

## Badal Sircar's 'Evam Indrajit': In the light of absurd drama

Ghanashyam Roy

Department of Bengali, Dr. Meghnad Saha College, Itanagar, Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal

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### Abstract:

In the second half of the 20th century, Badal Sircar, with the help of his play *Evam Indrajit*, unveiled a new horizon in the world of theatre and the Bengali drama also got its recognition to the world theatre court. In 1967, Badal Sircar, the founder of the *Shatabdi* theatre organization, once travelled around the country and abroad and came in contact with Martin Esslin's 'Absurd Drama'. In the post-modern period, ordinary people lived in a deteriorating world; Absurd Drama emerges as a way and medium to escape them from a confused, vague, endangered life without understanding the meaning of this world. From a wide experience of seeing life, Badal Sircar, in this play, made the deprivation of rural and inner-living destitute people in the socio-economic context of India. Under the guise of the mainstream of traditional drama, he created 'Third Theatre' as a novel theatrical project and wrote the play *Evam Indrajit* with the important question of modern life-asking, conflict of social stereotypes prevalent with the tangle dreams and aspirations of individuals and society, the existence of the conscience and humanity of the individual. *Evam Indrajit* (1965) is a representative play by playwright Badal Sircar. This much-controversial play introduced a completely new play in the era of modern Bengali drama. This new play is known as Absurd in the world of drama. The main thing about this absurd philosophy of life is to rebel against the compatibility and harmony of life. Many inconsistencies in this class of play give a glimpse of a true philosophy of life. In the current discussion, in this way Badal Sircar's absurd play *Evam Indrajit* has made the Bengali literary store unprecedented. He has tried to highlight through his play how life asks, emptiness and alienation darken the light of life. This is the main theorem in the current discussion.

**Key words:** Absurd Drama, Third Theatre, Social stereotype, Emptiness, Alienation

In classical age, Plato's concept of drama was largely critical. He viewed drama, as an imitation of the physical world, which itself is an imitation of the ideal world. Plato believed that drama could have a corrupting effect because it stimulates emotion and passion which can detract from rational thought and moral behavior. So he even suggested banning dramatists from his ideal state because their work could mislead and degrade the audience by promoting falsehood. But the discovery of Aristotle's theory of imitation places the dramatists in criticism. In the world of literature, Shakespeare later replaced the Greek theatrical feature Mimesis with Hamletia, the mistake of 'hero character's theory that brought a novel advance to the play. But alienation or separatism drama brought Bertolt Brecht to the present post-modern thoughts. And later it was connected to the Bengali absurd drama. In Bengali drama literature, Badal Sircar with his absurd plays revealed a new horizon in the world of theatre and Bengali drama also got its recognition in the world theatre court. In the play *Evam Indrajit* Badal Sircar has applied this post-modern theory of isolation in many ways.

Badal Sarkar is particularly well respected in the Bengali theatre industry. He was born in Kolkata on 15 July 1925. He was a successful playwright of his time. In 1967, Badal Sircar, the founder of the *Shatabdi* theatre organization, once travelled around the country and abroad and came in contact with Martin Esslin's 'Absurd Drama'. In post-modern times, ordinary people lived in a deteriorating world. In absurd drama absurd characters want to find their way and medium to escape from a confused, vague, endangered life, without understanding the meaning of this world. From his extensive experience of seeing life, Badal Sircar, in his plays, made the deprivation of rural and inner destitute people in the socio-

economic context of India as dramatic element of his play. He created 'Third Theatre' as a novel theatrical project behind the mainstream of traditional drama and wrote the play *Evam Indrajit* with the important question of modern life-asking, social stereotypes prevalent with the tonnage dreams and aspirations of individual and society, the existence of the conscience and humanity of the individuals.

Badal Sircar has shown an imbalanced beginning and inconsistent story in his absurd play *Evam Indrajit*. Most of his plays have problematic discussions, lack of prominent characters, lack of intelligent dialogue and meaningless chatter. In addition, the complex problems of post-modern times, the philosophy of despair, the search for absurd imaginary truths, complex and fading life-going, traditional nonsense, lifeless, incomprehensible, isolated and failed to connect have dominated here.

*Evam Indrajit* (1965) is a representative play by playwright Badal Sircar. This much-controversial play introduced a completely new genre of drama in the history of modern Bengali drama. This new drama is known as absurd drama in the world of drama. The main thing about this absurd philosophy of life is to rebel against the compatibility, harmony of life and meaning of life. The main character of this play, Indrajit, has been adopted and the entire play's speech has been rotated. The playwright adds the word 'Evam' to the name of the play *Evam Indrajit* and by this he means Indrajit's uniqueness from other characters. The common man wants to hear a lot about him. So Indrajit comes after Amal, Vimal and Kamal. Badal Sircar's play *Evam Indrajit* was written in 1963 and published in 1965 in *Bahuroopi* and was recognized by the *Natya Academy* in 1968. At the beginning of the play, it appears that the Writer has been writing something, he has been writing for a long time; Auntie came, Auntie is just to give a name, mother can be, paternal auntie, maternal auntie can be any one. The playwright wants to establish here that such characters behave arrogantly in plays. So these characters need to be distinguished not by name but by behaviour. Again, the strange thing is that the emotions of other characters are one way at a time, different at other times. So they can't be tied to any frame. Indrajit, Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Auntie have each expressed their nature in space, time, age and personality. Our radical reform is that one name represents only one character. But the Badal Sircar has shown that a name can also reveal many diverse personalities. Manasi is not just a woman's name--many people like Indrajit, Amal, Vimal, Kamal and the Writer are embodied in her. The Writer in this play sometimes desires to write poems, sometimes he desires to write dramas; a deep restlessness in his mind has made him yearning. That's when he wants to write a different kind of writing, the audience of the play will also become one character in his writing. Just as Pirandello (Luigi Pirandello) has taken the character of his play from the audience, Badal Sircar has also taken his characters of drama named Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Nirmal from the audience. In this play, Indrajit, explained his name out of fear; he called his name 'Nirmal' out of fear, because he thought that the fear of turmoil unrest when he goes beyond the rules as echoed in Rabindranath Tagore's *Taser Desh* which is the obligation to follow the rules in a sincere manner.

Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit are the representative of the degraded youths of Kolkata. They generally belong to the group of gentleman. They are well educated with degrees. The playwright presents the traditional life, life-making and fragmented plays of their lives in this play.

In the first act of the play, Auntie repeatedly pronounced 'Aren't you going to eat tonight?', the Writer's avoidance and clear indifference in his mind are shown, and on the other hand, there is no dearth of food in the Writer's household—there is a lack of dishes. Even though the playwright in the play *Evam Indrajit* wants to write plays about snake-playing *Bedes*, *Santal Morol* and a big gang of fishing groups, there is no way to admit that the sense that has worked in this play is a different understanding of satire. So the middle class Amal is sometimes became a teacher in this play, sometimes Vimal, sometimes Kamal and sometimes Indrajit. They taught, but what is noteworthy is that all three of them have called the same roll number 'Thirty four'. This type of calling by roll number is a sharp indication of the traditional education system.

In the play Indrajit accepted everything undeniably, accepted the superiority of cricket, even football, and even a little wink at Yul Brynner's film and Einstein's theory. So they know Einstein's alleged fourth dimension is actually 'time'. Outside the men of letter, they are encouraged to read the play of Bernard Shaw. So Indrajit says, literature should be realistic, but to say it should be a naked reflection of life....

When Auntie and Indrajit were in conversation, a song started in the play—

“One-two-three

One-two-three-two-One-two-three

One-two-three-two-One-two-three

Four-five-six

Four-five-six-five-four-five-six

Four-five-six-five-four-five-six

Seven-eight-nine  
Seven-eight-nine-eight-seven-eight-nine  
Seven-eight-nine-eight-seven-eight-nine  
Nine-eight-seven-six-five-four-three-two-one”<sup>1</sup>

The rhythm here is a combination of stereotypes. As soon as the Writer stopped singing, everyone shouted un-dramatically and said that there is no drama about Amal, Vimal and Kamal because they walk in a chart. Their lives are turned into a stereotype. They're like the characters of Uncle Podger. They begin in 'one'--then rapid prosperity, inevitable consequences after the speed of the path of 'nine' to reach its peak--and then falling action started as--nine-eight- seven-six-five-four-three-two-one. But where their journey ends, there is no progress, no backwards at all. Their lifestyle is resonating to 'zero'. They don't even want to think slowly. So they don't try to understand the meaning of one, two, and three. The writer said:

“WRITER. Did you understand that?

KAMAL. I would have in the Arithmetic Class. But this is a poem, after all. Not so easy!

[*Laughter again.* ]

WRITER. Actually I want to write a play.

AMAL. And give up poetry? Just like that?

WRITER. Not just like that. I have been thinking about it for quite a while.”<sup>2</sup>

Here they speak slantly about the nonsense of poetry. In this play, the playwright also seeks to mock the attempted arrogance of modern poetry of 1950's in the 20th century.

It was broken like a bubble before any sense arose in the absurd play. So there was so much noise about Manasi before a romantic weather broke out; she would mix with the excitement, it became pale. In the drama, the Writer asks Indrajit about Manasi and come to know that Manasi is Indrajit's cousin. There is a complex relationship between Indrajit and Manasi. There is love on the one hand, affection on the other—this tangled feeling confuses the social swells. But Indrajit is light to tell Manasi about his irony for not to marry Manasi. The momentary affair of 1960-70's love, marriage and live-together with a faithful person is also revealed here.

The third act of the play *Evam Indrajit* also mentions political unrest, some have spoken out against the British Empire, some against the Capitalist social system; some against Fascism and some others have called Communism the path to the extinction of people's sense of individuality. On the one hand, the slow movement of the Democracy is unbearable, while in Dictatorship, the vocal life of the people is unbearable. As a result, Amal, Vimal and Kamal decided to play cards—

“AMAL. On 15 August 1947 India became Independent.

VIMAL. We escaped from the clutches of British Empire.

KAMAM. Now we have to build a self-sufficient, self-supporting society.

AMAL. We have to dismantle the capitalist system.

VIMAL. Fascism is leading the world to destruction.

KAMAL. Communism kills man's sense of himself and his freedom.

AMAL. The democratic process is agonizingly slow.

VIMAL. Dictatorship has always been proved an evil.

AMAL. Our country has become the home of anarchy and corruption.

VIMAL. Our government can't be trusted to do anything.

KAMAL. Power corrupt...

AMAL. Politics is dirty...”<sup>3</sup>

After this, there is a personal life; Sometimes Kamal becomes a father and sometimes Kamal as a son turn around the scene of pestilence and death; Sometimes Vimal becomes a father, sometimes Vimal is a son. That is, the playwright has adopted this method to bring about a person of the same characteristic features and to reveal the character of politics here.

No specific limit of space and time is counted in the absurd philosophy. In this play too, we see Indrajit talking about his age and saying that it could be one hundred, two hundred or anything else. On the one hand, politics, economical condition, social policy, quotations, tenders, on the other hand, Indrajit does not marry Manasi in that life. Manasi goes to Hazaribagh or elsewhere. In the play the Writer always says about Amal, Vimal, Kamal, Nirmal; but the behavior of Manasi and Indrajit has been changed several times in the play. Manasi asks Indrajit about his family. Then Indrajit says:

“MANASI. Say something.

INDRAJIT. What?

MANASI. Whatever you going to say.

INDRAJIT. What was that?

MANASI. About yourself, about your family.

INDRAJIT. Oh yes! My wife looks after the house. I work in the office. My wife goes to a film. I go with her. My wife goes to her parents' house. I eat in a restaurant. She comes back. I go marketing.”<sup>4</sup>

In this reproduced life Manasi is not for Indrajit but anyway Manasi is in indrajit's life. They change themselves according to the situation; after that they don't change again. This is where the absurdness of the relationship format is. Absurd's aversion, depression and frustration about the life in the play are revealed through Indrajit in the play *Evam Indrajit*. The play begins where the play ends. At the end, he again said in an absurd sentence that the path he is on is not the end of the path.

In the play *Evam Indrajit*, there is a hint of a true philosophy of life deep in the depths of irresolvable nonsense. These Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Manasi- all are born in the normal rhythm of life, growing up, learning to study, working and finally dying. This is how they move towards zero consequences by creating circles one by one. Here the playwright has finally transformed his thoughts into the spiritual refuge of birth-burnish. So to say *Evam Indrajit* is a successful absurd drama centered on absurd characters.

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