhoy administers the technique of parallels and contrasts. On one side the beatniks perform yoga and meditation, and on the other, the beggars perform their monkey act. On the one hand, the hungry men slap their stomachs inviting at once pity, revulsion and charity, and on the other, is the fat person sitting at the table, eating and gorging himself with greasy and fatty food. At one level we have an atmosphere of arson, loot and communal riots, and at the other level we have chantings from the national epics advising us to learn action, meditation,
detachment, peace, harmony, and love. It follows that the central justification of art lies in its reconciliation of various opposites.

The dramatic action in *The Hungry Ones* is cyclical in its nature. It begins with the Americans' desire to learn about India, and it ends with their understanding that they are incompetent learners. The dramatist treats sympathetically their learning process for "they do learn even if what they learn is that they can never learn" (L. Meserve, and J. Meserve 18). D.H. Laurence writes in "The Spirit of Place",

> Art has two great functions. First it provides an emotional experience. And then, if we have the courage of our own feelings, it becomes a mine of practical truth. (*Studies in Classic American Literature* 461)

Theatre art, to Currimbhoy, embodies dramatised human experience by presenting before us the implications and possibilities of life. It explains to us what we are and what we could be. It sharpens our sensibilities and sense of values. Currimbhoy portrays the contradictory voices of India which smile sadly through death amidst the agony of believing without hope:

> The Hungry Ones is most characteristic of Currimbhoy's work-extremely theatrical and a strong determined, tense statement about man and about India in very physical and compassionate terms. . . . (L. Meserve, and J. Meserve 9.20)

The essence of the theatre which lies in showing conflicts is related to a special tempo-rhythm in movement. Where there is life, there is action. Where there is action,
there is movement. Where there is movement, there is tempo. And where there is tempo, there is rhythm. The right measure of movement which manifests in actions creates tempo-rhythm.

Tempo-rhythm affects our inner mood. It excites not only our emotional memory but also brings our visual memory, and its images to life. Hence, it is wrong to take tempo-rhythm to mean only measure and speed. When resolution wrestles with doubt, as seen in Henry's soul in The Clock, various rhythms in simultaneous conjunction are shown. The introduction of different tempo-rhythms in the play provoke an inner struggle of contradictory feelings experienced by the actor concerned.

Just as a painter does with colours, the playwright combines all sorts of different speeds and measures in The Doldrummers. There is an even tempo when the dropouts drink, sing and indulge in sex. The tempo quickens on the arrival of the Fat and Bald Man at Rita's house, and Tony's waiting to wring the ears of the customer.

The rhythm slows down the moment when Rita's house becomes an "open house". It suddenly quickens with the quarrel between Tony and Rita leading to the arrival of the police and the narration of Liza about the saving of Tony by Rita. With the news about the death of Joe and the withdrawal of Tony into the hammock, the tempo almost slows down. This even, uneven and again even tempo-sometimes slowing, sometimes quickening-interrupts the entire play, thereby, emphasising the fact that the dropouts in society struggle to find some meaning in their lives. Varied rhythms sustain audience attention. The pantomime in the exposition scene of The Dumb Dancer runs rapidly. The dumb show of the slaughter of Duryodhana and the clinical examination
by the psychiatrist and Dilip step up the tempo. In Act II, the practice of Kathakali
dance by the disciples and the Insane Fantasy of Bhima slow down the tempo.

Similarly, when Prema poses a number of problems before the Guru and his
daughter, in act III, the tempo slows down. But with the conduct of autopsy by Dilip the
tempo speeds up. Through these rhythmical variations the playwright controls the
minds of the audience and gets them involved in the proceedings of the dramatic
events.

The awareness of verbal echoes or echoes of imagery or incident across many
scenes may be heightened in performance, bringing to full realisation the visual
memory prominent in every one of us. The Dumb Dancer can be successfully enacted
on the stage because Currimbhoy, as L. Meserve and J. Meserve remark, "thinks more in
terms of scenes and actions on stage" than in terms of language "to provide images to
stimulate the minds, the ears and the eyes of his audience" (9-20).

While Bhima performs a dance sequence from Duryodhana's slaughter in the
opening scene, Prema is found fidgetting with "one of the strands of black hair (made
of string) from Draupadi's wig which had fallen off . . . " (1.14). The way she twists the
black string around her fingers betrays her fear under an "apparently cool exterior" (15).

Prema gets up to make an appreciative speech on the fascinating performance: "She
subconsciously looks at her fingers for the first time, wrestling with the string . . ." (15).

The action urges her to compare terror, which is aroused by Bhima's dance, to a
"taut string" (15). The string as a symbol is highly suggestive. It stimulates the minds of
the viewers to anticipate Prema's identification with Draupadi, her character ideal. It is the string which enables Dilip to gauge Prema's involvement in the dance performance.

DILIP: I'm not joking Prema. You seemed part of the play.

The tension in you was unmistakable

PREMA: I... I didn't know it showed

DILIP: (no more smiling) The string. ... (1.2.17)

Prema continuously strains the string to the utmost that it gets snapped.

The thematical impact of the image is, unrestrained identification with the character is equivalent to that of a taut string. In order to convey the deeper and inarticulate feelings of the characters, Currimbhoy gives them action rather than speech. For Currimbhoy, gesture is a precise and powerful expression.

Another example of how a symbol takes a visual form on stage can be cited from The Dumb Dancer. Prema suggests a shock experience to Bhima which might bring him back to normalcy. Dilip calls her mad. Prema replies:

Mad! Mad! Mad! Mad! That's all you can say.

Stand on the edge of a Precipice and look down.

Drive into the inner depths of an ocean.

There is a vertigo that beckons you...

beyond the point of no return. (1.2.23)

The vertigo symbol is sinister in its implications, for it suggests to us that there is no point of return for a viewer who falls from a precipice, or a diver in to the unfathomable depths of an ocean. Similarly, there is no point of return for Prema. As
she cannot hold herself back from Bhima, she will soon be absorbed in his world of insanity.

Given a religious interpretation, the context acquires a wider appeal, for it advocates the ill-effects of attachment as shown in Bhagavad-Gita, on Sankhya yoga.

While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops and from lust anger arises. (2.62)

From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool. (2.63)

Bhima and Prema develop unwarranted attachment which ruins their life. The Indian theatre emphasises the transcendental power of acting, and the performer's ability to raise the spectator's consciousness above the level of ordinary life to a spiritual awareness. The artistic strength of drama chiefly lies in concentration and immediacy. And brevity, which is an inherent liability in the dramatic form, can be overcome by the use of figures of speech which lends an impression of magnitude and subtlety to the play.

A drama bereft of imagery or symbols would be poorer form whatever aspect we regard it. Imagery or symbol as a genuine metaphorical expression reveals a significant and suddenly perceived relation between an abstract theme and a subject closer to the experience of the senses.
As revealed in the title, the clock is a symbol, standing for Time-an abstract entity, making an appeal to the aural-visual experience of the characters. The clock is the story of a man who loses the track of time, but keeps looking at the clock all the time. The knowledge that "life is one way street with neat little blocks sliced up in years-all chronologically numbered if not in multiple progression" (18) increases his awareness of time. But this knowledge is not a blessing but a curse, for he is frustrated in an attempt to realise the dead lines of his business.

The authorial comments that life is transient and time is irretrievable makes him shrink from normalcy. Something seems to snap in Henry's mind. With the savage cry he smashes the wall-clock. Henry's response to time in the beginning is one of escapism forgetting that the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well. When fighting becomes impossible and escape impracticable, he endeavours to destroy time. Henry fails to keep pace with time. Instead of accepting the reality of limitation, and of discovering alternate routes to success, he runs counter clock wise by trying to defeat time. The clock symbol is an illustration for iterative language expression, the peculiar function of which is to appeal to the emotions, the idea or mood which has guided the dramatist's choice of theme and shaping of form.

The business of the theatre is not dissimulation but revelation. The revelation is, there is in every man the ideal and the degenerate and out of that perennial conflict Currimbhoy creates drama which is theatrically alive.

Currimbhoy is a dramatist of the emotions. The conflict which defines itself in the quality of the themes he dramatises -- the dark meanderings of our lives, the
palpable frustration, the sadness of our condition, and the agony of being caught in a net -- touches the very nature of our existence. And the physicality of the stage which contributes to the enactment of conflicts will be discussed in the ensuing chapter.