

**The Critical Study of Asif Currimbhoy's *The Doldrummers***

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**Abstract**

*Asif Currimbhoy is a great artist; he wants to convey the Indian moral to the readers. Through this drama he wants to say that the modern youngsters are taking a wrong path in their lives. They are running after cheap pleasures of life. They are not sincere to their duties and want to earn money with any questionable means. The playwright wants to say through his drama Doldrummers that modern society is creating the unusual passion of sex. The real love is only on the point of destruction. Asif Currimbhoy has used sex as one of the major point of destroying young generation. As a playwright he has very successful in presented his views of the westernised modern society of India.*

**Introduction**

Asif Currimbhoy is an authentic name amongst the Indian dramatists who have made a considerable contribution to the Indian drama .He has written more than 30 plays which will focus on different issues .His achievement in the field of drama is inspiring, characteristic and distinguishing. As a dramatist, he wants to show the relationship between human beings in the society. *The Doldrummers* is one of the romantic plays of Asif Currimbhoy.

*The Doldrummers* was written in 1960 and was staged in 1969 but was banned by the state censors.The word Doldrummers was coined by Currimbhoy is very evocative to indicate the doldrums which settle over a group of his young people who haven't worked for a year of Sunday, living in a shack on the fashionable Juhu beach in the suburbs of metropolitan Bombay. In the play *The Doldrummers* the playwright has given the picture of some teenagers of both sexes who are running their life only for the low type of pleasures .The action of the play spans a period of few months. It deals with the problems of youth in today's Western-oriented society and depicts a life of sex and illicit drinks through a set of degenerate characters.

Asif Currimbhoy is an outstanding name among the Indian playwrights. Many things have been changed with the arrival of Asif Currimbhoy on the Indo-English drama scene. He had written as much as 30 plays based on different issues. According to Faubion Bowers he as a Karma yogi, has been called as "India's first authentic voice in the theatre" (xii). He

presents life as it is not as something it should be, the age old curse of India's classical theatre.

*The Doldrums* is a two act play, each act consisting of two scenes. It was written in 1960 but staged in 1969. It was banned by the State Censors. *The Doldrums* explore the human relationship in a beautiful realistic way. The title *Doldrums* coined by Asif Currimbhoy is very evocative. According to Faubion Bowers "it is a clever word coined by Currimbhoy to indicate the doldrums which settle over a group of his young people to have not worked for a year of Sundays; who live in a shack on the fashionable Juhu Beach in the suburbs of metropolitan Bombay"(x). This play is about the life of four friends. In the opening of the play the two friends Tony and Joe are singing a song. Tony is a pleasant, easy going young fellow, with a slightly vacuous smile, and a magnificent torso. Joe is a small young man, with ratty intelligent eyes. Rita is young, fully physical and very much in love with Tony. The fourth character is Liza-a technicolour doll: everything about her is painted. She is a greedy girl and cannot tolerate that her lover should go to another girl. She appreciates her those friends who present her expensive gifts. She evaluates her friends with their costly gifts.

Liza : (Casually) Oh, you can have him, Rita. I've got too many admirers. More than I can handle.

Joe : Try me, baby. I've got a good grip.

Liza : And they shower me with presents. See this bracelet. And this necklace. Touch it. Feel the rocks. Go on Rita feel it.

Joe : Pure?

Liza : You God-damn right. Pure cultured pearls (146-147).

Rita is a sincere beloved to Tony and therefore feels jealous when Liza presents Tony expensive gifts. Rita does not like this friendship of Tony and Liza and raises objection to Tony's receiving of gift from Liza. "Rita: Why did you do it Tony? Why did you do it! Isn't my love enough for you? I've given you all of it" (152). Rita worships him like almighty God. Rita loves Tony deeply from the bottom of her heart but Tony is not faithful to her. Tony gives more importance to the gifts given by Liza then her sentiments and feelings. Moreover, he tells Rita not to claim over him because they are not married and not leading a life of a husband and a wife.

Tony : Why do you look at me like that? Like I'd done something wrong. You got no claim over me, like we were married or something. So, what if I got a present. I wouldn't object to your getting a present.

Rita : (Tearfully) Don't you see, Tony, it's not the present that matters. It's what you've done to get it.

Tony : I wouldn't object to your getting a present, so why should you object to my getting a present.

Rita : Don't say that, Tony.

Tony : I mean it.

Rita : A present wouldn't mean so much to me.

Tony : Well, it does to me. I'd do anything to get a present.

Rita : (Tormented) you're not serious, Tony (152).

Joe advises Rita to present beautiful gift to Tony if she wants to buy his love. He wants Rita to earn gifts like Liza. Liza gets presents from her admirers. "Joe: I'm not torturing you, Rita. If my words didn't mean anything, it wouldn't torture you. So, even if you disagree with what I say, you admit to yourself the reality of its meaning" (160). For Joe love is only a four letter word. He does not believe in true love. "Joe: its love that the whore dispenses around the street corner, and it's the most respectable that pay its price" (161). For Joe love is only making physical relationship. "Joe: Rita or Liza, you're all the same to me. Women with something nice between their legs. No more. According to Joe, he can get to any woman's love. And it satisfies" (160). According to Rita love is a respectable thing but she does not want to lose Tony. She knows only one thing that she loves Tony very much and cannot live without Tony. She can do anything for her love.

Rita : Then he wouldn't love me. You can't love someone you don't respect.

Joe : ( Angrily ) Love ! Respect! Love! What does it mean? I get sick hearing people talk about it all the time. And what does love have to do with respect anyway. They're the very opposite. You think of the word love like something from a fairy book, patented germ- free. Like it had to have respectability. Well, it's not (161).

Joe tells her that she would not be able to buy Tony's love in spite of presenting him costly presents. At last Rita accepts Joe's offer because she wants Tony at any cost. And therefore, she agrees a "blind" date with uncle Lolipop. In the beginning, Tony became upset when he came to know about Rita's affair with fat and bald man and wanted to wring his ears but he could not dare to do so.

Joe : What do you think she's doing for you at this moment? Signing contracts? Do you know what the consideration is, Tony darling?... herself. Do you know whom she does it for, Tony dear ? ....You! She is selling her pound of flesh neatly cellophaned. It comes in beautiful boxes, with gardenias jewels. With these she buys you first – hand

guitars and lavendered vaseline that grooms your hair like Rudolph Valentino (172).

He reacted like a caring husband and starts beating his head on the tree. But when he saw the Fat and Bald man with her, he recognizes him his former boss. Now his anger changes into fear. He starts stammering. Rita feels humiliated and said, "Come on, Tony. Come on, please. How can you stand it? Don't you feel at all. Not at all? Just once. Just once. Why don't you kill him? I'll say I did it myself" (175). Rita regrets Tony's inability and decides to tear off her mask of self-sacrifice. Tony has no objection in receiving her gifts from others. It shows that Tony is a coward man and he feels no jealousy for fat and bald man when he came to know of his relation with Rita. A true lover can never tolerate his beloved's questionable relations with another person. In spite of Rita's hint he does not use any violence against that fat man. She thinks that her sincere and devotional love will one day catch the complete love of Tony. She wants that Tony should love her sincerely. She tells Joe:

Rita : Oh, Joe! Joe! He just stood there, Joe. Doing nothing. Absolutely nothing...while I begged him...to kill the man. I wish to God he had killed me instead. But he just stood there...

Joe : Kill the goose that lay the golden eggs?

Rita : Then there is no meaning to it all, is there? We each live only for ourselves...and self-sacrifice has no meaning except to satisfy one's own vanity.

Joe : (smiling hard) You're catching on now, Rita.  
(Joe puts his hand in his pocket and takes out a diamond ring.)

Joe : A present from a friend, Rita.

Rita : I don't understand. Joe! Joe! For God's sake. What are you saying? What do you mean?

Joe : We started a game, don't you remember and now I offer myself as another candidate. There's no difference (178).

She acquiesces Joe, who passionately offers himself as another candidate to claim her love. Joe springs upon her in a passionate embrace. She bears Joe's child. Rita tells Liza that she is having a baby. She also wants to give birth to the baby. But Liza advises her to be practical that how can a child be cared and loved without a father. But Rita assures her that Tony would take the responsibility of baby. And somehow Liza also knows that Tony really loves Rita and sometimes feels jealous that somehow Tony never gave her all, because she was never the right one.

Asif Currimbhoy creates scene to show the love of Tony to Rita. They kiss and Tony listen music in their kissing. They again kiss passionately.

Tony : that's cause I hear music when we kiss. Rita: Let's kiss.  
(They kiss.) Tony: Ho-hum...again. (They kiss again.)  
(138).

Tony : (kissing her) You're tops, Rita, really you are. You're passionate, without being dirty, or pretending. And you give me all, the way I want it. What I mean is that you're you, natural and true, and it affects me the same way. I never get that feeling with anyone else (153).

He also agrees with Joe, when he calls her a nature's own child, sweet and loving. Her heart is pure and she lives for Tony only. But Rita is shocked to see Tony, whom she had given her full heart that he is not a true lover. He comes with another old man named Moron Moe and asks her to face him as he wishes. She breaks down under the deep mental strain and rushes into the sea. Tony also rushes after her. But he does not know how to swim. He cries out to Rita for help. And Rita saves him.

Policeman informs Liza that Joe had drowned last night. His body was washed ashore yesterday. Liza was shocked and she informed Rita about Joe's death. Rita tells Liza "It's Joe's child I'm bearing, Liza. And Joe knew it" (200). It appears that Tony realizes the true picture of relationship and that is why he sings-

Cause I understand.....  
Cause I understand.....

*The Doldrummer* is a very important play of Asif Currimbhoy. It shows the effects of west on youth of India. It shows that for modern youth there is no difference between love and sex. This play also exposes human nature. Tony who is very poor and does not want to work for his living but even then, wants to live a life of comfort. He is also successful in attracting girls like Rita, who is ready to sacrifice for him, and Liza who loves him because he is such a 'big man'. The dramatist also wants to say that the modern youngsters are running after cheap pleasures of life. They want to earn many with any questionable means. Khushwant Singh also depicts the influence of western sexual culture in his novel *Company of Women*. Mohan Kumar is not satisfied with his pious wife and adopts illegal relations with a number of women. In the end he becomes the victim of sexual disease and gets his pathetic end of life with AIDS (105). Similarly the dramatist also wants to convey the message to youth to be honest in their lives.

The dramatist also wants to tell that true love cannot be bought by money. Joe advices Rita to present costly gifts to Tony to buy his love. She becomes professional prostitute to earn money for Tony's pleasure. She tells that it is her helplessness because she cannot imagine a life without Tony, but he was a boy of low spirit. He never objected her taking gifts

from others at a high moral cost. Shakespeare also has given the definition of true love in one of his sonnet where he says that true love is like polar star which never changes in any circumstances.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wand ring bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken (1326).

Asif has portrayed the life of the shack dwellers, with its poverty, love, small joys and their basic humanity. For all his love for beautiful presents and indifferent to Rita's feeling Tony does have a touch of feeling when he rushes to save her though he himself does not know how to swim. For all her jealousy and bitterness for Rita, the woman in Liza wakes up when she learns Rita is expecting.

Thus Asif Currimbhoy successfully depicts a life of sex and illicit drinks through a set of degenerate characters in *The Doldrummers*.

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