

Badal Sircar's 'Common Man' in His Play 'Evam Indrajit'

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Abstract

The enigmatic Bengal playwright Badal Sircar, who was more known in 90s for his antiestablishment play since the day of Naxalbari Movement. He did not want to be an imposter in rural theatre, and so he created the Third Theatre. He never liked the idea of keeping the audience in the dark which conventional theatre does. Liberating plays from the confines of the auditorium, his 'third theatre' movement revolutionized stagecraft in India; he had a problem with the stage which, he felt created a barrier between the audience and the actor. Sircar carried contemporary plays to unexplored terrain. The street, public space and parks, away from closed performance space. He broke down the wall that existed in theatre to bring actors and people to a common platform. In 1976, he founded his own company, 'Shatabdi', a new wave troupe that took Sircar plays to Kolkatta's Surendranath Park to involve the audience

Sircar's first play 'Evam Indrajit' marked his rebellious beginning. His group Shatabdi's first production was "Evam Indrajit". Sircar added a new realism to the contemporary body of work as there was no makeup and costumes in his plays and the audience also participated in the act. *Evam Indrajit*, written in 1963 and first performed in 1965, introduced a writer, a cast of "normal" characters, Amal, Bimal and Kamal, whose lives were sedate, ordinary and not appropriate fodder for theatre — and Indrajit. In an exchange between Indrajit and the writer, Indrajit asks: "Then how shall we live?" The Writer replies: Walk! Be on the road! For us there is only the road. We shall walk. I now have nothing to write about — still I have to write. You have nothing to say — still you have to talk. For us there is only the road — so walk on". then Sircar all of a sudden turned away from mocking at the feudal ills to depiction of melancholic introspection in 'Evam Indrajit', he was feted by the class of audience owing allegiance to existentialism and the philosophy of absurd. Leftist critics swiftly panned him for the projection of hopelessness in the play.

This paper depicts the common, middle-class values of the characters of the play 'Evam Indrajit', which are not only educated but also refuses to accept the existing unjust socio- political system.

“He was a pioneer and a multi-faceted cultural personality. His works spoke of peoples’ conditions. We were honored to have a rebellious figure like him in our department, ” says Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta, professor of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University. Perhaps no other theatre personality has had such a deep and pervasive influence on theatre practice and theory in Post-Independence India as Badal Sircar

Introduction

Badal Sircar is a great Bengali playwright. The name Badal Sircar can be easily known with his contemporary writers as Vijay Tendulkar and Mohan Rakesh.. His plays have been translated into English, Kannada, Gujrati, Marathi, Hindi etc. languages and staged successfully. ‘Evam Indrajit’ by Sircar has been translated into English by Girish Karnad and in Hindi by Pratibha Agrawal. Sircar wrote *Evam Indrajit* in 1963, this was his first serious play, and with same his other plays also marked the deep impression. The other two plays ‘Stale News’ and ‘Procession’ relying on juxtaposition, illuminate the contradictions and disparities of the socio-economic situations examined in the plays. Thus his principle of rural-urban dichotomy turns to vague, sometime class distinction in practice.

In this paper his play *Evam Indrajit* will be taken into light. The characters of this play find happiness, consolation, relief when they move on to their way. Mansi a woman character, Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit are young youths. They change their roles, language and dresses etc. in the play. This play is a tragicomedy, contemporary and inventive.

The play actually a theatrically effective and crystallized projection of all the prevalent attitudes, vague feeling and undefined frustration growing in the heart of the educated middle class. In some ways, *Evam Indrajit* is about the residue that consist of those who have failed to adjust and align, and also those who are enmeshed in the day to day struggle for survive. The play opens with the character, who is a writer, is in dilemma which is related to what he considers the limitedness of his experience. He is trying to write play, but does not know ‘people’ he himself has not experienced life at its primitive and basic reality.

The play is in three acts. In the first act writer (*Indrajit*) is trying to write a play but not able to find any thing new in the surrounding. In the second act *Indrajit* who is now thirty five, is employed and unmarried, although his other three friends are married and settled. He cannot marry Mansi, his love because she is his first cousin. On Mansi’s asking him “would you settle down if we got married?” He replies “I don’t know, Mansi, I don’t know anything. I’ve thought a lot. But can’t find an answer. I’ tired now. Now arguments don’t mean a thing. Nor can I do anything. I just feel tired –exhausted. I just do what I feel like doing at the moment. In third act, *Indrajit* become a bit philosophical in his approach to life. To him. “The past and the present are two ends of a single rope. They are apart because the dream is alive. Otherwise the future could easily be broken down and thrown into the arms of the past. The past instead of remaining a wait for the vague, smoky future could be turned into a well defined point-Death!” It is the climax in which *Indrajit*’s extreme

frustration leads him to philosophical thinking. Mansi and Indrajit intone together suggesting at the same time the endlessness of the stream of life, perennial struggle for perfection and devotion to duty.

Sircar once comments, "My plays are never naturalistic. Invariably too, they deal with a human situation or problem. I realized long ago that I wasn't cut out to be a novelist. Writers can analyze individual human beings from a point of detachment. I haven't looked at life that way."

His Third Theatre was formed imbibing ideas from the traditional and folk theatre. However, at the same time it had an identity of its own. In 1973 at Curzon Park Badal Sircar and Satabdi exposed Kolkatans to an unconventional theatrical dimension. 'Free theatre. No tickets, government grants, industrial sponsors and wealthy patrons'. Explains Sircar, "I had not intended labeling our activity. Theatre broadly branches into folk and urban styles. I was merely, therefore, identifying an untested form. However, the phrase has stuck on."

'Evam Indrajit' attracted readers and audiences through its dialogues and linguistic devices. The characters are tramps in the plays and they are representatives of the common men. The playwright has made the play unconventional, modern, inventive, full of dramatic convention. 'Evam Indrajit' is tragic and absurdist in true sense. The characters raise a voice against man's absurdity, unemployment and death-wish. The foolishness, absurdity, instinct for death is opposed in the play. The play is absurd and throws light on the absurd conditions of the life. The view of Sircar is existentialist. which deals with the anguish and ambitions of frustrated youths of their times and thus play is extremely relevant in a post-modern condition of India. It deals with the deep-rooted disappointment of the youth and their frustrations. The play conveys that after the completion of man's journey there will not be Paradise but we must walk on because there is path before us.

Amal, Kamal and Vimal (characters of 'Ivam Indrajit') in short and broken sentences give us a picture of disillusioned sight of post-independent India. Their broken words reflect the 'broken images' of India. As India freed herself from the shackles of the British rule, she is no better. The democratic process is agonizingly slow and people are being crushed under such a system. The government cannot be trusted to do anything as it has become the abode of anarchy. Vimal suggests that in such a state of affairs, they must adopt the others' stand: "If I am alive, all is well."

Badal Sircar's creation always whispers the truth of the absurd philosophy that 'nothingness that is man, that was man, that will be man thereafter'

References:

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