CHAPTER - V
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To act before a full and responsive audience is like singing in a hall with excellent acoustics.

-Stanislavski.

Drama, being a communal art, involves the playwright, the performers, and a larger group who watch the performance. Dramatic presentation is a collective and cordial endeavour, for what is created by the dramatist is recreated by the actors on the stage, and reincarnated in the mind of the audience. Other forms of literature make their appeal to solitary readers, but the dramatist thinks of the audience who are live, immediate and direct as he writes. The real advantage that the theatre has over the film medium is that it is live, while the film is not. People who perform in the theatre are in direct contact with the audience while those in the film are not. Depending on the interaction between the audience and the cast, theatre theorists have evolved their epoch making theories on theatre. In this regard one has to distinguish between two separate tendencies in the field of stage technique. These are convention and illusion.

Conventional staging accepts the basic idea that a performance is a ceremony in which the actors and audience take part. The stage is considered to be a platform, the settings are scenic structures, and the performers, who wear stage costumes, are basically representing personages other than themselves.

Illusory staging, on the other hand, wipes out of the mind of the audience the consciousness that he is sitting in a theatre. The stage becomes a peep-box framed by the proscenium:
Within this box, as in a special atmosphere, a story unfolds as if it were an event of the outer world rather than the result of rehearsals and of the efforts of stage technicians.


Scenically, this type of staging creates a total illusion of reality a verisimilitude, that is, it presents events, people, and settings on the stage in such a way as to persuade the spectators to suspend their disbelief and to take the illusion for actuality. In the illusionist theatre of the naturalists, recommended by Stanislavski, the Russian director, the actors identify themselves emotionally with their parts, and the audience with the characters through the actors. Consequently, the audience get doused by emotion and sensation and scaled down to "a hypnotised mass". Emotional and imaginative involvement in the dramatic illusion of a play while it is in progress, is a form of participation, whereby the events on the stage become part of our personal experience, and change us to some extent.

Brecht feels that this convention is harmful, for emotional identification incapacitates the audience to reflect critically on what is being performed before them. By contrast, Brecht desires to make an appeal to the spectator's reason. As a result, the audience develop an enquiring response which is the opposite of the theory of the catharsis that felt through terror-and-pity leading to a "calm of mind, all passion spent" (Milton 1783). The art of theatre, according to Brecht, is not a mirror reflection of life but a critical representation of reality. His epic theatre is basically non-illusory. It emphasises that a theatrical performance should not disguise itself as real life, but be presented deliberately as theatre. It follows that the process of showing must be shown.
Currimbhoy's eyes, on the other hand, are not on the course but on the finish. He disguises the stage apparatus. The stage props are meant to create the total effect of a stage environment, whether interior or exterior, in the manner of the rooms, the operation theatre, the shack, the Academy of Art, the Tavern and the hovels. The audience are not aware that they are sitting in a theatre, and the barriers between the audience and what happens on the stage are not lowered. In the world of Brecht, the lights are visible, and the stage machinery is not concealed. But Currimbhoy introduces shade and darkness where and when needed. The auditorium gets darkened, increasing the vividness of the stage action, allowing the viewers to forget their own existence. The dramatist ends the scene by a black-out which is very useful for a quick ending to create a moment of dramatic suspense.

In The Clock, to indicate a dream – scene with Henry asleep and his dream-image getting up from the couch to face the two killers, a dummy concealed in the dim indigo light takes Henry's place during the short black-out. They both resemble Henry, and this is the key that indicates to the audience that they are witnessing a dream-scene.

Understanding drama includes understanding its conventions. A convention is a covenant between author and audience that an idea will be presented in a particular way. A convention itself does not directly reflect the real world but it, nevertheless, stands for something that does, or might, happen in it. For instance, in The Hungry Ones, scenes of arson and riot are difficult to be portrayed, but the difficulty is lessened by the convention of introducing the relayed sounds of riot and arson in the darkness of the scene. In actual fact, riot and arson do not sound like that, but in a play we accept the convention, and appreciate the point it is making—that violence is hard, painful and
unpleasant. Conventions, thus, allow the audience to accept what is going on as real in a studio or on the stage.

The spectators are so used to most conventions that they hardly notice them. They know that a play is meant to portray the action of weeks, months or even years, and they accept that a great deal of time has passed even if the performance lasts two or three hours.

It means that the structure of a play - the way it is put together - must convey the passing of time. It is usually done in two ways. Time is assumed to have passed between scenes or acts, or time can pass quickly within a scene.

Currimbhoy follows both the devices. He indicates the passage of time between acts and scenes by stating that so many days have passed in the stage directions. For instance, The Doldrummers present the information regarding the passing of time in the following manner:

ACT I Scene 1 - the first day.

Scene 2 - a few months later.

ACT II Scene 1 - a few months later, late evening.

Scene 2 - the following day. (9)

In Thorns on a Canvas, the enactment of the second scene takes after “a few weeks or months later” (2.13). In Goa, the action of Act I scene i takes on one “Evening” (1.1.13); scene ii takes place on the “Following day” (1.2.17); scene iii on the same “Evening” (1.3.42); Act II Scene i takes place on the “Following day” (2.1.53); scene ii takes place on the night of “18th December 1961” (2.2.73); and “a few weeks or months later” (2.3.79) commences the last scene.
In The Hungry Ones, a lapse of "a few hours" (3.37), or "several hours" (5.45) is assumed to have passed between scenes. This convention occasionally bothers anyone studying or watching a play, but time passing within a scene can seem strange. A powerful example of a playwright's manipulation of the illusion of time passing very swiftly is shown in the last scene of Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faustus where the protagonist waits in dread for the Devil to take him off to hell. The effect is achieved within a single soliloquy:

Ah, Faustus.

Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually!
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come,

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,

Ah, half the hour is past !!! 'it will all be past anon. (67-77)

This is an evidence where the dialogue involves stage directions. A clock strikes eleven as signal for the start of the soliloquy, and it strikes half-hour immediately before the last line. It is heard once more:

O, it strikes, it strikes ! Now, body turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell. . .
Come not Lucifer!
I'll burn my books! - Ah, Mephistophilis!
The quick passing of time within a scene seems odd, but the emotional tension of the scene helps us accept the convention that treatment of time is elastic in most of the plays.

The presentation of time, in the dream sequence, in Currimbhoys The Clock, deserves a special mention. Henry closes his eyes and goes off to sleep: “The time is 11.45 p.m” (35). On the stage appear two Gunmen, the dream characters, who urge Henry to get up, for “it’s almost midnight” (35). They advise him to complete his sales target, and he has got only “ten minutes left”. Henry feels helpless and desperate. On account of which, the first gunman counsels to him, if he has got money, he can pay up, and square out. It increases Henry’s anxiety, and he requests “What . . . What time is it?” The first Gunman replies, “five minutes left” (36). Henry switches on the radio to find out whether he has won the bet money on the fighting match which is being broadcast. Just then, the commentator announces on the radio, “It’s eleven seconds to midnight. If he can only hold out for a second . . . It’s not always the best man who wins” (37).

Simultaneously, begins the referee’s counting “five . . . six . . . seven . . . Eight . . . nine . . . ten . . . He’s out. Ladies and Gentleman” (37). Henry’s fighter is defeated, and therefore he informs the Gunmen about his willingness to accompany them. Hence they say,

1 ST GUNMAN . Let’s go

2 ND GUNMAN. [Looking at his watch]: It’s midnight.

[Blackout. A few seconds later the beam of light falls on
HENRY’S sleeping figure. THE TIME IS STILL 11:45P.M]
Here, the playwright creates two levels of illusion. While the chronological time is made to stand still at 11.45 P.M, both at the commencement and closure of the dream scene, the dramatist creates a make-believe that time moves swiftly at the psychological level, for the dream characters constantly refer to the passing of time in their encounter with Henry. The disparity in the handling of time is hardly challenged because the success of illusion relies on heightened emotional identification. It is through the sequences of intense emotion that the spectators do not perceive the difference between the fictional time and the actual playing – time.

The dramatic medium restricts the author's opportunities for direct and unambiguous communication with his audience. As we abide by the convention that dramatic characters are independent and autonomous, it is most difficult to be sure how far we can consider what any one of them says as true and impartial, or representing the author's view. But the dramatist is at work throughout the play, directing the audience's thinking and response through a few devices. In order to acknowledge the presence of the audience and give them necessary information, the dramatist employs a few devices like prologue, spoken by a single actor; and, similarly, an explanation or interpretation is given in an Epilogue. As the use of these two devices cannot be established with reference to the plays taken for the present study, we may cross-refer to another play of Currimbhoy to confirm our observation.
The play, *An Experiment with Truth* does not have the formal division of time and space into Acts. It sprawls over wide spaces and periods of time. But it is able to handle it better with the prologue which gives essential information by going back and forth in perfect artistic freedom.

The prologue presents dreams and recollections regarding Gandhiji's assassination and the Salt March. The narrator-cum-actor questions:

Is he dead? I know he is, I knew it the moment . . . I had that shattering dream of his assassination, far away in my farm at Vermont . . . It was then that I took the long march with him.

The Salt March to freedom. It was my pilgrimage . . . My discovery that "the battle of Kurukshetra lies in the heart of man . . ." (9)

What has been stated and anticipated in the prologue is explained and interpreted by the narrator in the Epilogue that the long Salt March has come to an end, and with it everything else.

Apart from presenting the two actions which take place simultaneously, the end of the Salt March of 1930 (Shown on "the shadow-screen"), and the assassination of Gandhiji in 1948, the Epilogue attempts to interpret the action:

If the hand of God did not save him from the assassin's bullet, was it because He wanted him to take away . . .? I have journeyed far and wide . . . Never will I forget, and always do I remember, this man who led me, his kindly light . . . (66)
Every playwright is faced with the problem of introducing the audience to the circumstances of the play and of conveying to them thought which cannot naturally form part of the dialogue. One of the technical features of the dramatic form is the presentation of facts and events through the medium of words spoken by the agents themselves. The medium of direct speech gives drama cogency and power:

But a play which communicates to the audience only those passions or thoughts which the characters can communicate naturally to each other is in danger of becoming either superficial or colourless. If the action is at all vigorous, the characters may lack depth or definition; and if instead, they reveal themselves fully by slow and indirect processes like those of ordinary life, the play may be attenuated into series of conversation pieces, intellectually subtle, perhaps, but dramatically languid. . . . (Una Eellis – Fermor 97)

Therefore to convey to the spectators any considerable share of the dramatist’s understanding of his character’s experience, he must seek some further means of communicating with that audience, more rapid and direct than the instrument of strict dramatic dialogue. When we consider the ways in which this problem has been solved, we find three means that are of great significance. One is the chorus, the other is the soliloquy and the last is the process of communicating everything by implication and juxtaposition.

A chorus is an individual or group speaking directly to the audience about the action of the play. Dr. Faustus and Henry V both start and end with chorus figures
commenting on the play, and Henry IV part two begins with a chorus figure who is called Rumour. The convention of the Chorus may seem strange. On the stage are actors who are representing dramatic characters, but they are united by another figure who deliberately advertises the artificiality of the stage by objecting to be a character like the others and talking directly to the spectators about what is going on. Odd as this may appear, it is a convention that we will have to accept for the employment of chorus amplifies our understanding of the play. When the chorus in Romeo and Juliet tells us that the play is about the “fearful passage of their death-marked love,” we anticipate the course and the finish of the play. In addition, the chorus is openly helpful; the one in Henry V is there to help the audience imagine the battle field of Agincourt.

Currimbhoy adopts the convention of the chorus in Om which presents man’s search for God and outlines the different paths to salvation. As the play requires an aesthetic appreciation and deep understanding of the profound thoughts of Hinduism, “a continuous relationship is established between the chorus (who mainly recite extracts from the Vedas and the Upanishads) and the surface action of the play” (12).

The function of the chorus in this play is noteworthy for “it serves as the ‘inner voice’ and is a continuous link between this oldest faith in the world in its application to the problems of today and all times” (12).

Svetaketu, “a pale and shaken” young man in his thirties sees the shadow of a dead man lying prostrate across his path and when he begins questioning about the event, the chorus replies,
When a man departs from hence, his speech is merged in his
mind, in his breath, his breath is heat (fire), heat in the
Highest Being. (10)

Unlike the Greek chorus, which interprets and foretells, the chorus in Om gives
"verbatim reproductions only" (12), and if the frequent interpolations of the chorus
tends to divert the attention of the audience from the dramatic development of the play
rather than give it added meaning, the author suggests in his explanatory note that
Being a highly experimental play, it can really only be
judged from an actual production, and adaptations more
accordingly. It can however be said that most of the
chorus-quotations are necessary (though some can be
dispensed with), because the significance of the play lies in
its duality. (1.39)

The chorus is necessary to understand the duality between death and re-
incarnation. The most significant chorus figures, in the history of the chorus, are those
who serve the function of chorus and character. It happens when a character, so to
speak, steps out of his or her role to make a direct comment on the action of the play. It
is as if the dramatist decides that something needs to be said, so one character is made
to change his or her role to that of a public commentator on events.

Prospero in The Tempest is acting, and also role-playing when he creates a false
tempest which causes the shipwreck. He leads the dramatic action to match his own
end, all the while knowing that "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance" (5.1.27).
This is an evidence of a choric figure rising to a level much superior to what the play
can accommodate. And at last the issue of “stepping out” of role is resolved in the play only by making him bury the book and break his staff, destroying the span of the magic spell and bringing him back to the world of everyday reality.

The Guru in The Dumb Dancer is both apart from, and part of the action of the play. In so far as he is apart from the scene, he is close to the audience; an ordinary person who, like the audience, views the life of Bhima and comments in the beginning of the play: “There can be no greatness . . . without sacrifice (2.1.46). And at the end of the play he emphasises that “we must all learn to be detached” (3.1.59).

Another evidence of allowing one of the main characters to present the dramatist’s observation of life is from The Doldrummers where Joe is given an exclusive status of a commentator on events, particular or general, apart from his individual participation in the main stream of the story. Observing the dissonance between Tony and Rita, Joe makes a caustic remark on male chauvinism. It appears that

Man always pins a woman ‘neath him. Like a butterfly, with beautiful wings, spread out and pinned. For a woman. It’s crucifixion. (1.1.35)

Joe feels that many values are mere appendages and are not integral features of humanity, for love, hope, faith and friendship all boil “down to one thing alone. Me. Me. That I live, God knows how. That I shall die, that I know. This act of mine is what we all live by” (1.2.63).
Objective remarks distributed among too many characters in any play may debilitate the audience to identify the chorus figure. Hence, the dramatist lays emphasis only on one to reiterate his role as a commentator throughout the play.

While teaching the texture and form of true art, Yakub enlightens Malti, that accepting the thrust of thorns while enjoying the fragrance of rose is similar to that of accepting darkness, poverty and ugliness, which form the fundamentals of life. The paradox of life is, “The pain comes from life’s realization. Without it there can be no awareness: without it there can be no birth . . . no greatness to painting” (4.49).

Unlike Alsemero, a main character, in Thomas Middleton’s The Changeling who is allowed to make explicit the relevance of the title to a structural pattern that gives unity to the play at the end of the performance, Yakub, right from the commencement of the play keeps informing the audience that “there are no roses without thorns” (5.62) either in life or in art. The mystery of existence is that ugliness is not an absolute, but a relative factor to goodness. The idea is reinforced in Goa where Maria, the chorus figure, tells Krishna, “Purity, like the rose flower, always, comes from the dung-filled soil” (64). As a symbol, Maria stands for the dirt of the world which we must all go through to achieve the forces of life, whether they are sensual or spiritual.

The convention of making the actor step in and out of his role is similar to the device of Vidushaka, Sutrakara, or Bhagavata (the commentator - narrator) which abounds in Indian Drama. The Bhagavata who is both a character and a choric figure in Girish Karnad’s Hayavadana is a good example.

Karnad also uses female chorus in the play. But his chorus, which keeps the audience detached from any kind of emotional involvement, is entirely contrary to
Currimbhoy's use of choric conventions. We have seen, so far, actors performing the
dual role of character and chorus-figure in the plays. But in two of his plays, The Clock
and The Hungry ones, Currimbhoy introduces voices, which make only choric
observations in upholding thematic implications.

The conventions of the problem play permit a 'raisonneur' among the
characters; one who gives expression to the conclusions towards which the playwright
has been taking his readers or audience. In the last act of A Doll's House the heroine
herself takes on this function. On the contrary in The Clock, at the closure of the play a
voice remote and distant, but acknowledged as Henry's mother, floats unexpectedly
into the room informing that time is irretrievable. Hence one has to learn to utilise it
very effectively. Even if one has not made a beginning, it is never late to start if one is
serious about it. The voice wishes,

Happy Birthday, Henry, my child. You'll remember your
Mummy when you're grown-up, won't you? . . . Henry,
Listen to me closely and remember well . . . Don't let time
fly away uselessly . . . (44)

In the case of The Hungry ones, the technique of 'voice' stands for "the sound of
the woman's voice or perhaps the joint voices of the Indian man and woman, in
resonance" (1.30) echoing softly:

. . . So you want to become
one of us, stranger,
a hungry one . . .?
then learn; stranger, learn
The voice emphasises the message that one has to learn "the hunger that goes with fasting" (3. 42) which may help him develop compassion and love for the poor and the underprivileged. It is when characters make such general statements with authoritative force that the audience are led to identify the 'voice' as the voice of the author.

In addition to the chorus, the dramatist employs soliloquy as a means of revealing the intractable thoughts and feelings of an individual to the audience. Henry soliloquises five times in The Clock. And each time, he does, he deepens our understanding not merely by telling us what is at work in his mind but by unravelling in the very sequences and form of the speech, the very processes and demeanour of that mind itself. In the first soliloquy, Henry raises a question:

Why don't they understand it. There are some things I just can't do... I don't want to be bullied and I don't want to play second fiddle... I just want to be left alone. (17-18)

In the second soliloquy, Henry avows that he has been "plugging and plugging all these years" but "something seemed to go wrong everytime" so he questions "whether something was not wrong" (22) with him. The third soliloquy shows Henry's inclination to make something out of his life, but for him "there ain't much time left now..."(30).

The fourth soliloquy is short. However it is effective in presenting Henry's conflicting views as regards his love for Jean. For a man of his age falling in love with
someone as young as Jean overwhelms and frightens as though it were his first love. Yet he says,

I've never stopped to ask myself whether it was right or wrong to love you. I only know that it is . . . and that I want it to be true . . . (33)

The final soliloquy pictures Henry affirming an ideology that he will make a steadfast fight if he is on the right. However, he is not blind to the fact that the wife and kids may suffer because of one's bravado. It appears that the family has a great hold on him for which he has to choose practical means. But the end shows him not as a man of the world.

The hero is found being tossed by two equivalent but opposing forces. And when the character, through the process of soliloquy, disentangles his feelings and thoughts, the audience are on the throes of empathy for a similar strife is felt in the "theatre of the soul".

Soliloquies, which occur when a character is either alone or isolated upon the stage, are usually of two kinds: the public and the private. In a public soliloquy, a character openly addresses the spectators. It is interesting that it is often the villainous character who does this. Iago in Othello and Richard III in the play Richard III openly tell us about what they intend to do. As these characters reveal their delight in evil, and share their wicked plans with us, the audience judge them as wicked. At the same time, public soliloquies easily buttonhole the audience in the sense that despite their assessment of evil characters, they find them very attractive. A private soliloquy, on the other hand, creates a different effect. There, the audience are not addressed, but listen
in to, or over hear, the innermost thoughts of an individual. The spectators do not share the subterranean thoughts, but are aware of hearing the private questioning that is going on in a character's mind. Private soliloquies create different effects.

The chaotic anguish of Othello which finds an expression in his private soliloquies is different from the confident and the controlled manner in which Iago makes his public soliloquies showing him as a manipulator of other characters. In *Death of Salesman* Willy's mental wearing is adequately and appropriately expressed towards the end of the play by a private soliloquy in which he talks to his brother, Ben, whom Willy wrongly imagines is present.

Currimbhoy embarks on the use of private soliloquy in *The Clock*, the dramatic effect of which is to create among the audience, the character's bewilderment, mystery and conflict with no pause for an answer. Another evidence of private soliloquy is from *Goa* where the Portuguese Administrator examines his thought process regarding white colonialism. When the Portuguese came to India almost four centuries ago, they made Goa an enclave. But the Nationalist argues that the Portuguese have made Goa into a colony, instead of a small part of Portugal. Whereupon the Administrator analyses:

> Then what even if we did? We feel the same way about Goa, despite our political differences ... this is Goa, my own ... (1.2.17)

He praises a Goan village "nestling amidst green hill and valleys, the rice fields and rivers that make this" (1.2.17) a paradisal land. It is a peculiar meeting point of different cultures and religions, but he predicts:
that curious imbalance . . . cannot last, beautiful

though it is . . . (1.2.18)

The speech, thus, is "reflective of his thought process and cannot be heard by others on the patio " (1.2.17).

In Act II scene iii the Goan Nationalist soliloquises which articulates the views of the liberated Goans. The Goan Nationalist feels that he misses his old friend for he has said "Hello" to him countless times and enjoyed the glass of beer together. It is true that they had their occasional tiffs, but they enjoyed their little quarrels. He continues,

It was good fun and games and we never really intended
to be serious till . . . (He looks around surreptitiously) . . .
they wanted the invasion. And we found we wanted it too . . . (2.3.80).

He states, in the course of his speech, that he sometimes wonders "what will become of that stranger, that invader, that "liberator", who will now have to find his own peace, within himself" (2.3.80).

The soliloquies that we come across in Goa are about individuals who are in struggle and on self-analysis as seen in the case of Henry in The Clock. They are reflections on common problems. Therefore they make a wider appeal. Of the two speeches, the Goan Nationalist's soliloquy by virtue of its implied reference to Krishna's first act of sexual violence, increases the involvement of the audience.

Currimbhoy has placed with limits the use of soliloquy because it is non-dramatic in its manifestation. Men generally do not use speech as a means of revealing their thoughts and feelings in private. If they do so,
It is generally only for fragmentary sounds partly below the level of articulate speech. In listening to soliloquies our imaginations accept a kind of communication differing from that of strict drama and more nearly akin to that of narrative or lyric. (Ellis - Fermor §107).

Soliloquies are not the most direct presentation that art can achieve, and when we are listening, we are never aware of what we are doing. No man could at the moment of discovering it examine so coherently, lucidly, and logically the elements of his thoughts and passion, and drive from them the conclusion from which his actions are to commence from the next phase of the play. Such a use of soliloquy sacrifices dramatic illusion. However, it serves admirably the purpose of acquainting us rapidly with the motives and springs of the action: “though its logical and rhetorical effectiveness is supreme, its psychological probability” (108) is questionable.

Compared to the medium of chorus, soliloquy appears more flexible, and is better integrated into the body of the dialogue. However it can hardly create the impression of immediacy that derives from direct speech.

The conversation between one of the nurses and Dilip after the scene of autopsy in The Dumb Dancer is very powerful for it causes, fear, anxiety and tenseness among the viewers:

NURSE: Doctor ... Doctor ... one of the scalpels missing.

I ... I ... had counted them.

DILIP: What! I thought I told you beforehand to be

Particularly careful today. There was a visitor ...
NURSE: Nobody came near it. Nobody came near it. I swear... Nobody... Except those in the operating theatre.

[They are interrupted by a woman's piercing scream from the direction of amphi-theatre.]

DILIP: Prema! (3.2.72-73)

The dialogue is all the language of a play. Dramatic language is nearly always far more energetic than 'ordinary speech', a difference caused by the concentration and intensity of the mode: “The dynamism of the language is itself connected with the 'doing' aspect of drama its stress on action” (Watson, 15). Another evidence of dialogue creating intense effect can be quoted from Goa where Senhora Miranda gives Alphonso a clue to probe into the parentage of Rose:

SENHORA MIRANDA: Why don’t you ask me... who my father was?

ALPHONSO: You’ve already told me... he was Portuguese.

SENHORA MIRANDA: Ah!... But it's evident that I'm lying somewhere. That girl's either got the blood of her father... in which case he wasn't Portuguese... or she's got the blood of her grandfather, in which case my father was not Portuguese. (Alphonso is silent) Why are you silent, Alphonso? Wouldn’t you like to know where I'm lying? Either my child's a bastard... or I am.

ALPHONSO: (Quietly) I told you before it makes no difference to me. (36).
The dialogue in this play is by and large, distinctive and effective. But one should admit, honestly, that Currimbhoy's exercises in rhetoric sound false as seen in Krishna's long exhortation to Rose.

KRISHNA: 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. Rose. Dark Rose. Who was that colour of blood that broke out when she was conceived. Rose. Rose. Dark Rose. WHO RAPED YOU? Rose. Rose. WHO WAS IT? Rose. Rose. who reminded you of Rose. (2.2.77)

Surely, this is not effective rhetoric for it shows nothing but a string of dull and uninspired questions followed by mere a repetition of a name. T.S. Eliot and other distinguished theorists have emphasised that verse drama is the highest kind of drama. Statements of the case can be cited.

Poetic dramatist uses language as his strongest contributory means in the communication of his idea. Currimbhoy's dialogue remains an approximation to conversation, but that does not mean that he has failed to render his ideas transparent for our better understanding of them. Prose can be poetic, and the theatre through other means - setting, acting, grouping, lighting, costume, colour - can create its own poetry, and this is what Currimbhoy strives to achieve in most of his plays.
Another means of conveying the hidden thoughts and feelings to the audience is through the use of a second character who is, in part, a personification of those thoughts. This type of character is recognizable in the guise of a tempter in the devil Mephistophilis in Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus. In T.S. Eliot’s Murder in the Cathedral Thomas Beckett is confronted by four Tempters in succession. Currimbhoy’s The Clock does evince the adoption of a similar device. The two gunmen who appear in Henry’s dream are representations of his fear and anxiety. Similarly the hooded man, who makes an appearance in Bhima’s insane fantasy, and the subsequent sword tournament that is seen in the disturbed mental landscape of Bhima, projects Bhima’s incessant desire to excel Madhu, his mortal foe. This scene is again interspersed with the disrobing of Draupadi, the point of intersection being Shakuntala trying to pass the guard, the hoodman, to Bhima. The hooded man, who also wears a band of black or white cloth over the hood in the position of the eyes to obstruct any vision, catches Shakuntala by the Saree, and tears at it to unveil her. The female cries for help, and Bhima shouts with great anger, and cuts open the opponent’s stomach.

Shakuntala’s scream shatters the stillness. Bhima strides over and pulls open the hood to reveal the dead face of his rival... Madhu. Everyone looks horrified... most of all Bhima himself, from whose mouth gushes out blood... (2.2.51).

The entire scene hovers, through labyrinth of the dancer’s deranged mind. But it is obvious that Bhima desires to achieve professional greatness by combating Madhu.
and restore dignity to womanhood by slaughtering Duryodhana, the symbol of the base and the ignoble in every man.

The dramatist projects Joe as a second character to indicate ugliness which is seen behind the gossamer veil of innocence, found in every man. Tony acknowledges him physically, and bemoans over his disappearance for he was like one of his hands. And we know what a man with one arm feels. Rita on the other hand disagrees with him. Joe, for her, is a psychological reality. Therefore she thinks he never existed.

That he was only part of you and I. Something evil hidden within us. That it appeared one day as an apparition, and called himself Joe. (2.1.71)

His absence hardly means that he has been exorcised, like the demon, because he has already set into motion a host of events, and we know where they will lead to.

In Om, a visionary trilogy, Svetaketu is haunted by the fear of death, and he sees “the shadow of a dead man lying prostrate” on his way. The shadow is hardly anything but a mental projection of Svetaketu for the questions he asks himself regarding the dead man contributes to our understanding. The questions about the event are:

Why was he alive no more? Because he was dead? That was no answer. Why now, why not later? Why he, why not someone else? . . . Above all, why should the experience spell dreadful omens to me? . . . (1.15-16)
The father advises Svetaketu to get over the obsession of death, but the son questions the relevance of righteous actions during which he happens to look outside, and asks,

Do you hear anything? See anyone? He bears an image not unlike mine. He passes... like the faintest breath of life. (1.29)

Since the wife and the father confirm Svetaketu that they see no one except him, he continues his narration that how he slew once a God-like man who in turn blessed him in forgiveness. He glances out once again, and the shadow of a man in robes, silhouetted against the screen, grows larger and larger as it approaches. Svetaketu screams:

No! No! let me go. Don't you understand! [the shadow comes closer, the thundering louder]. I... killed... a saint!... [In the semi-darkness, the form of Svetaketu leaves the door to meet the shadow, and as they traverse the way back, the shadows merge to become one.] (1.38)

The episode has contemporary connotation. It refers to the assassination of the saint, Mahatma Gandhi. The treatment of symbolism gives rise to layers of meanings, depending upon the context and interpretation which the audience choose to give. For instance, the Eastern audience might relate Svetaketu’s killing of the saint to dharma the central concept around which every other revolves, and if the individual does not freely choose the good and strive to realise it, he does not progress morally. In Act III, on the shadow-screen, the image of a girl who is prostrate on the floor is shown. The voice of
the girl tells others that spiritual realisation can be obtained only by shedding their desires. When the Guru asks the voice of the girl,

Wait! "WHO ART THOU?" [The figure has disappeared, but a voice remains].

VOICE: I am ... Svetaketu. I am ... That.

It implies that Svetaketu represents the subtle essence in which all that exits has its self. The Smuggler in Goa represents evil, an inseparable force in every man. Krishna, the quiet, peaceful boy kills Alphonso, and is firm in meeting Rose. The smuggler tempts him that lurking in his shadow Krishna can see without being seen and do without being caught. He can hang upside down like a bat in the night. Krishna gets bewildered, but the Smuggler whispers in Krishna’s ears:

I’m your ... your friend, brother, myself. We are substance and shadow. I can merge myself within you ... (Darts behind KRISHNA in the darkness. KRISHNA looks around in panic as though the devil-of-the smuggler had got into him. The SMUGGLER laughs ... comes out from behind him) Looking for me ... within yourself? ... like some devil had captivated you? (2.3.84)

Krishna chides and the shadow of the Smuggler disappears. In the event Krishna is found to catch hold of his own throat, and interrogates “What’s happened? Where are you? Why does my voice sound... like yours? Or is it mine really?” (2.2.85).
Through the use of the Smuggler, a second character who is, in part, a personification of Krishna's thoughts, the dramatist informs the audience that the most insidious shadow is close to the heart and it cannot be vanquished.

Other forms of dramatic devices through which a playwright holds the interest of the audience are expectation, surprise and dramatic irony. Drama makes an intense appeal to something very primitive in us. We desire to know what is going to happen next. When the main concerns of the plot are given to us, we wish to know what will happen to the characters and how the dramatist will make it happen particularly in the case of comedies. In *The Importance of being Earnest*, the two young men, neither of whom is called Earnest, love two young women, both of whom want to marry someone called Earnest. Wilde has raised expectations that this problem will be resolved and at the end when he focuses his attention on the governess, Miss Prism, the audience heave a sigh of relief, and admire the skill with which the dramatist has handled the plot to give us a satisfying end. On the contrary, in most serious plays, every dramatist gives us a foreboding of evil. Shakespeare is renowned for the power and variety of his opening scenes which arouse expectations among the spectators. *Julius Caesar* is a fine example. The exposition scene helps us experience the tension of the on coming conflict between Caesar and those who resent his power. Similarly, we know that Miller's *Death of a Salesman* is not likely to end happily for the very title tells us that. So as the plot unfolds in such plays, we expect nothing but disaster.

The selected plays of Currimbhoy are of serious nature, and significantly all of them hold titular interest for the audience. *The Clock, The Dumb Dancers, The Doldrummers, Thorns on a Canvas, Goa* and *The Hungry Ones*, connotate that all is
not well in the dramatic world of Currimbhoy. It is generally believed that "the
audience will turn their faces to the door and their backs to the stage as soon as there is
no more to learn", (Literary terms, 166). But Currimbhoy hardly takes us by surprise
ends like O'Henry. He does not make unexpected or astonishing conclusions.
However, he puts us in a state of anxious uncertainty or expectation, the device of
which is called suspense. In other words, whether or not the dramatist is going to fulfill
the expectation he has aroused is the focal point of suspense which holds supreme
interest for the spectators.

In The Clock, the tick-tock sound of the clock is exaggerated, the suspense of
which is convincingly unravelled when Henry smashes the wall clock for he has already
stated in the exposition that he has quite lost the track of time. The Kathakali dance,
which takes place in the operating room of a mental hospital in The Dumb Dancer,
creates an atmosphere of terrifying violence and horror, and the audience who wait in
suspense regarding Prema's methods to cure Bhima of his mental insanity find an
answer in the meeting which takes place between Prema and Sakuntala. The
Doldrummers which begins with the anguish of the young dropouts ends on a similar
note. And the audience hardly question when Joe is conveniently removed from the
scene through drowning, after Rita had come to bear his child for the entire action is
motivated by his attempts to get into bed with Rita who finds Tony's company far more
rewarding.

Similarly, all movements and directions converge on the significance of thorns on
the rose –stalk from the start to the finish. At the end as anticipated by the character
herself, Nafesa remains a lone figure on the stage. In Goa, the dramatist maintains
artistic credibility by gradually preparing the audience for Rose's eventual rape and the.

In *The Hungry Ones* events that follow up. Sam and Al assure the audience that they will succeed in learning the secret of abject suffering through which one earns food to feed the hungry mouths. But their efforts should be made humble. Henceforth their inability to totally comprehend and guard Ramesh from killing himself is kept in suspense which in turn contributes to the effect of the play.

Currimbhoy hardly keeps his secret to the end. In other words, the audience are always at a vantage point of foreseeing the end. But the spectators will turn their faces to the door and their backs to the stage as soon as there is no more to learn. Therefore, Currimbhoy consciously conceals his methods of rounding-off events which increase the involvement of the audience.

Another basic characteristic of the dramatic medium is irony through which every dramatist communicates extensively with his public. Dramatic irony, also called tragic irony, is a device whereby ironic incongruity between appearances and reality is introduced into the very structure of the play in which the spectators are aware of elements in the situation of which the characters involved are ignorant.

Irony, as a means of stage communication, permeates through speech and action yielding different emotional effects. Irony can make the reader or audience change attitudes towards a character. When we hear Lady Macbeth's casual remark "A little water clears us of this deed," we await the anguish "All the perfumes pf Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" and the feeling of horror on account of the callous inhumanity of the character turns to pity. In all cases of irony the audience are placed in a position
of advantage of knowing the outcome of events. They can see more clearly than the characters can.

In The Dumb Dancer Prema, the psychiatrist who desires Bhima’s sanity, loses her sanity ironically during the course of the shock therapy. She who has stated “Insanity is a catchy thing” (1.2.23) is unaware of the fact that she is going to be its victim soon. In the final scene, our emotion towards Prema is one of pity when she questions,

Who is sane, Dilip, and who is not? . . . No greater passion was there than this stalwart God. I lip-read his mind. It was gigantic. When I touched him, I felt the element of his distraction grow within me . . . Do you understand, Dilip?

Distraction reaches higher than sanity. (3.2.74-75).

In irony, the spectators are conscious of the dissembled meaning; the victim (sometimes even the speaker) is not. Joe’s sententious remark, “An action initiated finds its own meaning” (1.2.52) is not initially understood either by Tony or by Rita in The Doldrummers. But in his absence Tony recalls to Rita that Joe told him “something about having started a situation in motion, and that his presence was no longer necessary for its natural conclusion. Hence he felt he could be dispensed with” (2.1.70).

Tony who is “as brainless as a banana” (1.1.20) cannot delve deep into the context. Similarly, Rita fails to understand the implication of Joe’s action when he permits her to wear his ring only for a while by informing her that “it has to be passed on to others, so that everything still-born may live in its transfiguration” (1.2.63). Only
at the close of the play when Liza divulges the hard news that Joe was drowned, Rita realises the significance of Joe's ring which bears testimony to their physical relationship. Whenever a fusion of impression take place in degrees great or small, its effect is wholesome and irresistible. J.L. Styan observes:

The author speaks obliquely throughout the play, and by forcing upon our attention this or that speech or deed, he is working to guarantee our co-operation in the joint enterprise of communication. The audience follows a play by discovering it; it is constantly interpreting signs, looking beyond the actors, listening between the lines. The play only has meaning through what the audience in this way is allowed to perceive. (1979)

We can recognise the ironic movement in the following extract from Thorns on a Canvas. Yakub informs Malti that if she desires to meet him she can come exactly at dawn to his room without knocking. Being ignorant of Yakub's intention behind the invitation, Malati gets excited to meet him, much as a lady love would. She runs to the window to anxiously look at the sky for traces of light. She is relieved at having found darkness. With haste, she begins her toilet; applies perfume on her body, Kajal on her eyes, tilak on the forehead, and coils the long tresses of black hair. She pauses now and then with variable expressions of fear, anxiety and anticipation.

She impatiently wears bracelets, an ornamental girdle-belt and anklets, but as she quietly begins to leave the room, she finds that the trinkets make a sound, and so, silently, she
pulls up the loose bracelets to the elbow, tightens the girdle,
silences the ringing anklets, and leaves. (5.59).

She enters Yakub's bedroom which lies in silent semi-darkness. First in
hesitation and then in a sharper voice she calls him. Suddenly there is the click of a
light-switch. Malti sees shockingly Yakub and Nafesa in an intimate embrace. The
audience who are already in the know of the irony of the situation sympathise with
Malti.

Irony is not merely "a contrivance of plot or a stylistic twist of language, but as a
way of seeing, by bringing together chosen contradictions and disagreements. Regard it
as the metaphor of the theatre which enlightens understanding and refreshes
imagination with stab after stab of hint and suggestion," (Styan 52).

Irony is felt even in the smallest detail. The "suggestion of a nudge and a
smile" (1.1.14) among the bench-watchers in Goa, while Senhora Miranda takes her
self-conscious patio-walk, communicates to the privileged spectators of a meaning
hidden from the character. Alphonso the Portuguese adventurer, states in the play that
Rose is the cleanest girl, but when he equates "Rose is Goa" and "Goa is Rose" (1.2.37) it
connotates wider meanings of which he is totally unaware.

Equally, Senhora Miranda's declaration "Therefore, I always take on first; a
protection in a peculiar sort of way, if you know what I mean, you drunken fool."
(1.3.51) unfolds a host of implications not to the characters but to the audience as
regards the movement of the plot and analysis of characters.

The spectator's impression depends on what the character on the stage is
speaking or doing. When the victim fails to realise the contextual truth, the well-
informed audience recognise his folly and its outcome. Krishna does a tempter's job by urging Maria to pour her hate not on him but on Rose for she is the cause of her sufferings. That Maria who has been using people as her instruments so far is going to be instrumental in wrecking the innocence of Rose is the knowledge we gain through the device of irony.

Ironic is drama's essential tool of communication. It is our "chief means of examining the quality of the texture of a play and of evaluating the whole, and as such it cannot be disregarded" (Styan 56).

The significance of Currimbhoy's dramatic conventions rests on the participatory function of the audience. The expression 'audience participation' needs analysis. Some dramatists involve the audience in dramatic performances in a more literal and even physical way by making the actors leave the stage for the auditorium and directly address individual members of the audience and bring a few up on to the stage. For instance, Badal Sircar treats the performers and the audience in his Free Theatre on the same wavelength - physically and emotionally. That is, the actors sit among the audience, directly speak to them, and invite them to join hands when the need arises. The New Theatre revolts against the barriers of light and darkness that exist in the proscenium theatre to promote intimacy between the actors and the audience.

As demanded by naturalistic theatre, Currimbhoy creates the illusion of reality, and the proscenium stage enhances the emphasis. But the means and materials of Sircar’s open theatre resist illusion. In both the theatre the audience are every busy, whether knowingly or not, finding personal equations with what they see and hear on the stage. The dramatist's "invitation to the audience to make all such comparisons is
an invitation to bridge a gap, not the physical gap between audience and actor but the
dramatic gap between audience and character" (Styan 235).

Every author is working to narrow or widen the gap as the play demands
between the characters and the audience and delusion consists in allowing the
spectators to build a bridge by his imaginative co-operation through the emotional
persuasiveness of the theatre.

The situation in Goa centres around Maria who might represent anyone at
anytime and at any place, who is both corrupted and uncorrupted, desirable and
undesirable, ever seeking a better world, yet finding it difficult to achieve it. The
memories of an anguished past torment her emotions; so does the present environment.

She expresses to Alphonso her hatred for Goa where she dreads “having to cross
that patio day in and night out. Like something predatory” (1.2.27). Conversely, she
pleads to him to tell her about Portugal, that “wonderful Portugal” – where she might
look “beautiful” and “young too” (1.2.25). The reality that she is a half-breed having no
roots at any place makes her dream of far-off places.

When Alphonso, her saviour, is killed by Krishna in his efforts to ironically turn
the game of equalization against Maria, she loses everything and every possibility of
hope. For she retreats into her own private world which borders on insanity not caring
anymore either to realize the truth or resist the odd currents of the callous game of sex.

The dramatist shows her complaining uncomprehendingly near the end:

What’s that! Who did that outside? Who started the thunder
and rain? Does the lightning still streak across the sky . . .
and strike the cross? The heavy cross. Made of gold and
diamonds? Like white spectres in the sky. I carry in it heaven every night when I go upstairs. To put my baby to sleep. To hold her tight. (2.3.87)

A warm and comfortable identification with a character, which is termed as empathy, makes us emotionally participate in the line of communication. Being lost in the fictional illusion, we are not critical of Maria, a mother who has turned her daughter into a whore, but sympathetic towards her for her inability to prevent it so.

Contrary to this is Brecht’s theory of alienation as an effect in the theatre. Brecht helps his audiences, think alertly and critically about emotionally potent scenes. In the play **Mother Courage**, Mother courage refuses to believe that Kattrin, her daughter, is dead, and she tries to delude herself that her daughter is asleep. She sings:

Lullay, lylay, what’s that in the hay?

The neighbour’s babes cry but mine are gay.

The neighbour’s babes are dressed in dirt:

Your silks were cut from angel’s skirt.

They all starving: you have a cake,

If it’s too stale, you need but spek. (1.2)

The image of Mother courage bending over her deceased child and singing a lullaby presents her as an archetypal mother figure. To counter such pathos and potential empathy, Brecht gives an ironic twist to the traditional lullaby in which the mother selfishly imagines her child to be provided with the best, while the neighbour’s children remain deprived. While we are overwhelmed by an emotional experience in
the case of Maria in Goa, Brecht's Mother courage puts the audience in a position where a conventional, empathising response was impossible and unreachable for them.

Emotional identification and imaginative involvement in the dramatic illusion of a play while it is in progress, are properly considered a form of participation through which the artistic situation becomes part of our personal experience, and can obviously transform us to some extent. The Bengali man who performs the "monkey act" (26) in The Hungry Ones writhes his body forward. His flesh kicks up the filth of the pavement, and cuts itself on sharp stones till blood shows on dirty cloth. As he passes, one of the Americans takes out a banana from his pocket, gives it to the Indian, who crawls by without taking it. Equally the second American, on observing the Indian, takes out a coin from his pocket, offers it to him who in turn passes by as though he is blind. The Americans are excited, and become curious for the hungry beggar crawls up to a child, who is eating gram from a palm leaf:

He stretches his hand out, slapping his belly, eyes now beseeching... the child is moved to pity, takes out some of his own food (possibly from mouth), and puts it in the mouth of the man, who at last closes his eyes, stops hitting his belly, lies inanimately, only his mouth chewing slowly on the food, the life coming and going out of him. (1. 28)

The pantomime, an effective visual means of linking the author with the audience, intends to arouse emotions of pity, revulsion and charity in the viewers. At the same time the scene does not stop merely with an emotional impact. The details of the mime, as regards the beggar refusing the food as well as the money offered by the
Americans but accepting the food from the small child, helps us realise that in the theatre, emphathising response as shown by the child, is more significant than the alienated response of the Americans. While observing Currimbhoys plays, our attention is gripped, our emotions are stirred, and we are made to think as well.

Currimbhoys dramatic situations with their conspicuous causal connections of scene to scene, powerfully enforce the idea of the inevitability of the action. Being horrified by the consequences of what Prema has committed, Dilip shouts at her and at Bhima too in The Dumb Dancer. But Prema expresses "No . . . he can't hear you any more . . . and neither shall I. We can only hear each other . . . living in the same world. Listen! He calls out to me again. Listen. Listen. Hush. Let the whispers die . . . " (3.2.76). The curtains come down with a faint echo of someone calling out "Draupadi" . . . "Draupadi" . . . (3.2.76). The Spectator of the dramatic theatre says,

Yes, I have felt the same . . . This is only natural. It will always be like this. This human being's suffering moves me, because there is no way out for him. This is great art: it bears the mark of the inevitable. I am weeping with those who weep on the stage, laughing with those who laugh!.

(qtd. in Watson 161)

The Spectator of the epic theatre, on the other hand, laughs about those who weep on the stage and weep about those who laugh. He always challenges the sense of inevitability, and considers critically possible alternative courses of action to those employed by the dramatic characters. The audience in the epic theatre emphasise that a
theatre is only a theatre, and dramatic performances are not life though they may assist them to comprehend it.

Truth on the stage does not refer to the external truth which is reduced to photographic or surface realism which dominates electronic visual media. Truth on the stage is what we can sincerely believe in where there is belief, even an untruth becomes an artistic truth in the eyes of the actor and the spectator. The moment we come to doubt the reality of the character's life in the play, truth disappears and with it emotion and art. They are substituted by pretence, theatrical falseness, imitation and routine acting.

The truth that one finds in Currimbhoy is his obligation towards the social and the political worlds that surround him:

He has something to say, something he must say, a message to deliver, a vision to fulfil. He is "Karma yogi", and like other thoughtful men he searches inwardly as well as outwardly for means to satisfy both the act and the art of his desires. (L. Meserve. Foreward)

In most of his plays Currimbhoy helps us realise that while experiencing the forces of violence and hate we are driven to compromise. His major concern is how to retain one's integrity, be it personal or national. In Goa, Krishna justifies his succumbing to Maria as the only medium of action given to him, for he fears that he will lose what he desires most. Consequently the young man, who hates violence, seizes by force what he could have had by peaceful methods, and in so doing, he loses
ironically all that is most precious to him. In the life of every individual or nation, there arises a greater need to take a moral decision.

Arrogance of power, sexual or political, symbolises the final suffering and disintegration. Currimbhoy's yet another major theme is "equalisation" in thoughts, words and deeds which find means of articulation at every level. Currimbhoy says,

You have to present all sides of the problems and to the extent that you are a writer with a sense of commitment of life, you have a say in the matter without being drawn from it completely. (Commentary 39)

However, Currimbhoy is not a philosopher to violently thrust his views of life on us. He never forgets that he is basically a dramatist for whom the emphasis is on action which is seen through moving and talking scenes in the theatre. And those who see them will re-create his idea through their emotions and intellect, making dramatic art a collective enterprise in which everyone depends on everyone else.

Going to a play is a fruitful endeavour. It is an active pursuit expecting us to willingly share our finer feelings and honest thoughts with the dramatist in the proper study of a play. In the words of I.A.Richards,

If we do not live in consonance with good drama, we must live in consonance with bad drama. And, in fact, the idle hours of most lives are filled with reveries that are simply bad private drama. On the whole evidence, I do not see how we can avoid the conclusion that a general insensitivity to
drama does witness a low level of general imaginative life. (320)

The Spectators observe the play not as an idle piece of entertainment or as a means of escape. They do not go to the theatre for the vicarious pleasure of living life at second-hand. Instead, every spectator is characterised by his overwhelming curiosity to know about man and his prospects, his flights and drops, and the extensive range and depth of the human spirit in its intricate relationships and widening conflicts.

Currimbhoy perceives, to a considerable extent, the demands of the spectators and gives them, through his theatrical virtuosity, an occasion to excitingly view life in the proper perspective.