

Waves of Protest against Neo-Imperialism: *Kallol* by Utpal Dutt

Naren Mondal

Ph. D Research Scholar

Dept of English, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan

Abstract

The play *Kallol*, which takes the Royal Indian Navy Mutiny of 1946 for its theme, is one of the greatest productions directed by Utpal Dutt. The play re-creates the historical event to expose the true nature of the ruling class of the time. Dutt who was a hardcore Marxist wanted to use theatre as a weapon to bring socio-political revolution by making the common mass realise the oppression perpetuated on them by the ruling class and the bourgeois. The play exposes how the Congress worked as the agents of imperialist forces to betray the mutiny for their own class interest. Dutt's play is a call for overthrowing of the state machinery. This paper is an attempt to look at the neo-imperialism at work in the text as well as in society. This paper also tries to highlight the waves of attacks and protest that the play drew from different areas.

Keywords: Neo-imperialism, Marxism, Bourgeois, History, Communists, Indian Theatre.

Full Paper:

The play *Kallol*, produced by L. T. G and directed by Utpal Dutt, was first performed on 28th March 1965 at Minerva. The play starts with Sutradhar who narrates the story of the Naval Mutiny of 1946 in Mumbai. The tone at the very outset is cutting edge irony. Utpal Dutt politically uses this character of Sutradhar in serving his purpose of reminding the people about the glorious violent movements in India's freedom struggle. His sole purpose is to use the whip of satire to make the people angry, so that they would wake up to know how they have been fooled through the ages and they would burst into rebellion against the oppressive ruling class and the bourgeois. This is a conscious effort on Dutt's part as he thinks that revolution is not easy, 'it's not available in the market to buy'. It's something that you have to create by making the people i.e. the common mass realise the oppression being perpetuated on them by the ruling class and the bourgeois. Through Sutradhar's rough and untrained voice, Dutt brings out the names of the famous revolutionaries of Indian freedom struggle from all over India to remind us of the great armed struggle. In this context Pierre Macherey's 'theory of reading the absence' becomes crucial when we see Utpal Dutt hammering on the absence of incidents and examples of violent freedom struggles in the story of the ruling class. The ruling party government's, in this context the Indian National Congress', highlighting and promoting of the non-violence movement led by the Congress leadership carefully excludes all the violent struggles of other freedom fighters who even sacrificed their lives for India's independence. As the production and dissemination of

knowledge is controlled mostly by the ruling class, the non-violent movement propagated by them becomes the 'hegemonic' 'discourse' that dominates other possibilities or alternative stories, discourses, pushing them to margins. To break free from this hegemonic ideology Utpal Dutt re-creates the historic Naval Mutiny of 1946 in his text the *Kallol (The Wave)*. Dutt, through his re-creation or rather re-writing of history, fills in the gap or to say the absence with the forgotten violent struggles and sacrifices. He brings back the colonial past of India just to expose the true nature of the ruling class as he thinks they are mere neo-colonial masters or agents of imperialist power who betrayed the real cause of India's freedom struggles for the sake of capturing power and promoting capitalism. He always asserted, unlike other contemporary theatre workers who saw it to be merely a mirror of the society, that theatre is a weapon to change society. He was never satisfied with exposing the ruling class and bourgeois but also wanted to overthrow the whole system. In an interview with A. J Gunawardana published in *The Drama Review* (Vol. 15 no. 2) by MIT Press, Dutt stated unequivocally, "Revolutionary theatre must preach revolution; it must not only expose the system but also call for the violent smashing of the state machine (225).

The main source material for this play was *Nou Bidhoro* (The Naval Mutiny) by Shahdat Ali the book that was confiscated and banned by the then British government. Utpal Dutt took the help of a police officer from the detective department of Lalbazar to collect that book from the archive. He also collected some pamphlets and articles written by the rebels. He took a few interviews from water frontiers of then Bombay and Kolkata (Seal 49). As Darsan Chaudhuri in his book *Thetarwala Utpal Dutta* writes, the play exposes the history of colonial strategies of the British Government and betrayal by the Nationalist Congress leaders, is an expression of Dutt's historical knowledge and research (77). The other plays that left their influence on Dutt while writing *Kallol* was Earnest Troller's *Draw the Fires* and Tretyakov's *Roar China*, specially the boiler room scene on the ship of the latter. Two other influences were Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1926) and Vishnevsky's *The Last Offensive*.

In this play Utpal Dutt chooses the story of the Naval Mutiny of 1946 in Mumbai. This is a story of bravery on one hand and torture by the British and betrayal of the leading political leaders of the Congress party on the other hand. This is a story that calls for violent revolution against the ruling class. Only readers with narrow vision will see it as only a story of conflict between the workers and the colonial masters. The play depicts a personal battle as well in personal life of the ratings side by side the political battle. And if we do a reading from the 'New Historicist' perspective putting the historical documents of this incident and the play text, we see an allegorical conflict of the Congress and the Communists at large.

At the very outset of the play Utpal Dutt gives us an idea of the inferior treatment Indian Naval Soldiers get from the British officers. They always sent the Indian Army in the front to die and save their back. After the victory, the British officers take all the credit. In spite of such services, there is a huge disparity in the salary and food given to the Indian Navy and the British Navy. The 'Khyber Cruise' shown in this play is the representative of the Royal Indian Navy that was instrumental in the Naval Mutiny of 1946. The Indians are not even considered humans by the British officers. They are identified through numeric digits;

Denham: Fall in you Indian bastards—number—

Ratings: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—

Mukherjee: One killed, one wounded Sir.(Natok Samagra, V-2, 246)

Such deprivation and humiliation in every sphere has already led to the piling up of grievance among the Indian ratings. Different sources like *The Free Press Journal* of Bombay then and memoir of B. C Dutt, a rating of Talwar involved in the conspiracy of the mutiny, rightly reports the humiliating treatment of the British officers like King, "... the 'insulting behaviour' of Commanding Officer King infuriated the naval ratings under his command with taunts of 'Sons of Coolies' and 'Sons of Bitches' not to add 'Sons of bloody jungles' (Meyer 52). In another picture we see the shore establishment where the families of Indian ratings live. These people have been neglected too by the British. They neither send the salary of the ratings working in the battleships nor pay pension to the families of the retired, injured or deceased. Many Nationalist leaders too think that since these people have sent their family members to the war along with the British Navy, they all are against the Indian freedom struggle. They have often been thought to be the agents of the British. Against such backdrop as the discontents piled up day by day, the sailors plan for a general strike to get their demands fulfilled and form a Central Strike Committee of which Talwar ship is the epicentre. The ratings of Khyber —Shardul Singh, Gafur, Rajguru, Satwalekar, Asad, Brijlal, Rafiqur and others —getting the news of strike from Talwar, do strike at the pre-decided time and defy their white masters. This is the first major protest on their part against the colonial masters after such a long period of deprivation. Shardul Singh, who is the tragic protagonist of the play, envisions that this strike can become one great revolt against the British Imperialists. Shardul and others hear that the Maratha regiment of Indian Army have refused to attack the innocent Indians. The common men of Mumbai have also supported the strike. Shardul Singh senses a historical rebellion approaching. So he says, "This is not only struggle for India's freedom. This is a struggle against all the masters" (Natok Samagra, V-2, 261). But the problem is created by the lack of foresight of the Central Strike Committee. The Central Strike Committee confines the rebellion within a general strike and prepares a list of eight demands where there is no reference to India's freedom. They demand good food for the Indian soldiers, clean clothes, equal pay, removal of Indian soldiers from the battle in Indonesia, and a few other minor demands. What they really lack is political vision and experience. They decide to lead the strike as per the direction of the National Congress leaders who in the end mislead the movement and, betray the ratings for their own political interest.

The division between the ratings of the ships is also vivid, an exact portrayal of the situation during the naval mutiny, whether it is a strike or a rebellion. Shardul Singh, the protagonist, is always aware of the greater scenario in which it would be perfect timing to convert the uprising to a great rebellion throughout India so that the imperialist forces are forced to leave India immediately. The doubt against such notion is expressed in words of Rajguru, a comrade of Shardul Singh:

Rajguru: Want to kill the prisoner? Aren't you ashamed?

Shardul: You want to keep the officers alive during rebellion?

Rajguru: It is not a rebellion. It is a strike. Take them away. (Natak Samagra, Vol-2, 261)

Shardul has been preparing for this kind of a war of independence against the British and also the bourgeois since a long time. He has a revolutionary foresight in him. He believes in violent struggle against the imperialist masters. Shardul's mother Krishnabai, a woman of revolutionary zeal, is his comrade in his vision of revolution. She understands what he is trying to do. Whenever he comes home from the ship, he secretly brings pistols, cartridges, bullets, guns, grenades in hope that there will come a day when the people need to fight against the colonial masters. This strike of the ratings is a spontaneous one, united one at first. They put up the tri-colour flag of the national congress, green one of the Muslim league with moon and the red communist flag with hammer and star. Talwar ship is considered the action centre of the Central Strike Committee with Saxena as the secretary. The ideological difference that exists between the secretary of Central Strike committee and Shardul Singh who represents those who are prone to make the strike a violent struggle against the British is thin. The ratings of Khyber want unconditional freedom from the British Raj where as Saxena and his followers want good food and better clothes for living a better life. The central strike committee decide to lead the strike in a totally non-violent way as per the directions of the Congress leader Sardar Maganlal who does not favour the general strike called by the common people of Bombay. Sardar Maganlal along with Saxena wants to solve the problem by discussing it over the table. On the other side, in their determination to curb this mutiny, as they have termed it, to make it look like one small contained strike by the name itself, the British send armed troops to surround the Castle Barrack establishment –slum area on the shore where the families of the ratings live, so that they are unable to get out on the road to support the ratings of the ships. During this confrontation the British army opens fire on the unarmed Indians that work as catalyst in bringing the ratings of Khyber to their rescue. Dutt shows that Khyber tries again and again to contact the Talwar ship through radio only to get no response in reply. This is quite metaphorical as Talwar's not responding to their call can be translated into their negation of Khyber's way of approach. The ratings of Khyber prepare and open fire on the British army forcing them to retreat. In this scenario the Congress leader Maganlal airs his speech on the All India Radio where he praises the ratings for their strike saying that their peaceful strike would shake the pillars of British imperialists and they would get their rights for better food and clothes fulfilled. He also points out that a few ratings are trying to mislead the strike by taking violent means. Their idiotic opening fire has taken lives of many innocent British (Natak Samagra, Vol-2, 266-67). The Congress feels it is the plan of the Communist and other leftist parties of Bombay to create chaos out of this situation to gain political advantage. Mr. Maganlal thinks that the common people who joined the strike called by the Communists attacked the British shops and pelted stones at the police. This Naval Mutiny of 1946 is a very significant political event in the history of India both in pre-colonial and post-colonial period. John M. Meyer in his article "The Royal Indian Navy Mutiny of 1946: Nationalist Competition and Civil-Military Relations in Postwar India" published in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* in 2017 tries to critically assess the situation leading to the mutiny and the political turmoil it created in the equation of power between the British, the Congress and the Communists. He writes,

...the mutiny of 1946 was a crucial starting point in newly independent India for two reasons: first, the mutiny's collapse cemented Congress's dominance over the Indian military and, second, it represented a decisive closing of radical left-wing action in the emerging independent India, which in turn contributed to the eventual failure of Nehru's government to discipline capitalist industry in the years to come (47).

The play shows how the violent counter attack on the part of Khyber inspired thousands of people living on the land, specially on Castle Barracks where Shardul's family lives, to revolt against the imperialist forces. Women characters, in Dutt's plays, play an important role in his vision of social transformation. They have shown time and again how pivotal they are in bringing any kind of socio-political change, for Dutt believed that true revolution cannot be achieved unless men and women together take part in it. Krishnabai, in this play, is one of the leading women characters whose determination and revolutionary zeal inspire many others. She is the one who leads the revolution on the land with her intellect and foresight. She is the mother of Shardul Singh but she considers her son to be the leader of revolution and works accordingly. When Maganlal visits the shore establishment with army troop led by major Rebelo to convince the inhabitants not to support the violent actions of the ratings, it is Krishnabai who confronts them and exposes how the British killed innocent unarmed people to curb the rebellion.

Krishna: You were in Hornby Road?

Magan: No, but heard everything.

Krishna: I was there. I saw everything –

Magan: What have you seen?

Krishna: The British navy fired guns on the procession from the British shops. They started it at first (Natak Samagra, Vol-2, 269).

This scene also hints at the collusion of the Congress leader with the British which later turns out to be one of the main reasons of the failure of the rebellion. Krishna bai and other inhabitants of Castle Barrack realise that they need to fight back otherwise the British would not let them live. The rifles, here is this play too like *Rifle*, that are secretly stored under the control of Krishna Bai, symbolically become very significant. The British would do anything in their power to retrieve the rifles, symbolizing rebellion. The British officers Rear Admiral Rattray and Captain Armstrong also point their finger at the Russians and Communist leaders for the violence and conspiracy against the British in India leading the readers' mind to the thought of a battle that is going on between the Communists and other imperialist forces of the world for 1930s and 1940s witness the biggest battle of the Leftists against the fascist forces.

Scene VII of the play exposes the collusion of the British and the Congress as Maganlal visits Admiral Rattray's bungalow to discuss how to curb the rebellion and arrest Shardul Singh and his comrades who are violently fighting against the British. The violent struggle is not doing any good to either the British or the Congress. Maganlal, who protects the interest of the capitalist masters, points out how Rattray's action plans are actually hampers the British capital in the country. Maganlal refers to the statement of the British businessmen published in the newspaper where they say they are afraid to invest their foreign capital in the country as the struggle for independence, as they think, is going under the control of the Communists (Natak Samagra, Vol-2, 282). Maganlal convinces how they will protect the British capitalist interest, "If we nationalize, we'll compensate. May be we won't even nationalize. We don't have any problem with British capital. Rather British and Indian capital can cohabit" (Natak Samagra, Vol-2, 282). Mr Meyer writes in his article,

British bureaucrats and Indian business leaders both preferred the orderly calls of capital-friendly Patel (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel) to the threat of revolutionary socialism. Patel's influence proved strong enough to wrestle left-leaning Congress leaders into line, and he effectively discouraged them from showing any support for the actions of the communists, the rioters, or the ratings" (58).

Maganlal tries everything in his power to take control of the situation by convincing the British that British capital can stay in the country even after their rule is over. It's kind of a double attack on the rebelling ratings –both consent and coercion. Maganlal, on the part of Congress, takes the consent part whereas the British army take the coercion part. Leader Maganlal and the British officers trap Saxena, the President of Central Strike Committee, into their web and plan to use him against the ratings of Khyber and bring them to headquarter for a peaceful meeting. Though Saxena hesitates at first, Captain Armstrong, Rear Admiral Rattrey and regional Congress leader Maganlal convince Saxena to bring the ratings of Khyber to a peace meeting in the headquarters. Saxena so trusts Maganlal that he wants guarantee from him that the ratings of Khyber won't be touched i.e. arrested if they come to the meeting. Maganlal even goes to the Khyber ship to talk to them. The conversation between Maganlal and Shardul clearly shows the ideological differences that leaders like Maganlal and rebels like Shardul have. Shardul believes that real revolution can only be brought by violent struggle against the imperialist and capitalist masters. He is quite radical in his idea of revolution. He thinks, like Mao Zedong once said, that barrel of a gun is the source of political power.

Maganlal: ...So you won't surrender weapons?

(Shardul suddenly takes Asad's rifle and pulling the bolt points it at Maganlal's chest. Maganlal shudders back)

Shardul: You see? You may wear khaddar but you are afraid of the gun. Battle is always fought with guns. It always will be. White masters, black masters –all are afraid of this one thing –rifle. The term non-violent struggle is self contradictory. That is a lie. So we won't shun weapons (Natak Samagra, Vol-2, 299).

When Maganlal and Saxena are unable to convince Shardul, though they have quite successfully convinced others like Rajguru, Satwalekar, Pinto, Gafur and others, they take resort to blackmailing them that the British army have arrested the family members of the ratings living in Castle Barrack so if they do not go for the meeting the British officers will shoot them alive. This clearly shows the conspiracy of the congress to curb the rebellion of the ratings. Rajguru takes over as the leader of Khyber as Shardul only agrees to go to attend the meeting as general member after resigning. All the members of Khyber attend the meeting at headquarter only to find the trick of the British who arrest the ratings immediately. Shardul is shot and critically injured while trying to fight.

On the other hand, before the meeting, the British plan to attack the slum area at night so that Shardul Singh and his men cannot see the British army in the darkness. They march at night and search the house of Krishnabai, mother of gunner Shardul Singh, but they do not get the weapons. They arrest Krishnabai and Captain Rebelo, army officer of Sikh regiment try to emotionally blackmail Lakshmibai, the wife of Shardul Singh, who is presently staying with retired rating Subhash, who has lost one hand in war. State uses discursive practices to

maintain surveillance on its citizens, often politicizing the private space. Here, we see captain Rebelo working as an agent of imperialist power, uses the personal relationship of Lakshmibai and Shardul Singh to get information about the rifles, which are posing a threat to the very existence of the British. Dutt also shows how the Congress in collusion with the British create a discourse to brainwash the people in leading them towards believing that the Communists are trying to turn the strike into a violent chaos to destroy the country. Dutt, here too like in his other plays, shows that this false discourse created by the Congress party has always served as an ideological weapon to turn the people against the Communists, to brand them as terrorists and nullify them easily. This may have also, later on, resulted in the banning of the Communist Party of India in 1948. Also the political situation of Bengal when Dutt is writing his plays in the 1960s and 70s may appeal to be relevant in this context as the ruling party then hunts and the Communists workers down one by one and shoots them dead branding as terrorist. Rebelo shows his sympathy towards the rebels, the other residents of the slums, unlike the British army, just to gain their confidence. Even he himself is unaware of the fact that he is merely working as an agent of the British imperialist like a puppet to be used by the power-holders as per their need.

Utpal Dutt wrote in his “Japen Da Japen Ja” published in 1984 that time has come to spread the story of violent freedom struggle of India in each and every corner of the country: from Siraj, Mir Quasim, Majnu Shah to Derozio, Titumir, Sidho-Kanho, Meghai Sardar, Kunwar Singh, Rani of Jhansi, Azimullah Khan, Nana Saheb followed by Kshudiram, Kanailal, Surya Sen, Ganesh Ghosh and all other new revolutionaries of Meerut Conspiracy Case. Another chapter of uncompromising struggle against the British imperialist is Subhash, INA, Naval Mutiny, and the struggle of the Jute Mill and Thread Mill workers of Telengana (132). He knew that people need to understand the true nature of the ruling class under their facade for the revolution to come. Utpal Dutt said in “Sangramer Ekti Dik” that the ruling class is campaigning to the outside world that India is a country who always speaks of peace but the ruling class with the help of bourgeois state machinery suppresses all kinds of mass protest in a violent way. According to him the ruling class wants people to believe, by way of feeding them with the lie that gradually becomes accepted as the truth when people live in that for a long time, that Indian history is forever a history of class co-operation. Dutt wanted to re-create history in the great tradition of violent struggles that India had seen through the ages. There has always been controversy as to how he has created or fictionalised history, but no doubt this Naval Mutiny that he has re-created in his play *Kallol* has a great impact on the history of Indian politics. The Congress and the Muslim League were strongly against the ‘hartal’ or strike called by the Communists. When the common people including the students and factory workers joined the ‘hartal’ in which buses were burned and clashes among the police and the crowd became violent, the Congress and the League distanced themselves from the strike, even forcing them to surrender. They knew that such revolution can cause them to lose grip over the incident. They wanted the ratings to surrender at any cost. Mr. Meyer writes that the Congress and the Muslim league used the political turmoil in legitimizing their own space in the Indian politics “as purveyors of liberal justice and liberal values”, one who would like to work within “a constitutional framework to establish Indian Independence” (48). Also this was a time when the Congress and the Muslim league were busy preparing for the 1946 election of constituent assembly. So naturally they would not want a mess like the Naval Mutiny to go out of hand. Mr Javed Iqbal in his article “The Great Royal Indian Navy Mutiny of 1946 and Beyond –A Mortal Blow to the British Raj”

published in the *Europe Solidaire Sans Frontiers* writes, “The last thing they wanted was another ‘Quit India’ movement. In a rare display of unity, the implacable rivals both condemned the Royal Indian Navy revolt in HMIS Talwar and other ships and shores across the country” (9). Darsan Chaudhuri writes in his book *Thetarwala Utpal Dutta* quoting from Fanibhushan Bhattacharya’s *Noubidroher Itihas* that Congress leader Sardar Ballabhbai Patel was present in the meeting of Central Strike Committee members and he said “I request you to remain calm, place your trust upon me. Surrender” (80). But once the ratings surrendered no one did anything to save them. The British implemented court-martial law and “They put thousands behind the bars, killed thousands more by shooting or drowning them in the water” (80). Just as Shardul was cruelly killed by the British in the play, the leader of RIN Mutiny 1946 Mr. M. S. Khan had been drowned into the sea tied to a stone, while his assistant Madan Singh was shot dead. British shot guns on the innocent people of M. R. Barack and Castle Barack. Two members of Women’s Royal Navy Mrs. Urmila Bai and Mrs Anubha Sen were shot dead by the British Raj (Chaudhuri 81) the National Congress and Muslim League’s betrayal to the cause of the revolution is one of the main reasons of the failure and plight of all these people. Mr. Chaudhuri writes in his book *Thetarwala Utpal Dutta* that the Congress and Muslim League never wanted that the Indian freedom struggle that they had controlled so far would move into another direction and somebody else would emerge from it as leader. Especially, they were afraid of the Communist influence that was growing in the mutiny; they could not go beyond their own class interest (81). So, the huge expectation of strong support that the ratings had from the Congress never came except for ‘words of sympathy and promises of legal assistance’ (Meyer 54). Meyer wrote that the Congress realised that the British Raj was about to end soon and they had the opportunity of playing a great role in the smooth transfer of power. Supporting a violent struggle like the Naval Mutiny could cost them immensely at the negotiating table of transfer of power. He also notes, “Nor could Congress risk the annoyance (or the destruction) of Indian capital that formed their base of support. The sudden burst of patriotism from the mutinous, low-ranking ratings came too late in the raj’s life-span to convince the Congress leaders of its good effects” (55). Besides, the British knew the importance of a smooth changeover of self-rule as it would build the relationship of co-operation between India and Britain stronger. Mr. Meyer uses a letter of Commander-in-chief Auchinleck written to all commanding officers in 1946 for his purpose of study to point out that, “(But) stability and tolerance would also pave the way for the British officers to continue to serve in the independent Indian army –a hope which eventually came to fruition” (50). Dilip Bose in a condolence meeting of journalist Rajni Palme Dutt, who was one of the great journalists of pre and post independent India covering RIN Mutiny of 1946 and more, published in the Marxist Internet Archive, referred to this incident, “Clement Attlee hurriedly despatched the Cabinet Mission to India to negotiate with the national bourgeois leadership of the Congress and the League. The subsequent story is known: it led to the transfer of power to the upper class leadership, though the country was partitioned into India and Pakistan” (2)

The play *Kallol* created a ripple in the socio-political sphere of India, Bengal in particular. The waves created by *Kallol* shook the ruling class by exposing the naked truth of their allegiance with the British imperialists and their betrayal to the cause of the working class. Theatre Critic Rustom Bharucha says in his *Rehearsals for Revolution: The Political Theatre of Bengal* that “*Kallol* is a deviously formidable attack on the colonial inheritance and repressive administration of the Congress party in India” (70). The Statesman called it “the

Mutiny of Beadon Street” (Mukhopadhyay 105). *Kallol* was criticized for the ratings not surrendering at the end like they actually did in history. Utpal Dutt replied to this criticism saying that the way ‘Potemkin’ did not surrender in the film the same way ‘Khyber’ did not surrender. It is only the reflection of a revolutionary truth rather than a mere historical one (Mukhopadhyay 105). He was never satisfied in merely presenting the torture and suffering upon the lower class people in his plays, but also guides the way for coming out of it. That is why the ratings do not surrender but revolt and become a symbol and inspiration to many other through the ages. Another effect that the play brought with its production was that advertisement of the play was banned in all the established newspapers of the time except *The Statesman*. Dutt in his *Towards a Revolutionary Theatre* writes about this, “That they were acting in concert and under instructions from the Congress bosses and police chiefs was obvious to all” (52). One widely circulated Bengali daily wrote, Minerva has become a centre of debauchery of the Communists and its guru Utpal Dutt must be harassed to stop all that (Mukhopadhyay 107). But it could neither stop Dutt and his members from producing the play nor could stop the people from watching the play. They published leaflets advertising the production of the play and spread throughout Kolkata. The leaflet, published in Arup Mukhopadhyay’s Book *Utpal Dutt: Jeevan O Srishti* as an image form, said that a few Bengali daily stopped advertisement of the play without stating any proper reason. The play has been praised by many famous personalities like Manmatha Roy, Satyajit Ray, journalist and editor of ‘Basumati’ Vivekananda Mukhopadhyaya, Premendra Mitra, film director and journalist Khaja Ahamed Khan and others. This leaflet mentioning the show times were printed in large amount and the trade unions and peasant associations came forward to do the job of postering the cities and villages with them. It also said that *Kallol* was going on full house and it would go on whether ‘they’ publish advertisement or not because “Kallol is just not a name but has become news” (Mukhopadhyay 104). The play was played at different places in different names. Satyajit Ray praised the production of *Kallol* saying, “Writing and directing a play in the context of the Indian Naval Mutiny, Utpal Dutt has shown courage and his achievement [is that]... there is much use of theatrical techniques, but it cannot be said to be too much for the technique has never overshadowed the content to become overbearing” (Mukhopadhyay 108). The ruling class tried in every possible way to stop the production of the play. Utpal Dutt said in his *Towards a Revolutionary Theatre* that the ruling class planned to stop *Kallol* by attacking it like they did in 1962 to stop *Angar*. This was different time than what happened in 1962. He wrote,

We were tipped off about half a dozen times about impending attacks by professional hoodlums. ...The Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI (M)] took up the defence of the play. Workers from the Jessop factory and students of several colleges took turns to stand guard outside the theatre, and jeeploads of Congress gangsters who had come to attack the theatre, drove off at full speed at the sight (52).

These kinds of attacks, as Dutt truly believed, are one of the characteristics of a genuinely revolutionary play, which so disturbs the mental wellbeing of the ruling class by exposing their true nature and shaking their ideological base of lies that they cannot tolerate the performance of such plays and “in the long run must necessarily seek to wipe it out” (43). The ruling class even went to the extent of arresting Utpal Dutt and put him behind bars without trial on 23rd September 1965. He writes, “I was arrested on the day of ceasefire (Indo-Pak war) at my house and detained without trial in Presidency Jail...” (52). Even that

could not stop *Kallol* from being performed at Minerva. As Shekhar Chattopadhyay, who played Shardul Singh, recollected in his article named “Kalloler Kaj” published in *Sharadiyo Ajkal* that he had received many phone calls threatening him to move away from acting in that play. Sometimes unknown persons started talking to him on the streets casually about the play and finally threatened him of dangerous consequences if he did not distance himself from the play (296). The performance of the play went on to packed houses. So the ruling class tried sending in spies inside the theatre group. Dutt said that they received applications seeking job of actors and technicians in plenty which itself seemed suspicious to them as a time when the actors were threatened and attacked is not a time when general people would want to join Little Theatre Group (LTG). There was in fact one person who got job of an usher at Minerva, and ironically Dutt’s wife Shova Sen discovered that ‘crooked little man’ inside Secret Police Head-quarters coming out of an officer’s chamber which subsequently led to his losing the job(55).

All these incidents proved that there was no way stopping Dutt from doing his duty as a social and political reformer using theatre as a weapon. His theatre activism showed the way for a socio-political revolution yet to come in Bengal. Sangeet Natak Akademi, a cultural organisation under the central government, awarded Utpal Dutt for his play *Kallol*, but Dutt declined that award and wrote a poem in *Deshobroti* magazine in protest of that show-off award in 1966. The play was performed for eight hundred and fifty nights without a break. It shows the popularity of the play and how successful it was to draw people’s attention in spite of all odds.

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Bio: Naren Mondal is an Assistant Master (Group-A) of English under W.B. Subordinate Education Service and a Ph. D Research Scholar in the Department of English, Visva Bharati Santiniketan. He has done his MPhil degree from Visva Bharati in 2015. His dissertation is entitled “Agents of Social Transformation: Women Characters in Utpal Dutt’s Plays”. He is an active theatre worker in Santiniketan Poesis theatre group. His other areas of interest are Bengali and English literature, Marxist Criticism, Feminist Criticism and Photography.