

taking with it the memories sweet / deciphering the words of battle
within / that mute Gita shall speak / to man interpreting the secrets of
life.

The persona articulates his wish to fly “with the balloon” seeking new interpretations to the hitherto held mysteries. However, he does not want to go abruptly; instead, he wants to say “a word more / with a feeling heart” – a heart that feels for the man and the world. The last line, of the last stanza: “shall I now part”, has its origin in the last line of the first stanza that states: “before I part and you start.” He wants to “part” – depart – after man begins “the incantation” of the “word” enshrined in the Gita and Om. This “Om” is the word that is supposed to have come into existence with the first *Nāda* at the time of the creation, with big bang, of this cosmos; it is a compound of three sounds: 1. /ə/ - the first sound in “above”; 2. /u/ - the vowel sound in “put”; and, 3. /m/ the first consonantal sound in “man”. These three sounds have very significant meanings and exhort man respectively: the first sound insinuates man to be *atmaṇṛāyana* (self-centered) to give up desires of body by involuting in the creator and relishing His company; the second sound connotes *unnati* (progress) to enrich oneself with physical, mental, social, economic, and spiritual wealth; and, the third consonantal sound denotes *mahānatā* (greatness) and urges one for relinquishing wickedness, narrow-mindedness, selfishness and sensitivity for love, kindness, large-heartedness, service, sacrifice, control, and ideal life. Thus, the word, “Om”, suggests giving up all those attributes that lead to vices; and, to make an effort for spiritual progress by seeking Lord's company in complete devotion and surrender, as stated in the *Gita*:

Yatkaroshi yadshnāsi dadāsi yat, / Yattapasyasi Kaunteya tatkurusva
madarpanam. (9.27)

Dr Aripirala Viswam, a scholar of mysticism, explains the quintessence of “OM”:

Poetry is memory. Memory is the very fragrance of the agony and ecstasy. Outflow the serenity and sanctity of rhythmic patterns of life in the form of music of vociferous silence. It merges in and emerges out of the vibratory silence of a primal word “OM” whose numerical entities, when deciphered, are as follows:

A = 1 U = 3 M = 5

By adding up into an integral number, it becomes 9. The whole world constitutes of (1) Nama (name), (2) Sankhya (number), (3) Pada (word), (4) Bija (the primal sounds) and (5) Rekha (figure). The whole circumference of cosmic traverse is from OM to OM (9 to 9). “AUM” or “OM” is word, letter and silence. Silence is the ultimate real. Word is the immediate real. OM is the dialectic possibility of the cosmic throb (spanda) or Sat-Chit-Ananda. 'Navo Navo Bhavati Jayamanah.' Nine in Sanskrit is called “Nava”. The entire creation is conceived on the primal word unit of OM (9) or 'Nava'. It is the fulcrum on which the wheel of cosmos rotates over. That is why OM is PRANAVA. Pranava is ever new and everlasting both. Ego in Sanskrit is Aham (1). Numerogically A = 1, H = 8, and O = 0. Aham = 180. When added [1+8+0] to primal number it becomes 9. Our traverse of life begins with 1 = 9 and ends with OM = 9. That is why the Veda 'Navo Navo Bhavati Jayamanah' stands for this

Sankhya principle of Nine. Sankhya is the principle of life both within and without. It stands for the battle of life as well as peace; which the Vedanta terms as Pravritti (philosophy of conflict of life) and Nivritti (philosophy of peace of life). In Vedanta, Sankhya stands for the battle of life and peace. Peace is the pinnacle of achievement. Om is the crest Jewel of crown of cosmos. So the traverse is from OM to OM. Om is the undivided absolute. Om is the one and the only ultimate, with no second. 'Om Ityekaksharam Brahmeti Vyajanat' (Know that Om is the one and only the manifest of the supernal Brahma). Om is a state of being in everlasting bliss. From I to Om is the pathless path. . . .

"I" is the ache of life. "Om" is the aura of bliss. From here to eternity, the travel goes on. Out of the churnings of "I" and "Om", comes the nectar of bliss, the ultimate real, and also the *Halahala*, the poison.

One is the life-giver, the other a life-taker [life-terminator]. (13-14)

Thus, the word "Om" imparts new significance to life and embodies in itself the beginning and the end, the nectar and the poison of life. The poet adds another essence of the Vedanta – the Gita. He posits that the chanting of "Om" and the knowledge enshrined in the *Gita*, short for *Srimadbhagavadgita*, can emancipate the "feeling heart" of man from the battle of this mundane life surrounded by *Trishna* (desires). So, after divulging this essence of knowledge, instrumental for man's salvation, he wants to depart leaving him secure with nectar, protected from the "*halahala*" in this battle of life. Hence, beautiful is that which gives solace; solace comes in this life from the incantation of "Om" and the knowledge of the *Gita*. It leads not only to spiritual peace, but also to everlasting beauty. From the mysticism of "Om", one moves on the paradox in "Last Word" (54). The protagonist discloses the secret in the opening of the poem:

I did not hear him / say the last words / said under a lonely shade / of
an autumn tree without leaves.

This announcement, on the part of the persona, suggests as if someone has recently died. This somberness is further emphasized by the use of "lonely shade", "autumn", and "tree without leaves." All these words and phrases suggest decadence, death and decay. The persona "laughed on the irony of fate" of "him" whose words he didn't hear. This irony was shattered unceremoniously and debunked: "dismantled without a flip" to give up "an argument" that had not been initiated as yet. The paradox is built

without a finger to point out / and to precipitate scuffles / between
long paralleled lines / in a place where none breathes / and this
approaches a sudden end / without resolution.

Once again the confusion in the mind of the protagonist that he articulates through a host of paradoxes becomes apparent. How can one expect any solution of a problem that has not been cited, and at a place that is desolate? A place "where none breathes".

Thus the last words haunted the place / amused the air making
ripples / but silenced the meaning / when the ears were blocked / to
make nobody hear the words / still attempted to know the meaning /
of words unheard.

The protagonist talks about the “last words” disturbed [what could they else do?] the protagonist in an ambience of death and gloom and “amused the air making ripples” – they echoed in the air. In their absence, they cannot be deciphered. Despite all the hurdles to block the hearing of words, “the last words haunted the place/ ... / still attempted to know the meaning / of words unheard.” It is the greatest mystery that the words have not been heard but an attempt is going on to squeeze out meaning from the unheard sounds. The persona will continue his effort to draw meaning as long as the poem survives like the music of the singers under the grove and lovers in 'Ode on Grecian Urn' by John Keats:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal – yet do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

This quality of art that makes one pine ever and ever without reaching any consummation makes it “sweeter” for the “unheard melodies” and unsought answers. The poet has very beautifully woven a complex thought of beauty and peace embedded in the indecisiveness to act, hope and desire as the wheels of progress, corruption as a stigma to life, seeking bliss in chanting “Om” – the beginning and end of the creation and creating everlasting beauty is inherent in the unfound answers to “words unheard.” This is what Prem's poetry aims at and continues to haunt readers and critics alike to unearth the hidden meanings and nuances of life.

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An Assignment of Conscious and Unconscious in *The Dissident MLA* and *Monsoon* of Asif Currimbhoy

- Anthony Viphezol Richa

Abstract: There is a sense of a trigger which was life itself and this has catapulted Asif Currimbhoy to become a virtuoso post-independence Indian playwright in English. He never feigned in the presentation of his characters of variety in plenty. This paper concentrates on *The Dissident MLA* and *Monsoon* to emphasis on an assignation of conscious and unconscious, centering the protagonists, i.e. Manubhai and Tuan Andrew. Both of them are over-ambitious and commit excesses in their lives. They are egoistic and least bothered about the impact their actions are bringing on their associates, especially their primary relations.

Keywords: Indian English Drama, Asif Currimbhoy, Conscience.

“There is a sense of a trigger - I think the trigger was life itself, of what I saw around, of how I reached to it, in other words an emotional reaction” (*Commentary* 39). This trigger has catapulted Asif Currimbhoy to become a virtuoso post-independence Indian playwright in English. The technique of evolving complex personalities and dramatic situations from the interplay of a deep-rooted and diverse cultural ethos is typical of him. K.M. George has commented on the greatness of Currimbhoy in the following words:

I had heard of Asif Currimbhoy earlier. But it is only recently that I realized the power and vitality of his works... As the chief editor (The Sahitya Academy) the moral responsibility was entirely mine. It was a challenging, though highly enjoyable, task. It was in the course of this work that I came across Asif Currimbhoy's work. I decided to include a part of his play, the *Dumb Dancer* in the anthology. That was also the time when I decided that I should be seriously introducing this talented playwright to Malayalies (George 5).

Currimbhoy's place in the Indian English Drama is profoundly appreciated and his contribution to Indian English theatre is immense. C.V.Venugopal, a great critic on the plays of Currimbhoy, says:

If Indian drama in English has had a significant breakthrough of late, only a handful of playwrights can take the credit for it. Among these few, Asif Currimbhoy most definitely figures prominently (Venugopal 261).

Figuring tall among the Indian English playwrights, his hallmark is social realism and he felt a strong urge of “evolving himself in society and seek a full revelation in his plays of what he finds in the world around him and within him” (*Commentary* 39). The new current of violence that erupted

in the country, India, during the sixties has befittingly served his purpose. As he plunged into the dramatic world, he has chosen to write for the theatre because he thought this would allow him to show the complexity of society he lived in. His acute sense of observation on people, particularly on the mode of expression, has made him create unique things. This is evident from what he revealed to Rajinder Paul and Paul Jacob in an interview about his past experiences and places:

The place had always had a considerable fascination for me and dialogue always appeared to me especially when they incorporated a feeling of diverse opinion. In other words a conflict in theatre, conflict at every level – physical, mental and emotional – because from the time really you meet with other people, what is human relationships, its striking sparks with each other that brings about a feel of life (Paul 1970).

It is this feel of life that has made him go a long way and has always maintained an independent thinking in his journey throughout playwriting. He even chose controversial themes and embodied them in arresting dialogues with constructed and resolved plots in an unconventional way. The author's audience is awestruck at the way his protagonists face life's trials and tribulations. The captivating and breathless moments are those when the characters and the audience are consciously aware of what is happening in the scene but the characters are unconscious of the impending effects of their actions that are at the offing. More enthralling are those moments when the characters suffer the ill effects their deeds are yielding but still continue to indulge in the same actions unaware. Therefore, conscious and unconscious worlds head for a disastrously perilous collision. When this collision takes place, with the unconscious elements heavily pressing on the conscious things, the damage is colossal; the damage may reach the point of no return where repairs may become a farfetched notion. As a result, the assnigation of conscious and unconscious is excruciating and disparaging. It is more agonizing when the unconscious holds the domain and the person complacently continue coddling in the evil deeds. To substantially delineate this theme, this paper will concentrate on the two plays of Currimbhoy, i.e., *The Dissident MLA* and *Monsoon*. R.L. Meserve and W.J. Meserve have said, "As the concept of western tragedy merges with acceptance of life and death, serious writers like Currimbhoy are still reluctant to call man truly fortunate, whereas they themselves must avoid having their artistry disappear into therapy as the creative intelligent contends with the experiences of living and seeing life lived" (Meserve 31). Having experienced and lived amongst men, Currimbhoy could not but draw the actual picture of man as he is and not as he should be. Manubhai in *The Dissident MLA* and Tuan Andrew in *Monsoon* are ambitious. They are discontented with their lives. Indulging in inhuman acts does not prick their conscience. Inflicting others is, seemingly, pleasurable to them. Manubhai is more a hedonist than a righteous politician fighting for the cause of his trusted citizens. Andrew, on the other hand, is more a beast than a philanthropist fighting for a humanitarian cause or a clergy preaching the salvation of man through

just and charitable deeds. The irony in these two central figures arrests our attention and interest. Manubhai is a lecher, schemer and hedonist while Andrew is a merciless and superstitious person. Other characters, associated with them, play significant and responsible roles in exposing and divulging shocking as well as pertinent revelations. Shanti (Wife), Ramesh (Son), Kantibhai (Mentor) and the Astrologer are the major characters surrounding Manubhai. Monsoon (Child and later Wife), Dr. Juan and Daisy (Friends) and Noroo are the immediate associates of Andrew. Their destinies are designed by their own will and conscience; their will and deeds being their handmaids. This unique creativity of the author has also being perceived by P. Bayapa Reddy: Curimbhoy “sees man as essentially a creature of passion with potential for great nobility as well as terrible destruction” (Reddy 151). Psychologically discoursing, the passion in man makes a person to be ambitious. Andrew has desired to venture into those areas where others feared to tread. His Christian ethic is questionable and his undying ambition has rendered him to be “psychosomatically pregnant” (*Monsoon* 14). The dialogue between them opens the curtain for our dissection of Andrew's disparaging ambitious life:

Andrew: You're right, Juan. I'm . . . what you call it . . . pensive. I've been pensive for a long time. Searching for a decision . . . and this is the place where I try to think it out . . .

Dr. Juan: Yes?

Andrew: It's difficult to think out . . . much more explain. And it's not so simple as your analysis of home and abroad, which after all is purely an emotional one, almost hedonistic, without right or wrong . . . without Christian ethics if you like to call it that . . .

Dr. Juan: (*hurt*) Oh!

Andrew: Don't pretend now, Juan, this is serious, and I need your help. I think you will agree that every situation is capable of scientific analysis, your primary interest being medical, and mine educational. But where you differ in terms of art, I do in terms of religion. So we have enough in uncommon to disagree. (Ibid 15-16).

The phrase 'every situation is capable of scientific analysis' propelled Andrew to reach a point of no return. His scientific experimentation is neither sociological nor political as the word 'situation' indicates. The focal point of his problem lies in the anthropomorphic interpretation of the “phenomenon of the immaculate conception” (Ibid 15). The concept of 'Immaculate Conception' is a pure Christian faith, divine handiwork and heavenly intervention. Andrew profanely equates himself with God's power and ability as is found in the following words, “...I want to make something of the girl. Want to make her the closest thing to perfection. And I want to ally myself in this experiment that no church dare perform, for divinity is sacred not only to God but also to man” (Ibid 43). Therefore, he dares God and said, “... That is what I want to do for her” (Ibidem) because he “... saw in her the potential of... an immaculate conception” (Ibid 31). To do this for the little Monsoon, he wanted to “... bring about conditioned growth” (Ibid 30). The potentiality in Monsoon has conditioned her as an object for experimentation, likening it to that of a microorganism – amoeba (Ibid

31). The distorted spiritual faith has inebriated Andrew and this has landed him up into the shadow of a condemnable life. Discontentment has gripped him tightly and this is externalized first by trying to possess the little girl, then to the murder of her grandmother; secondly by keeping Monsoon in a cloistered house, then to the desire for an incestuous relation with his own infant daughter when she grows older. Thus, Andrew's fearless and over-ambitious life has finally landed him in a maddening world. Manubhai has also plunged headlong into this maddening world (*The Dissident MLA*). He has not committed murders like Tuan Andrew but he is a hardcore hedonist. As a politician, he is a very tactful MLA, who is all out for the dissolution of the assembly. In the course of his attempt to pull down the ruling party, the students' community was made his hands and legs. He felt that "it's always better to work . . . behind the lines" (*MLA* 11) and "encouraged the use of violence . . . as a means to an end . . ." (*Ibid* 39). On the other hand, in his hunger for political victory in dissolving the assembly, he intently desired that the external actions take place according to his will. He wanted the astrologer to predict his fortune, exactly suiting to his needs (*Ibid* 16) and this shows that he is severely affected with insecurity. Manubhai does not realize the repercussion of his inordinate ambitiousness and continued to savour the pleasure of humiliating others. He publicly disgraces the Vice Chancellor with the help students. The Minister of Social Welfare is made to wet his pants in the public at his behest. These diabolic designs do not sufficiently satiate his hedonistic attitude. This discontentment has made him to be tyrannical towards Shanti, his wife, and even induces him to lead an adulterous life-style. He is an incendiary button presser with an undisguised egoism. An altercation between the father and son has cogently pictured the selfishly ambitious father, who would not be cowed down in any way:

Manu: I can call it off. / Ramesh: You mean you can ask me to call it off. / Manu: True. I made you follow my will. / Ramesh: Why? / Manu: (*Frowning, searching within himself*) I don't know. May be it was to liberate myself. To make you do all the things I failed to do myself in life. / Ramesh: (*Angrily*) But what about me! My own feeling! Or didn't that matter? / Manu: It was my love . . .

Ramesh: (*Interrupting*) It wasn't your love. It was your ego (*Ibid* 54).

Manu is so selfishly egoistic that nothing or nobody can exculpate him. Even his son, Ramesh, was angered when he realized that his father was making him to be his action in the public. Manubhai and Andrew have suffered a severe inner conflict in the sojourn of their ambitious adventure and this conflict has scuffled with their conscious world. Nevertheless, neither of them took a conscious effort in, at least, extenuating the problems. On the other hand, they gave it way for it to get gradually and firmly rooted in their unconscious selves. Both of them, though, are sub-consciously aware of the pangs. His full consciousness of the tempting adulterous deed and marital status would have made Sonal "Go to the other room..." (*Ibidem*) but his weak self has yielded to temptation without guilt (*Ibidem*). The war goes on in him and finally, his conscious self was defeated by the unconscious self. The inner war in Andrew is severer than the inner turbulence faced by Manubhai.

Apparently, his undaunted determination seemed driven only by a conscious effort but there was a gradual unraveling that he suffered from an obsessive compulsive disorder. His conditioned experimentation on Monsoon was nothing less than a diabolic act because the basic human freedom of the little girl was curtailed and her emotion was subjected to his desires. In the history of Christian faith the first disobedience to God was seen in the fallen Angels who rebelled against the power of God and desired equality with God. Andrew, too, dared to nurture the same desire of the fallen Angels and undertook the conceited effort of embarking on the deeds of God the Father, sustained by this desire, in making a virgin conceive to sanctify the sullied one (*Monsoon* 40). As a learned clergy, Andrew is eloquent with words but his intention reflects his willfulness. Therefore, the lacuna in him is conspicuous but he failed to take cognizance of it to perceive the invisible force that is driving him to sit on the pins. While being enshrouded in an inextinguishable urge for a parodied design and plan with God, his pride and fear were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm. He is also egoistic like Manubhai, without minding the ill effects his action is bringing upon others. The inner turbulence that he experienced is too meager to make him consciously realize that all is not well with him. Therefore, he does not feel guilty in liquidating anybody who comes his way in executing his plan. In executing the desired plan, neither Andrew nor Manubhai was altruistic. Andrew cherished a distorted Christian faith but Manubhai suffered the effects of political perversion. Apparently, Andrew seemed to show interest in bringing about a new discovery, through a conditioned experimentation, by taking a human person as the specimen. He also seemed to display a true missionary's endeavour in attempting to save a soul from being damned in hell. But it was ironical that every attempt of his was perilous and destructive. He turned out to be a serial murderer. Perceiving Monsoon's grandmother to be a stumbling block in the execution of his planned experimentation, a gaping hole was created on the verandah for her to fall through into the deep blue sea and die. "Andrew takes a deep breath" (*Ibid* 55) as the tapping goes dead and the grandmother is swallowed by the water. The very fact of him heaving a deep breath confirms his merciless and guiltless soul. As Manubhai has sweated at the time of trying to hold Sonal to gratify his sexual instincts, Andrew too sweated while waiting to fulfill his devilish plan (*Ibidem*). The ineffectual response to his own evil deeds led him to strangle the girl he had baptized, took pains to train through experimentation and who bore him a child he deeply desired. The following episode shows the diabolic Andrew, after Monsoon has smothered her daughter:

Andrew: (*Incredulously*) Y... you ... killed ... her ...

Monsoon: (*Her hand to heart, a last effort before breaking down*) ... and ... may ... the Lord ... have ... mercy ... on ... me ...

(*Andrew springs on her violently, catching her neck in both hands, strangling her*)

Andrew: (*Hissing*) I shall not have mercy on you, Monsoon, I shall not have mercy on you. (*He keeps on strangling her, till her lifeless body lies in his hands ...*) (*Ibid* 148).