



ASIF CURRIMBHOY'S GOA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR GOAN IDENTITY

Shweta Patel

A-22, Vasant Vihar Society, Grid Road Kabilpore, Navsari, Gujarat, India.

Asif Currimbhoy's Goa has become a sort of landmark in the history of English writing in India because of a number of factors. While Currimbhoy's genius and craftsmanship in writing the play cannot be questioned, the play has immortalized the struggle for the soul of Goa between the Portuguese rulers and the Indian inhabitants. Currimbhoy is almost impartial and free of prejudice as he shows the plight of the 'innocent' Goa being 'raped' for personal gains by both the Portuguese and the Indians. After 400 years of Portugal domination Indian finally challenged it and managed to free the Goan territory – however the process was not painless and was almost a 'rape' that mangled the innocent flower of Goa. Currimbhoy makes powerful use of imagery and allegory to tell his story while retaining the spirit of an intriguing and interesting play. The play keeps the audience at the edge of their seats and does not deteriorate into preaching or moralizing.

The main characters in the play are Senhora Miranda, the (probably Luso-Indian/Indo Portuguese) hussy, Alphonso, the Portuguese idler, Krishna the young dark skinned Indian lover of Rose and of course the beautiful dark skinned innocent Rose who is deaf. Other minor characters representing different segments of the pre-independence Goa also populate the play. Especially noteworthy are the vicar, the Hindu Nationalist, the Portuguese Administrator, the Goan Hindu and the old man and the old woman. All the characters are representative of a socio-political factors influencing the outcome of the Indo-Portuguese standoff in the December of 1961. Currimbhoy throws them together in a cauldron of dislike and compromise, love and hatred and joy and pain and lets them all battle it out. Just as Goa became the bone of contention between the Indian natives and the Portuguese rulers; Rose, the young 14 year old beautiful deaf girl becomes the bone of contention between Alphonso, the Portugal bullish idler and the young lustful Indian Krishna. Between the two of them is her half Portuguese and conspicuously Half Indian mother Senhora Miranda who uses the innocent Rose to quench her own lust.

While the plot focuses on Krishna's endeavour to win over the innocent Rose with endearments and Miranda's attempts to use her sexuality on both Krishna and Alphonso in her own favour on the allegorical level it is evident that Alphonso represents the vestiges of a bygone Colonial power of the Portuguese who were once a powerful European empire but now are jaded. On the other hand the young dark skinned lustful Krishna wooing Rose becomes the symbol of the young Republic of India trying to make Goa a part of its territory. Senhora Miranda is automatically representative of the Luso-Indians/Indo-Portuguese sitting on the fence trying to get the best of both the worlds.

On an allegorical level the Luso-Indians seem to be regretful of the 'dark-skinnedness' and their Indian heritage as they try and fail to pass themselves off as pure fair skinned Portuguese. Miranda, though cannot deny that there is some native Indian blood in her own body, tries to downplay it and express her disdain that Rose her daughter, is dark skinned. In no uncertain terms she describes quite crassly the birth of the dark skinned Rose who emerged from her own fair skin body and though, she does not say it outright the audience get the idea that she dislikes the dark skin of her daughter. Now after fourteen years Rose has bloomed into a beautiful young girl attractive in her own sense. When she realizes Rose's attractiveness and the effect she is having on men like Alphonso and Krishna she perverts her innocence and tries to use her as a whore for her own selfish reasons.

Rose the young innocent girl is in love with Krishna or thinks that she is in love with Krishna in whom she seems to find some sort of a kindred soul because of his dark skin. And while it seems that Krishna is truly in love with her it turns out that he too is lusting for her and will not hesitate to bargain his love for her. He too 'whores' his love for her with her own mother Miranda. Rose is the only character who is without selfish ulterior motives everyone else schemes and plans to use others for selfish purposes.

Currimbhoy forays into the other major factors influencing the Goa struggle by making his character represents certain segments of the Goan society. The vicar represents the Catholic Church and the Goan Hindu represents the native Hindu populace who resents the power and the exploitation of the natives (both Hindu and Catholic) by the Catholic Church. The debates and discussing between the Portuguese Administrator and the Hindu Nationalist also bring out the issues of

contention between the native Goan populace and the members of the Portuguese regime who considered themselves a part of Goa and Goa for 400 years they are foreigners and are not entitled to rule over the native population. The Goan Hindu makes it clear that he rejects the Church though he does not disrespect the Catholic religion. He says that he worships from outside without entering the church building because it has been built over a conspicuously Hindu Temple.

The worst fate in the play is that of Miranda who is possibly a pure Portuguese woman but also possibly of Indo-Portuguese descent as she hints that her mother may have had a 'dark skinned' lover who could have possibly sired her. Despite the chances of her being an Indo-Portuguese person she wants to escape all that is associated with the dark skinned natives of India and escape to the magic land of the fair skinned Portuguese. Her ticket to Lisbon the capital of Portugal and for her freedom from the dark skinned Indians is the Ox like Alphonso, a non-intellectual plodding idler led by his lust and alcoholism. Miranda ensnares him with her sexuality and pleads with him to take her away from everything to the magical land of Portugal. When it seems that her sexuality is failing her she has no qualms of offering the beautiful young and innocent Rose as a sacrifice to him. She wants to use Rose as ticket for her trip to Portugal.

The young innocent Rose becomes a pawn in the hands of her mother who wants to use her to further her own goals. When the play starts, a tender love scene a la Romeo and Juliet ensues as the intense young Krishna woos the deaf Rose who plays Juliet standing on the balcony lip-reading his loving words as dusk falls and she is unable to read his lips any more. It is almost ironic as darkness brings obstacles between the young lovers whereas in the original Shakespearean play it is darkness that assists the lovers to meet. Darkness disrupting their love seems to foreshadow that 'darkness' or obstacles will disrupt their love as the plot progresses. And indeed, Miranda becomes the darkness (ironic again, as she is supposed to have fair skin) between the lovers and offers to whore herself to both Alphonso and Krishna before both the men could taste the tender innocent Rose.

Miranda has no qualms in offering to 'whore' Rose in exchange for her own benefit. In fact she also has her lust satisfied by both the men while 'dangling' Rose in front of them as a temptation. Krishna who has a promising start as a young passionate lover deteriorates into another pawn in the hands of Miranda and 'whores' his love for Rose with her (Miranda). Krishna squanders his own innocence and passion as he satisfies Miranda's lust by getting involved with her sexually. It is unclear whether it is solely to satisfy Miranda's lust or to equally satisfy his own sexual urges which are thwarted by Miranda. He disqualifies himself as the true love of Rose once he has had sex with Miranda and only Rose is left as the pure selfless character in the play. However, Miranda is not done yet and plays both the men against each other and provokes Alphonso and Krishna to fight it out in the primal tradition of male beasts fighting for their mate. The outcome is terrible and Alphonso is killed. Currimbhoy seems to be alluding to "Operation Vijay" by the Indian Military Forces into Goa named the "Indian Invasion" by the Portuguese where the Indian forces violently vanquished the Portuguese and established their own power in Goa. Krishna, representative of India manages to kill Alphonso, symbolic representative of Portugal with a dagger.

However, Krishna's victory over Alphonso is in no way beneficial for Rose who has voluntarily adopted a blindfold and has adopted blindness in addition to being deaf. She has also been turned in to a prostitute and rented out to potential customers by her mother Miranda. When her former lover Krishna comes as a customer to her, Rose is completely shattered and the play ends with a hysterical Rose having stabbed Krishna to death.

Currimbhoy's Goa has been recognized as a raw intense play that manages to work at the theatrical as well as socio-political levels. His use of allegory has also been applauded and the play remains a well-studied and well received play across international audience.

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