

Concept of Lost Identity in Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*

Rohit

Master of Arts

Department of English & Foreign Languages

M.D. University Rohtak (Haryana)

Abstract:

This research paper will try to examine the concept of identity crisis in the play 'Evam Indrajit' by Badal Sircar. The play deals with four main characters Amal Kumar Bose, Vimal Kumar Ghosh, Kamal Kumar Sen and Nirmal Kumar. Also, a female character Manasi acts as a female protagonist in the play. The play is concerned with the life of Nirmal, who first hides his true identity. His name seems inappropriate to the writer, so he asks Nirmal to reveal his true identity. On asking several times, the protagonist discloses himself as Indrajit. Indrajit represents a modern man frustrated by society's rigid norms and guards his identity to escape these rules and regulations. Indrajit is afraid of going beyond the social system, so he assumes the name Nirmal to do the same. The name Indrajit also conforms to the reference to Indian mythology. Indrajit was the son of Ravana in the great Indian epic Ramayana. Indrajit had the power to cover himself behind clouds in order not to get identified, hence later called Meghnad. In the present scenario, the play projects the ambition and desires of the youth. It becomes clear through the conversation between the writer and protagonist that Indrajit is in love with his cousin and wants to marry her, but marriage to a cousin is not appropriate according to social norms; hence it is a case of Taboo. Indrajit attempts to protest against the exploitation and hypocrisy of society. He decides to disregard the rules set by society but doesn't get support from Manasi. He adopts a fearless attitude against rigid social norms and wants to live an independent life. Indrajit ultimately realised that he didn't have enough potential to free himself from the shackles of society and accept himself as Nirmal Kumar, an ordinary person. Suffering by the existing social system, he marries another girl rather than Manasi and leads a meaningless life.

Keywords: Taboo, Social norms, Exploitation, Hypocrisy

Introduction:

Badal Sircar was an influential modern Indian dramatist and theatre director. He was a proponent of the third theatre movement and focused on bringing change in the audience's thinking. Badal Sircar became one of the prominent figures in street theatre in Bengal. He wrote anti-establishment plays during the Naxalite movement. He was awarded Padma Shri in 1972. Through his plays, Sircar put an attack on the government, the caste system and other problems faced by society.

Evam Indrajit is one of the prominent plays by Badal Sircar, which portrays the problems of middle-class society. It was translated into English by Girish Karnad in the year 1967. The play displays a true picture of contemporary society and reflects the attitude of modern life. The play attacks the rigid social norms and reflects the problems of middle class through the character of Indrajit. Indrajit is the protagonist of the play and describes his love life to the writer. The play is absurd, having no sequence of events.

Satyadev Dubey, in his introduction to Evam Indrajit, praises the play as a milestone in the history of modern Indian drama as he says:

"With the performance of Sircar's Evam Indrajit in Bengal in Calcutta in September 1965, theatre practitioners all over India became aware of significant talent and a significant play. The play provided them with the shock of recognition. It was about the Indian reality as they knew it; it was a theatrically effective and crystallized projection of all the prevalent attitudes, vague feelings and undefined frustrations gnawing at the hearts of the educated urban middle class."

The play is mainly concerned with four characters; Amal Kumar Bose, Vimal Kumar Ghosh, Kamal Kumar Sen and Nirmal Kumar. The name of the fourth character seems inappropriate to the writer, so he asks Nirmal Kumar to reveal his true identity. On asking several times, he reveals himself as Indrajit.

What is your name?

Fourth. Indrajit Ray

Writer. Then why did you call yourself Nirmal?

Indrajit. I was scared.

Writer. Scared? Of what?

Indrajit. Scared of unrest. One invites unrest by breaking the social norm. (Sircar 5)

The name Indrajit conforms to the mythical reference as Indrajit was the son of Ravana in the great Indian epic Ramayana. He has the power to cover himself behind clouds to not to get identified, hence called Meghnad. In the present scenario, Indrajit hides his true identity to go beyond the existing social rules and is afraid of unrest. He makes conversation with the writer, and it becomes clear that Indrajit is in love with his cousin. Indrajit has had strong bonding with Manasi since childhood, and he wants to marry her, but this is unsuitable according to social norms and hence a case of taboo.

Pritam Chattopadhyay says;

"Evam Indrajit begins with the hunt of the writer in quest of a premise for his play. As he wrathfully tears up his manuscripts, his stimulation appears as a woman whom Sircar calls Manasi-“the creation of the mind” and perhaps an Indian counterpart of Jung’s anima."

Indrajit represents modern man and adopts a daring attitude against societal rules and regulations. He is seen making several attempts to protest against the oppression, injustice and hypocrisy of society. He wants to disregard the social norms but doesn't get support from Manasi, who would rather have to be a school teacher at a distant place from her home. The play presents the life of the middle-class through the character Indrajit. He tells the writer that life goes in a circle. Everything seems meaningless to him. He wants to free himself from the fetters of society. He wants to live his life independently. The play is relevant to the post-modern state of India. It projects the ambition, desires and frustration of youth in the coeval society. Indrajit wants to disregard the societal rules but is afraid of unrest, so he adopts the name Nirmal. Indrajit’s relationship with Manasi is not appropriate according to social norms. This relationship is considered a case of taboo. Indrajit’s rebellious attitude toward rigid social norms causes anger and frustration.

Writer. Indrajit and Manasi. Indrajit and Manasi. [To the audience, pontificating]. As you all know, different conditions and different cultures have produced plays about Indrajit and Manasi. Mythical plays, histories, social plays, comedies and tragedies of all kinds. Hordes of Indrajits and Manasis have appeared from all levels of society, in all forms with all possible names....and it’s difficult to say what joys and sorrows, what meetings and partings, what pride and hatred, what mental blows and reactions have shaped their plays. The love of Indrajit and Manasi. An immortal dramatic theme....Indrajit! (Sircar 15)

Indrajit is discontent with the existing social norms, and one can also see a reflection of corruption in society. The play portrays the helplessness of youth in front of a corrupt system. In the second act of the play, Amal, Vimal and Kamal go to face an interview, but ultimately it becomes clear that the discussion is just a sham. It shows that talents and merits do not hold any importance in the current society where only money, power and influence matter. Indrajit, when don’t get support from Manasi, goes to London. In a letter to the writer, he reveals that he get married to another girl rather than Manasi. His love for Manasi and his desire to marry her remain unfulfilled. Ultimately Indrajit realises that he doesn't have

enough potential to free himself from the shackles of society. Life is like a circle, and there is no escape from sorrow. A common person can be taken as a puppet at the hands of a social system. Finally, he accepts himself as Nirmal Kumar.

To quote Satyadev Dubey again as he says;

"Indrajit finds himself at parallel railway tracks on either side-tracks with an illusory meeting point....the train does not come on these tracks anymore....He does not believe in his dreams anymore, but he has now come to the bitter awareness that they were just dreams dreamt by a person who thought that he had the potential but, in fact, is a very ordinary person-he is, Nirmal."

Conclusion:

Evam Indrajit presents the life of Indrajit, a disappointed man frustrated by rigid social norms. He wants to disregard the rules of society but is unable to do so. Indrajit's desire to marry Manasi remains unfulfilled, and he accepts himself as Nirmal Kumar, the name adopted by him in order to escape reality. Ultimately realises the truth of life that there is no end to problems and no escape from the sorrows of life.

Works Cited

Ahmeduddin, Mohammad. "Indrajit as an Angry Young Man in Badal Sircar's Evam Indrajit." *Pune Research Journal*, vol. 4, issue 2, pp. 1-5.

Shukla, Shashank Shekhar. "Badal Sircar's Evam Indrajit: A Critical Perspective." *Literary Herald*, vol. 1, issue 3, Dec. 2015, pp. 134-139.

Sircar, Badal. *Evam Indrajit*. Translated by Shakti Batra. Surjeet Publications, 2018.