

Thematic Dimensions and Interpretation in Badal Sircar's *Bhoma*

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Abstract

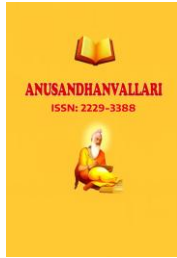
Badal Sircar has authored plays that address a diverse array of social issues. The depiction of Sircar prompts reflection and endeavors to improve society. The author effectively articulates his perspectives on the challenges prevalent in contemporary society. Sircar's plays function as social satires, aiming to expose societal flaws and ultimately instigate transformation. His plays provide several examples illustrating societal dysfunction. The individuals governing the society in which the characters reside may be culpable for their futile existences. His plays address significant societal issues, such as population growth, unemployment and the struggle for survival under various economic challenges.

Key words: poverty, corruption, avarice, malevolence, lovelessness, subjugation

Introduction

Sircar's plays explore the complexities of the human condition, utilizing fictional characters to illustrate the profound struggles and suffering individuals endure. He is mostly concerned on the malevolence of individuals. His creativity is derived from his life experiences. His socio-realistic dramas serve as a compelling exhortation for societal engagement. They are rooted in the constitutional ethos of a genuinely democratic society, achievable only if individuals embrace both moral and political values in their personal and public lives. He desires his readers to contemplate their connections with others who are less privileged in a profound and emotional manner. Sircar has provided his insights on some significant issues impacting women. Men frequently feel empowered to mistreat women when the institution of marriage is criticized. A significant amount of the exploitation of women is linked to financial dependence. However, it is evident that Badal Sircar has illustrated the sorrowful and dire condition of the colonial populace.

Badal Sircar incorporates contemporary elements into his plays. He creates a credible new culture. He is a significant playwright in contemporary Indian English writing. His plays illustrate contemporary



perspectives on life and death. He represents the New Theatrical Movement in India. Sircar's plays address challenges in politics, society, psychology and life overall. Badal Sircar is a renowned Indian dramatist and theatre director. Individuals also contemplate his third play due to its anti-establishment nature. He asserts that the "Third Theatre" possesses a philosophy and a comprehensive theory. He posits that folk play originates from rural society, being the earliest form of theatre. The second theatre is the European Proscenium Theatre. Individuals from the middle and upper classes attend the theatre. This theatre provides a platform to discuss societal progress and improvement. Badal Sircar believes it is essential to seek an alternative approach because of the high costs and challenges associated with theatre. He creates the Third Theatre by integrating the first and second theatres. He acknowledges their style; rather, he eliminates their shortcomings. G.Anuradha says:

the important characteristic features of the socio-economic conditions of India is an unfortunate dichotomy between the urban and rural life. He felt that theatre is one of the fields where this dichotomy manifests most. Hence, he wished to create a link between the two through Third Theatre which synthesizes the two. Third Theatre, thus, is an outcome of transcending the confines of the urban commercial theatre and the indigenous folk theatre. (305)

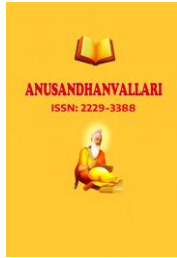
After India's independence, its literature adopted numerous Western concepts, including liberty, equality, fraternity, nationalism and internationalism. It has also embraced a scientific, rational and humanistic perspective on life. Imitation, resistance, accommodation, adjustment and assimilation are components of culture that contribute to both acculturation and national integration. The British administration offered a liberal education that established a new aristocratic class in India. These individuals, who attended university, were wholly committed to the Western paradigm of thought, emotion and action. India could not stay where she was and the western influence was an impulse for change. This dialectic of the sociocultural situation was fully reflected in the polarization of attitudes and beliefs in literature, hence too in its forms.

Discussion

Bhoma was composed in 1974 and premiered in April 1976. Badal Sircar composed *Bhoma* during the midpoint of his career as a playwright. He states that in April 1976, they leased a space daily for six consecutive Sundays to present a new play titled *Bhoma*. We were unable to utilize our bespoke chairs, which were at varying elevations, or the lighting setup we had at Anganmancha in this venue. No advertisements appeared in newspapers, on posters, or in booklets. We solicited assistance from our friends and supporters and received a contribution of Rs. 1 to offset expenses. The hall's capacity ranges from 110 to 140 individuals, contingent upon the event. All the performances were at capacity, and demand increased mainly due to word-of-mouth promotion. The officials denied the request to hire the hall again. We were fortunate to discover an alternative venue on College Street that perfectly suited our requirements and hosted performances every Friday. The responses persisted, prompting us to engage in *Spartacus*, *Michhil*, *Tringsha Satabdi*, and *Prastab* alongside *Bhoma*.

Badal Sircar is the inaugural dramatist to democratize theatre. The play *Bhoma* exemplifies "Third Theatre." *Bhoma* is a common surname among households in the northeastern region of Bengal. The drama features six characters, all of whom are numbers. The present drama illustrates the impact of lovelessness in our society. Tushar Kanjilal, the headmaster of the Rangabelia village school, informs the dramatist about *Bhoma* and *Sundarban*. In the foreword, Badal Sircar elucidates the origins of the drama.

This play omits *Bhoma*'s narrative. Observing, encountering and acquiring knowledge about our environment astonishes, wounds and infuriates us. These emotions have manifested in peculiar, theatrical



imagery. Bhoma's photograph was incorporated in those works. However, when the images were compiled to create a play, Bhoma's image emerged as the central connection, resulting in the play being titled Bhoma. The play was created together by the Satabdi crew and Sircar. There are neither characters nor a plot. The drama presented by Satabdi features six actors. While Three discusses love, One continues to search for Bhoma. Bhoma is not a character; nonetheless, his presence is palpable throughout the performance. He transitions from a modest peasant to a formidable character. The characterization does not encompass the notion of a protagonist and an antagonist being diametrically opposed. It resembles a compendium of various events and scenarios, all interconnected by a central subject of the absence of love. At the commencement of the play, six players, uniformly attired, simulate various agricultural activities. One asserts familiarity with Bhoma but is unable to provide any information regarding him. Subsequently, they commence a discussion regarding the evolution of circumstances across time.

TWO: The blood of fish is cold.

ONE: The blood of man is also cold. Theory of Evolution Darwin. Had man's blood not grown cold, he wouldn't have survived.

THREE: What would have done then?

ONE: Died. Become extinct, like the Dinosaurs.

THREE: The blood of the Dinosaurs was it cold or warm?

ONE: I don't know. (47)

Although the argument lacks empirical validity, it demonstrates a deficiency in compassion and empathy for others. If individuals continue to exhibit rudeness and a lack of affection, they may face extinction akin to that of the dinosaurs. Two discusses his professional endeavors and familial relationships. Three individuals attempt to impede him. He expresses his affection for a woman, although others ridicule him. Subsequently, they begin to contemplate urban areas and visitors. It facilitates urban expansion. An individual emphasizes the significance of enhancing rural areas, noting that 75% of India's population resides in villages rather than urban centers:

THREE: The village! the lovely village! the charming village! the beautiful village.!

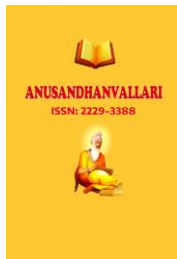
FOUR: The special village welfare programs on the radio.

ONE: describes the miserable condition of poor peasants in Indian villages: "At four rupees a day you can't afford to buy rice, wheat, yes, but not enough for chapatis. If you make a porridge of it with water and salt it goes a long way and fills you up. If you can't get wheat flour, there's cornflower, if you can't even get hold of that, you starve. You can't always get a four rupees a day job, may be at most a hundred or a hundred and twenty-five days a year".

(54)

Badal Sircar's drama illustrates the disparity between the affluent and the impoverished, reflecting his communist ideology. It is evident as follows: "There's no electricity but there are the poles and wires all these three years. If we get electricity, if the canals are a drenched, if we have more tube wells — only 3 million rupees — then the whole of the Simulpur, Anchar, all the 3000 acres of land will yield gold! Gold! (54). Conversely, some individuals discuss the growth of their city.

The drama utilizes the term "blood" in many contexts. Five repeatedly employs the term "blood." He states: "Give me blood, I'll give you jobs, give me blood, I'll give you permits" (62) and "Give me blood, I'll



give you Kingdom” (63). “Blood” signifies exploiting and harming individuals. The playwright intensifies the concept of blood to a significant degree. At the conclusion of the play, a character states:

Sircar provides several instances of how affluent individuals exploit impoverished populations in free India. A different conversation also introduces the same concept.

TWO: (in agony) Beggars and dogs fighting over leftovers from the wedding feast thrown out on the street.

ONE: Drown that noise with Ravi Shankar’s sitar. (64)

Similarly, he throws light on the circumstance that third world countries like India are demoralized by the advanced countries like America.

TWO: Yes, yes, sell your pots and pans.

FOUR: Your country will also sell its pots and pans to educate him.

FIVE: Thousands and thousands of pots and pans will be spent to educate him. SIX: Educated, he will depart in glory for America. (68)

The current play illustrates how rulers exploit their nation and deposit their wealth in Switzerland. This impoverishes the nation while enriching the rulers. They feign the role of noble statesmen and utilize the press and mass media to obscure their spurious patriotism.

TWO: Bless me, it’s the country that will become bankrupt, why should I? My money is in a bank in Switzerland. ONE: Shall thou not be called a traitor by the nation?

TWO: Who dares call me that? I am a patriot and I shall remain one.

ONE: How?

TWO: Microphone, Newspapers, Radio, Television. Above everything else the T in man. (69)

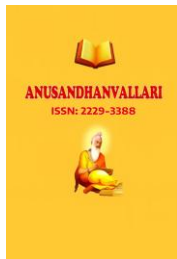
In a democracy, all individuals ought to possess equal opportunities. However, the reality is that only a select few fortunate individuals reap the advantages. The government faces insolvency while the leaders amass wealth. Sircar employs this drama to critique nations possessing nuclear armaments. Nuclear weapons are termed “weapons of mass destruction” due to their capacity to annihilate millions and create deformities in countless children. However, individuals often overlook the detrimental aspects of nuclear weapons and express considerable satisfaction with their nation’s ascension to nuclear power status.

TWO, FOUR, SIX: Rejoice! Rejoice! ONE: India becomes a nuclear power! TWO, FOUR, SIX: Rejoice! Rejoice! ONE: Number Six in the world! (71)

Subsequent to discussing these matters, he asserts that the sole solution is to amalgamate all egos into a unified “we.” Numerous critics emphasise oppression and exploitation. Consequently, Bhoma vividly illustrates the plight of the oppressed peasant by dramatizing a sequence of scenes depicting his social subjugation and economic exploitation.

The central theme of the drama is the exploitation of impoverished Indians by landowners. Shampa Bhattacharjee additionally asserts this. Sircar employs a number of illustrations from this socioeconomic milieu to demonstrate the sentiments of the subjugated rural populace in contrast to the “grandeur” of Calcutta.

Bhoma represents the potent symbol of the downtrodden agrarian class in West Bengal. He is not merely a destitute villager; Bhoma embodies the jungle itself. Bhoma constitutes the village. The subjugation of Bhoma has precipitated all issues, whereas the liberation of Bhoma resolves all concerns. Upon encountering the



villages of the Sundarbans, Sircar has been appalled by the dehumanised state of their existence. However, beyond being surprised, he is incensed by the utter indifference of the metropolitan community in West Bengal for the destitution of the people in the Sunderbans. At the conclusion of the play, Sircar illustrates how an equitable society eliminates all forms of oppression and exploitation.

ONE: This earth belongs to ALL of us, doesn't it, Bhoma? If we ALL of us, could work our hardest to make everything we need and them ALL of us shared all we produced, then that queer picture that lets us buy up your blood to drink, the picture that you don't have and therefore can't get your rice-if we could destroy forever that queer, obscene Picture-I can't explain it, Bhoma I can only understand if you don't rise up with your axe, then the forest of poisonous trees will never be cleared. (86)

The depiction of toxic trees is interpreted as a reference to the category of exploiters and oppressors. The society as a forest of toxic trees inhabited by opportunists and exploiters, with Bhoma, a primitive aborigine, serving as the woodcutter. Bhoma exemplifies the repressed and exploited peasant who ultimately seizes his "rusty axe," refines it and eradicates the toxic trees surrounding him. B.Charanya observes:

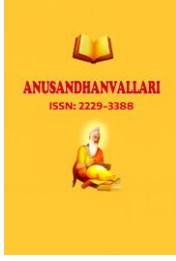
In *Bhoma*, Sircar presents a vivid picture and description of the lives of many Bhomas in the village under a desperate socio economic condition which has exploited them to the core. The character of Bhoma is endowed with an archetypal significance. He is a symbol of the oppressed and exploited peasants. There are many villages full of many hungry Bhomas. Sircar conveys his audience and readers to consider the rural people and the hard work of the peasants on whose toil the people lead a self-content life without suffering from hunger and help in the upliftment of the standard of living of them. (19)

Conclusion

Badal Sircar's *Bhoma* is a remarkable and singular drama not intended to amuse the affluent audience in the opulent theatre. The drama endeavours to awaken the typical individual to their responsibilities and obligations towards the less fortunate. Sircar addresses various contemporary social and economic issues, including nuclear testing and the abuse of atomic weaponry, elevated income taxation and the exploitation of rural populations by urban dwellers. The drama concludes with a symbolic finale in which many Bhomas advance with axes to fell the toxic trees and rejuvenate the Earth. The majority of his plays are grounded in actual events, as evidenced by their analysis. Badal Sircar possesses a heightened awareness of the challenges posed by the nuclear era, including poverty, corruption, avarice and the exploitation of the impoverished in both industrial and agricultural sectors. The anguish of individuals, brutality, subjugation and domination are also significant. In conclusion, Sircar's plays encompass all the subjects essential for maintaining societal harmony.

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