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AMALGAMATION OF MYTHICAL AND LEGENDARY STRUCTURE WITH MODERNITY
AND EXISTENTIAL EXIGENCIES IN BADAL SIRCAR'S "EVAM INDRAJIT"

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary "Machine Age" with the technological advancement has accelerated the growth of economic condition but has made the modern man materialistic, selfish and spiritually barren. As a consequence of these merely worldly attitudes, people of the modern era are living in a state of moral, spiritual and existential crisis. Indian drama has a rich heritage of involvement of myths and legends as its requisite component. Badal Sircar, a renowned Indian playwright also follows this trend in his works. In his plays, he verily delineates the Indian way of life incorporating all its positive and negative aspects, its consuetude and their relative coeval significance and relation. Mythical and legendary beliefs are densely rooted in religious and cultural belief of Indian people. Even the old traditions and customs take an enough space in the hearts of contemporary Indian people. But, now the individuals face many difficulties on account of the vague of modernity, repudiation of ethics and morality, and humanity. In this paper, I shall throw light on the contemporary moral, spiritual and existential crisis and how Badal Sircar tries to reform these crises through the technique of intermingling of mythical and legendary structure with the modernity.

Key Words: Society, Modernity, Crisis, Dilemma, Contemporary, Materialistic, Concerned, Myth, Legend, Economy, Existentialism etc.

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Multi-culturalism, religious plurality, diversity in faith, and multiplicity in existence are some guiding ethos of India. Like its cultural multiplicity, Indian drama is also enshrined with diversity, celebrated diversified faiths, multi-culturalism and the plurality of nation. But, the contemporary "Machine Age" with the technological advancement has accelerated the growth of economic condition that has made the modern man materialistic, selfish, and spiritually and existentially wasteland. To perpetuate the merely worldly attitude, the people of the modern era are living in a kind of psychosis and a state of spiritual and existential crisis. Due to the repudiation of value of individual's identity, ethics and morality, the modern people are subjected to confront many vital problems in the society. India has a great tradition of drama from the ancient times. Primarily Indian drama was written in Sanskrit language depicting rituals, folks and cultural heritage. "Our knowledge about the initial, primitive stage of theatrical activity is very meagre. However, we can safely assert that in India, as in other cultures, the theatrical activity began with primitive magical, religious or social rites,

ritualistic dances, festivals etc" (Jain 1). But nowadays the major concerns of the Indian playwrights are to represent the current social issues and the problems of everyday life. On the contrary, Indian playwrights have a great legacy to incorporate mythical and legendary elements in the literary canon to demonstrate their thoughts on the present condition with inner or external struggle of a human being from the primordial stage of Indian drama. "The stories of these plays are drawn from Indian mythological episodes, folk tales, historical events as well as contemporary social situations, though sometimes the stories are echoes of some popular Muslim or the western legends or tales are also here" (Jain 68). Mythical and legendary thoughts give more vivid and elastic meaning, and it amplifies the purview in a more contemplative and thoughtful way. As the major concern of the modern Indian playwrights is to represent social and cultural patterns and problems of the coeval society, myth and legend has a plentiful storage of story relating to the present scenario of society. Even, among the people of modern India, mythical and legendary believes take an enough space. Mythical and legendary believes are profoundly rooted in religious and cultural faith of Indian people, and the religious ideals and thoughts give meaning to the existence and identity of Indian people. The mythological stories are very common to the people, and they can easily relate the morale and rationale of the particular story to their life, and try to eradicate such distorted values and norms from their life which create existential and spiritual dilemma. But now the individual faces many difficulties and distresses on account of the vague of modernity, repudiation of ethics and morality, and humanity. Badal Sircar, a renowned Indian playwright also follows this propensity in his works. In his plays, he verily delimitates the Indian way of life incorporating all its positive and negative aspects, its consuetude and their relative coeval significance and relation. "Plays of Badal Sircar placed him on a pedestal higher than other contemporary playwrights of Indian Drama. His time of entry into Indian drama was very appropriate. Perhaps he made the final breakthrough when a considerable amount of modernity had already been ushered in and the new directors who responded so happily to him had already achieved an identity" (Dass 68-69).

Through the play "Evam Indrajit" the playwright Badal Sircar endeavors to limn up many vital social and cultural problems of the contemporary society which brings to the society a catastrophic existential and spiritual exigencies. The play "Evam Indrajit" is the landmark in the literary arena of modern Indian drama, as it focuses on some burning issues of post-independent India. Due to the denial of ethics, morality and socio-cultural norms, the people of the modern era suffer from the existential and psychical crisis. Sircar tries to rectify all the perverted values and norms from the society which create a spiritual and existential vacuum among the modern people through the morale and rationale of the mythical and legendary structures in the play "Evam Indrajit". At the very outset of the play "writer" was writing but while Manasi asks him what are you writing? He replied nothing. Through the following lines the playwright dexterously elucidates the existential dilemma of the people of post-independent India.

"Manasi: Won't you read out what you have written so far?"

Writer: Haven't written a thing.

Manasi: Why did you do that?

Writer: It's not good. I have nothing to write about.

Manasi: Nothing?

Writer: What shall I write? Who shall I write about? How many people do I know? And what do I know about them?" (Sircar 197)

The play is an absurd play which focuses on the existential crisis and dilemma of its characters. Sircar adroitly delineates the individual's identity crisis and psychical sufferings of the contemporary people through the portraiture of Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit in the play. Indrajit likes to address himself as Nirmal rather than Indrajit, and also he is called by roll number in terms of statistics rather than human being. He would not marry Manasi because he is the cousin of Manasi not because of himself. The structure of the play is like a round circle in which the events are same but the personalities are different. At the outset aunty asks the "writer" to stop writing and latter Manasi asks the same to the writer. K. Venkata Reddy rightly observes that "Nothing meaningful happens in *Evam Indrajit* as in any typical absurd play. The play is not unrealistic either, as some readers think it to be. The realism of *Evam Indrajit* like that of *Waiting for Godot* is a psychological realism and

inner realism which explore the human subconscious in depth rather than trying to describe the outward appearance of human existence" (Reddy 65). On the contrary, Sircar skilfully represents the cyclical system of life through the depiction of the cycle of Birth-School-Interview-Job-Marriage-Death and Transport-Files-Tea-Files-Lunch-Files-Coffee-Files-Transport etc. It reflects that everything is in a circle in the material world and Indrajit rightly says in the play that "The past and the present are two ends in a single rope" (Sircar 240).

Through the technique of amalgamation of mythical and legendary elements with the modernity in "Evam Indrajit", Badal Sircar endeavours to make the modern man realise their unethical and vitiated value loaded norms which create spiritual and existential vapidness among the people of modern era. In Ramayana, Indrajit is Meghanad Ravana's son who is against the distorted systems and norms, and tries to dig up all kinds of injustices, hypocrisy and malpractices. Likewise, in the play, Evam Indrajit bitterly repudiates and neglects the malicious systems and rules in the society in which he does not find any efficacious and fruitful aspect. "In Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*, Indrajit as Meghanad Ravana's son is taken from Ramayan, who opposes the system and neglects follow to the rules, unable to find anything good. He comes to a point in his life that future makes the person to survive which is like dream. Death is the greatest happiness" (Holeyannavar 4). Likewise, Evam Indrajit also severely negates the hypocritical rules and rulers, and endeavours to bring a reformation in the society.

Indrajit: The world! The people around us! What you call society. Have I told you about Leela?

Manasi: Her husband died of TB, didn't he?

Indrajit: Yes that's the girl. He died a few months ago. Now her in-laws have thrown her out.

Manasi: Thrown her out?

Indrajit: Nothing more to happen. Everything that could happen has already happened. I heard about it yesterday, though it happened three months ago. Tell me what sort of a rule is that? (Sircar 215)

The play "Evam Indrajit" focuses on various aspects of the society which are contaminating resulting in shaking and weakening of the social fabric of the society from the last few decades. The problem of male chauvinism over the women is nowadays considered one of the outrageous and vital social diseases. The patriarchal norms of the society make a deleterious mind setup among the people of the society. Even among the women, these malicious and hypocritical patriarchal batons become very normal to accept, as they are brought up in the same social milieu. Consciously or unconsciously women are mentally prepared to accept these unethical and vitiated norms of patriarchal society from the very early stage of their life. Here, in the play, the playwright mentions a specific case of Leela whose husband died few months ago. The husband of Leela has died of Tuberculosis and that is why she has thrown out from her home by her in-laws. After taking away all the jewellery and provident fund's money from her, the in-laws of Leela desperately disallow her in her own husband's house. Leela is obliged to live in her cousin's home with her young boy of twelve years old. Like the legendary figure Indrajit of Ramayana, here through the portraiture of Indrajit, Sircar tries to pluck up this feigning and flagitious mind setup of the patriarchal society.

Manasi: I don't know why. But that's the rule.

Indrajit: You always go by rules, don't you?

Manasi: [Laughs.] Whenever you allow me to.

Indrajit: You like it?

Manasi: Girls have to. (Sircar 214)

Unemployment is one of the very burning issues of the post-independent India. It is a kind of disease which creates a vacuum of fragmentation, disillusionment, pessimism and frustration among the youngsters. And the disillusionment and frustration makes the existence of human being an absurd one in this material world, and it also creates psychical and spiritual bareness. In some cases unemployment enhances a social activities, deceitfulness and hypocrisy among the people. Indeed the playwright tries to capture our notice to this specific aspect in "Evam Indrajit". In "Evam Indrajit" Sircar dexterously raises the issues of unemployment by the use of myth, by a vivid depiction of the four youngsters, namely Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit, and by their business for jobs, interviews and for involvement in academic discourse. Jyoti Singh Rathore rightly states "He actually represents the depressed and frustrated Youngman, who in spite of their high educational

qualification and middle class status in society. Move here and there for searching some respectable position. Referring to the bible Indrajit holds the mythical fruit of knowledge responsible for all dissatisfaction and frustration in human beings" (Rathore 5).

On 15th August 1947 India got an independence from the long wristlet of British rule and clutches of British Empire and colonization. But, the socio-economic and cultural ambience of India is not changed so far. India is needed to create a strong, self-sufficient, self-supporting social and economical milieu. The capitalist system needs to be eradicated from the society which leads the society towards the destruction. Fascism also needs to be uprooted from the political milieu of India which directs the world towards the demolition. Communism terminates the individual's sense and freedom, and dictatorship has always been proved as a harmful. "The dismantling of the Capitalist system led to Fascism and it led the world to destruction. Communism is killing man and his freedom. 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 and nepotism" (Rathore 3). Massive body of the people suffer under any of these systems. People cannot trust government no more as it becomes the inception of anarchy, corruption and nepotism. Through the delimitation of these various kinds of ruling policy and system, Sircar endeavours to bring a societal reformation and rectification which the forefathers of India have dreamt.

Vimal: We escaped from the clutches of the British Empire.

Amal: We have to dismantle the capitalist system.

Vimal: Fascism leading the world to destruction.

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

Vimal: Our government can't be trusted to do anything.

Kamal: Power corrupts. (Sircar 238)

Thus, it is observed that the play "Evam Indrajit" is the trailblazing work in the literary arena of modern Indian drama as it dexterously delimitates the present state of mankind by putting the rationale of legendary figures in the play. Different kinds of vitiated societal norms and malpractices which create a hollowness of existence and deficiency of spirituality and morality are skilfully depicted in the play, and the playwright also tries to rectify these flagitious and contaminated value loaded norms through the contextual and remedial representation of mythical elements. Sircar minutely and delicately documents the issue of unemployment among the educated youngsters that causes frustration, disillusionment and absurdity among them. Mythical figure 'Indrajit' of Ramayana was against all sorts of social taboos and policies, and perverted rules and rulers. Likewise, Sircar in "Evam Indrajit" limns up the character of Indrajit putting in him the very appropriate, logical and contextual characteristics of mythological figure 'Indrajit', and makes it very rational and pregnant to the context of modern mankind's state of psychological and existential dryness.

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