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## Fields of Dust and Tears in Asif Currimbhoy's *The Miracle Seed*

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### Abstract

Indian English drama did not exert a substantial influence in the post-independence period, unlike poetry and literature. A fundamental aspect of theatre is its amalgamation of several art forms, with the writer being one of the integral components. Nonetheless, Indian English drama contributed to the development of post-independence Indian English drama. Numerous plays by Indian playwrights, including Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma and Guru Charan Das, were successfully staged in England and the United States. However, there was no established institution for Indian English drama in our country. In the twentieth century, Indian Writing in English flourished and gained significant recognition. Drama was historically the least favored genre for literary output. However, it has evolved beyond just theatrical performances and gained popularity among readers due to the contributions of emerging playwrights.

**Keywords:** impoverished, famished, despair, green revolution, drought, generation. hybrid stalks

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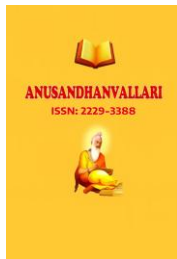
### Introduction

Asif Currimbhoy is a significant Indian playwright from the post-independence era. He is the inaugural authentic voice in Indian English Theatre. Currimbhoy is a highly prolific dramatist who writes with the intention of conveying a message. He employs unconventional themes from contemporary Indian society to demonstrate his acting prowess. Currimbhoy is among the foremost playwrights in Post-Independence India, among contemporaries such as Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, BadalSircar and Mohan Rakesh. He has authored twenty-nine plays. He is a successful writer in all genres; nonetheless, his acclaim as a dramatist has obscured recognition of his prowess in other literary forms.

*The Miracle Seed* (1973) illustrates individuals' faith in renewal and existence. The play narrates a compelling tale of a drought in Maharashtra. The play centers on a family consisting of a grandfather, a father named Ram, a mother named Malti and a daughter named Savitri. It compels affluent farmers to vacate their residences and become stone masons. Cousin Laxman unexpectedly arrives from the city bearing "Miracle seeds" that promise to resolve their difficulties. When Savitri presents hybrid stalks, the community is astonished to learn that her family is about to leave for refugee camps. Currimbhoy adeptly illustrates the poignant realities of migration and its impact on the local populace.

### Discussion

*The Miracle Seed* elucidates the reasons and mechanisms by which individuals often avoid locations



where economic sustenance is challenging. Certain locations possess extremely inhospitable natural environments, limited advantageous natural resources or significant distances from neighboring areas. There are few, if any, employment opportunities available. Existence in that locale can be challenging if there are insufficient attractions to entice individuals. If individuals are not segregated, they will relocate. If they are, they will endure consequences. A significant number of individuals in rural regions globally experience hunger. Rural areas with low population densities experience higher levels of hunger than densely populated urban regions. James Vernon states: "Documenting the evolution in the perception of hunger and starvation over the past two centuries: from a natural condition attributed to individual shortcomings to a humanitarian concern deserving of empathy, and ultimately to a political matter" (3).

The play features five characters. Ram is the patriarch of the household and Malti is his astute spouse. In the play, Bapa serves as the family's grandfather, however he remains unnamed. He is referred to as Bapa. Ram and Malti are the progenitors of Savitri. Laxman's mother is Malti's ill sister. The drama is set in the early 1970s. The scene unfolds in a desolate farmhouse, where Ram and Malti are seated alone. Ram frequently roams and gazes at both the sky and the ground. The family is concerned about the monsoon's failure, which causes him difficulties. The water level in the well is diminishing and their cow is becoming increasingly emaciated. Malti, the spouse of Ram, is an exceptionally intelligent woman. She advises her husband to trust in God and have faith in His justice, while attempting to soothe him. She ignites the diya and adorns Ganpati with flowers. Malti consistently implores God for precipitation. Ram mocks Malti's plea, however she genuinely believes in God. She also motivates her husband to diligently seek optimal solutions to their issues. Women require assistance from men. Additionally, women engage in many forms of domestic labour and bear and nurture children. The character of Malti illustrates that a woman within a family bears numerous responsibilities. Freedom holds significant importance in various aspects of life. Society perceives that men and women occupy distinct roles. Intelligence also influences the degree of self-esteem experienced by men and women. Women have equal opportunities to pursue careers and engage in work; but, societal norms have confined them to household responsibilities. R.K. Narayan, in his *My Days* says: "A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of circumstances" (189).

The drama effectively illustrates the challenges faced by a husband and wife in parenting their children. Ram advises her to prioritize her health due to her pregnancy. She directs her husband to the location of the cow in the shed to ensure his happiness. The cow's state clearly illustrates the effects of drought.

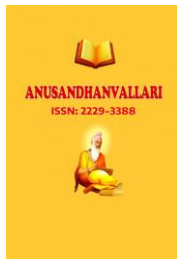
The disparity between rural and urban life becomes evident upon the arrival of their nephew Laxman. He is a youthful, open-minded man residing in Bombay. He is raised without parental figures and his father is perpetually unemployed. He has resided independently in the large metropolis for an extended period. Malti believes he has experienced poverty and solitude throughout his life. He possesses aspirations. Ram asserts that Laxman is loquacious, possesses considerable flair and is a charlatan. Individuals perceive Laxman as atypical due to his urban upbringing and identity as a city dweller. Individuals recognise that residing in a metropolis is nearly enjoyable. Individuals have this belief because urban areas provide greater opportunities for newcomers. Ram asserts that Laxman possesses an urban culture that is incompatible with rural inhabitants. Ram and Malti engage in conversation:

RAM: He's managed.

MALTI: Managed! How can you say that!

RAM: These city boys know how to get along.

MALTI: He's been deprived...and lonely. And he's a dreamer. Yes, I remember him even as a child...a dreamer...



RAM: (mumbling)...lot of loud talk...and style...a shyster, if you ask me (TMS 10-11).

Individuals exhibit varying attitudes, a fact that is readily observed. Grandfather, Ram's progenitor in the drama, overhears Ram's incoherent utterances. Grandfather comprehends Ram's emotions. Ram and his grandfather are in conflict due to the grandfather's remarks. Asif Currimbhoy demonstrates how conflict presents challenges to human survival. Conflict is an inherent and inescapable aspect of existence. Individuals experience various types of conflicts, which can arise at any location and at any time when there is a disagreement. Internal conflict elicits emotions in individuals, potentially leading to misunderstandings. This conflict results in discord among individuals, impacting the environment and involving numerous people. The conflicts occur among individuals, families and ethnic groups. Minor disagreements can escalate into various forms of conflict. Individuals ought to contemplate the reasons for their conflict prior to taking immediate action. Martin Luther King, Jr. states: "Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation" (80).

This method is fundamentally based on love (source from the internet). Their conflict persists:

GRANDFATHER: Ahh...I heard you. I heard you. You think I'm deaf, but I can always hear people mumbling in a low voice, or quarrelling in a high one.

RAM: You hear what you want to hear, Bapa.(TMS 11)

Subsequently, Malti converses with her Grandfather. He asserts that Laxman is a reserved individual who enjoys the company of others. He possesses humility. Ram is displeased with his evaluation of Laxman because to his belief that urban individuals, such as Laxman, are unlikable. Grandfather desires Laxman to procure some food for him. He states:"The older I get, the more I dream. I dream of youth, I dream of food. We dreamt of rich food, the kind of food we didn't even eat at the best of times" (TMS 12). Their discussion pertains to famine, with Grandfather recounting his experiences managing it throughout his youth. However, he is content with those days. Malti discusses the indifference of the British towards the hardships of others during a famine. However, Grandfather contests her viewpoint, asserting that the British possess a degree of concern for others. The dialogue induces tension between Malti and her Grandfather. Malti addresses her grandfather,

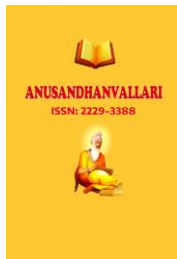
MALTI: (one hand on her stomach) There'll be no famine, Bapa.

GRANDFATHER: That's what we all said in our days too, but it happened.

MALTI: Those were the days of the foreign Raj. They couldn't care.

GRANDFATHER: Oh, they cared. No less than the present one in their own way. But they were helpless. Like us, they depended on the heavens (TMS 12).

Upon Grandfather's departure from the room, Ram advises Malti to disregard Grandfather's remarks. He has no beneficial aspirations. Individuals refer to his dreams as nightmares. Dreams can be extraordinary, enlightening or nightmarish. Dreams originate from individuals' desires and aspirations, but nightmares stem from their emotional states, particularly during periods of stress or anxiety. Ram informs his wife that their farm is meticulously maintained and can rival the affluence of Bombay. He discusses the condition of fertilized soil and its comparison to the rights of individuals in Britain. Ram asserts that the British treat individuals as subordinates while they themselves live in opulence. Ram discusses the government's assistance to farmers during periods of drought. Ram states:"And you were right about the foreign Raj. He lived as slave; I do as master. This is my land, and this is my government. I have rights. If this land doesn't grow food, they have to feed us" (TMS 11-12).



The drama illustrates the disparate ways individuals confront droughts based on their British identity versus their sense of autonomy. Ram and Malti both recall the devastating drought that occurred sixteen years prior. They assert that their first child, Savitri, was born with a speech impediment due to the severe drought. They refer the birth of their daughter to evoke memories of the adverse weather and conditions experienced during the drought. Asif Currimbhoy discusses how natural calamities render persons physically and psychologically vulnerable. Natural disasters, such as droughts, occur globally and can devastate individuals' lives. It is believed that Savitri was born with a speech impediment because of the drought.

The dramatist seeks to illustrate the malevolent nature of famine. The starvation affects both current and future generations. Ram is concerned about the drought due to its previous adverse impact on their daughter. Malti is apprehensive about the drought once more due to having an infant. Individuals must acquire the skills to navigate various situations throughout their lives. Malti soothes Ram by offering him a healthy child resembling Ram. Malti reassures:“(touching his face tenderly) Don't worry, my husband, don't worry. I won't lose this child. I'll never lose this child. And it will grow strong like you. I promise” (TMS 13).

The husband and wife discuss their problems and provide mutual consolation. The drama illustrates that individuals possess values even in challenging circumstances. Individuals experiencing poverty do not forfeit their self-respect and they express affection towards one another. Grandfather presents Ram with some withered vegetables and enquires if they are suitable for consumption. When Grandfather enquires about the wilting vegetables, it causes Ram distress, prompting him to forcibly remove them from his daughter Savitri. He implores his daughter earnestly to respond and disclose the source of the items. However, Savitri is unable to provide Ram with an impeccable response. Eventually, both Ram and Malti enquire about the vegetables. Savitri states that she obtains the vegetables from a modest garden adjacent to the well where she makes repairs. She enquires whether her cousin is arriving that day. Laxman has sent a message to Savitri to inform her of his impending arrival. Ram and Savitri are both astonished by Savitri's responses. Ram aspires to assist her with her speech impediment by engaging her in constant conversation. Malti prevents Ram from attempting. She believes that this type of speaking practice will not assist Savitri with her vocal issue. Savitri speaks emotionally to Ram:

SAVITRI: (trying faster, stumbling more) to...to...s...say...th...that he...he's...c...com...coming to...today.  
(Savitri takes a deep breath of exasperation)

RAM: Give her a chance.

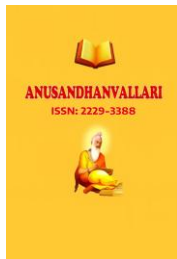
MALTI: Yes, go on. Protect her. You're always doing that. It won't help to cure her speech!

RAM: There's nothing wrong with her speech! (Girl looks with alarm from one to the other)

MALTI: Next you'll be saying I'm responsible for it!

RAM: (angrily) Well, I certainly am not! (Girl puts her hands to her ears, her face distorting) (TMS 14-15).

The dramatist envisions how affection and compassion for others may assist individuals in overcoming adversity such as poverty and famine. An individual's resolve and tenacity can assist them in confronting any problem in life. Laxman's arrival halts the confrontation between Ram and Malti. He arrives in the village from Bombay. He is in his twenties and attires himself like a cinematic icon in the city. He is grinning and grasping a bag. Malti and Savitri are exceedingly delighted to encounter Laxman. He greets everyone and converses with them amicably. He dispatches gifts for all family members from the city. Initially, he presents Malti with a bracelet that was owned by his deceased mother. Furthermore, it was the final wish of his mother. He informs Malti:“My mother's final request was for me to present it to you...” (allows it to be absorbed) Each time you don it, it will evoke memories of my beloved mother who has departed... Laxman's statements illustrate his profound affection for his mother and his perception of her in Malti. The author employs the person Bapa to



illustrate how elderly men typically instruct youth on morality and responsibility. Laxman contacts Bapa to present his gift, but initially, he performs an act to astonish the elderly gentleman. He refers to cheroot “It was my mother’s last dying wish that I give it to you... (lets it sink in) And every time you wear it, it will remind me of my dear departed mother... (TMS 16). Father advises Laxman against developing a smoking addiction and inundates him with concerns. Ram becomes irritated as Laxman and Bapa converse, prompting him to attempt to terminate their dialogue. Ram states:“It’s late.Time to go to sleep. Dream if you wish. The time for reckoning comes with day and work” (TMS 18).

However, Laxman presents Ram with an exceptional gift: a bag of substantial seeds. He informs his uncle that this is the seed that initiated the green revolution in Punjab. The green revolution pertains to rapidly growing seeds that are robust, healthy and adequately fertilised. It is referred to as the golden harvest. Laxman’s portrayal of the seeds astonishes the entire family, as numerous households, including Ram’s, have struggled to cultivate crops for two consecutive years due to a lack of rainfall. Laxman states:

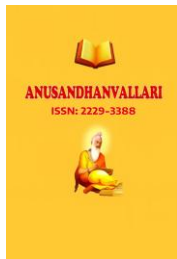
It’s fields of gold, for as far as the eye can reach. Quick growing, full and healthy, well fertilized...There’s nothing like this on earth. No more poverty, no more those whims of nature, the arid of dying soil, the demented green...Here at least is man’s dream coming true. I’ve seen it myself, revolutionize life, bring prosperity and fullness to living (TMS 19).

Laxman bridges the gap between the older and younger generations. He exemplifies the application of technology to address the issue of hunger. Hybrid seeds can assist in this matter and also mitigate the issue of drought. Laxman acquires knowledge of contemporary agriculture and transports hybrid seeds. He believes that these seeds will initiate a green revolution in Maharashtra and his family members begin to anticipate a prosperous harvest in the future. Ram cautions Malti that those from the city, particularly those from the metropolis, are untrustworthy. Their hubristic demeanour and deceitfulness induce feelings of discomfort in him. Malti informs him that not all individuals in the city are unethical, as she has complete trust in Laxman. Ram and Malti engage in a verbal dispute on Laxman’s sentiments. Their argument illustrates their sentiments towards Laxman. Subsequently, Ram reminds Laxman of the seed he has bestowed to him, which brings him satisfaction. He informs Malti that Laxman possesses numerous exceptional ideas. Ram comments to Malti:

Well...he did show us...the miracle seed. And he has worked in the fields with me. I wouldn’t have believed it if I hadn’t seen it. Do you know he actually worked with his hands, this city sticker... (now getting more and more excited) There’s something about the boy...that’s quite a man. Wouldn’t have known it if I hadn’t seen it myself. Yes,(almost proudly)...he’s quite a boy, this nephew of mine. (Malti smiles) (TMS 20).

The dramatist posits that individuals should employ new technologies to address the issue of drought; nevertheless, he illustrates that many in rural regions, particularly farmers, oppose these concepts due to a lack of understanding. Ram believes that Laxman acquires many forms of scientific agriculture in the city. The metropolis enhances his intellect in every aspect. Ram and Malti see a future in which they can fulfil all their desires. Simultaneously, people ponder the authenticity of their dreams. Malti enquires:“Oh, is it true? Is it true? Or are we all riding on false hopes. Just because that boy came here and taught us how to dream” (TMS 21).

Subsequently, Laxman encounters Savitri and presents her with a stone to enhance her voice. He continues to instruct her using the pebble. Throughout the instruction, Savitri softly articulates several phrases with little pauses. Laxman persistently urges Savitri to address her vocal issue. Currimbhoy has used the character of Ram in the play to illustrate the significance of having a responsible person inside a family. Malti’s abdomen enlarges, and she walks with a pronounced heaviness. Ram contemplates her pregnancy and anticipates a healthy offspring. As the family leader, Ram consistently concerns himself with the well-being of his household. Ram has a negative disposition due to the failure of the seed and he extends this treatment to



Laxman. He strongly disapproves of Laxman's demeanour and the manner in which his family discusses him. He believes that Laxman's deceit affects the perceptions of all family members.

Currimbhoy depicts the harsh realities faced by individuals who are impoverished, famished and destitute. It is believed that his realistic manner imparts a distinct significance to the social context of his plays. The interconnection between life and literature is universally applicable. Literature serves not only as a reflection of human existence but also as a critique and a significant facet of life. The playwright effectively illustrates three tendencies of despair, belief and skepticism across three generations. The moment of Laxman's arrival constitutes the most exhilarating segment of the play.

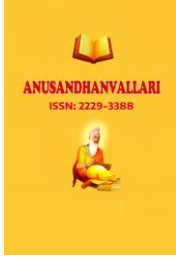
Laxman's suggestion prompts Ram to reconsider and resolve to relocate to the metropolis. All family members are pleased with the decision. There is considerable enthusiasm and preparation occurring throughout the residence. Individuals are placing various items in the hand cart. The extensive adventure is about to commence. Upon Savitri presenting Ram with a selection of the finest hybrid stalks cultivated in her vegetable garden and irrigated by Malti, Ram declares that it is time to depart. All are astonished to observe the stalks within the residence. Even in adverse circumstances, Malti may still irrigate a small parcel of land. Savitri exhibits hybrid stalks and her scream demonstrates that she has completely overcome her stammering. Ram selects a stalk and commences the separation of the seeds. He then examines it in the palm of his hand. This instills greater optimism in the family, prompting them to remain in the village and await the forthcoming monsoon. The entire family is exceedingly pleased to observe the finest hybrid stalks. Savitri asserts that the miraculous seed indeed functioned as intended. She has consistently been acquainted with Laxman. She provides inspiration and concepts to the youth. Laxman observes the situation within Ram's family before proceeding to the city. He states he will return to the village for the subsequent crop. He asserts with conviction, "for the golden harvest" (TMS 38).

The drama depicts three generations. Bapa represents the inaugural generation of individuals who have succumbed to despair. He asserts that the world remains unchanged. Ram and Malti belong to the second generation. They contend that planting hybrid seeds in their farms will yield a substantial harvest. However, their aspirations are thwarted when the miracle seed fails to germinate due to insufficient water supply. Savitri and Laxman embody the third generation of optimism. She firmly believes in Laxman's miraculous seed and contends that it will initiate a green revolution. A variety of superior hybrid stalks has emerged in her vegetable patch, Thus the play ends with a hopeful note of life after drought. According to M.P.Ganesan,

The painful dying breath of the cow, the stammering of Savitri, the pregnant Malti taking a deep breath of exasperation the giggling of the grandfather-all these produce auditory images which widens the play's meaning and reflects the poignant condition of the farmer in his fight for survival. The visible arid land and a well in the background, the dying cow, withered vegetables and Ram himself with his face clouded with frustration and anger raising his eyes to the sky and binning sun all these create visual images which underline the intensively pathetic condition of Ram's family. (39-40).

## Conclusion

Asif Currimbhoy's plays can be categorized into four primary groups: romantic, political, social and those addressing religion and art. He has authored works in various genres, including humor, tragedy, farce, melodrama, history and fantasy. *The Miracle Seed* illustrates the divergent perspectives of individuals in rural and urban settings. The characters Ram and Laxman exemplify this diversity and the narrative is predicated on the concept of the green revolution in India.



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