

**Personal Angst: The Predicament of Modern Men With Reference To Badal Sircar's
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Salem-5.**Abstract**

This paper attempts to bring to the limelight the plight of modern men who, in the present Information Age, experience deep existential angst. The modern man, amidst advanced scientific and technological progress, is frequently doomed to find himself in a tragic mess, grappling with alienation, a sense of void, and a resulting internal crisis. Badal Sircar, widely known as India's prominent theatre man, deeply concerned himself with the pathos related to the modern age and the existential vacuum concomitant with middle-class urban society. Sircar projects these contemporary situations to depict a life-in-death attitude through his seminal play, *Evam Indrajit*.

By reading Sircar's modern masterpiece alongside the theological framework of Christian scripture, this paper examines how existential dread, human fragmentation, and mechanical legalism can be counteracted. While Sircar utilises the Western idiom of the Theatre of the Absurd to portray human limitation and the repetitive, Sisyphean cycles of life, Christian theology provides a complementary lens of redemption, divine solace, and personal responsibility. The paper concludes by asserting that while human efforts often mirror the absurd pulling of societal weight, true healing, meaning, and validation are found through conscious choices, moral actions, and resting in a higher creator.

The Modern Predicament and the Search for Meaning:

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed the massive, compounding impact of rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, and technological advancement. While these

developments have offered unprecedented globalised connectivity and material progress, they have simultaneously ushered in a wave of profound dehumanisation. In a world where materialism is often treated as the ultimate order of the day, the cherished spiritual and moral values of the past are frequently discarded as outdated or irrelevant. The resulting societal landscape is one marked by scepticism, disbelief, confusion, and a pervasive, anxiety.

This systemic faithlessness, desolation, and lack of deeper spiritual consciousness threaten to wither the individual's inner life, drying up joy and hope. The common man is left feeling completely helpless, angst-ridden, and trapped within an empty routine. This state of internal agony is beautifully captured in the ancient biblical laments, such as the words of King David in the Book of Psalms, "Have Mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint; heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long? Turn, Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love." (Psalms 6:2-4)

This scriptural cry of deep-seated anguish directly mirrors the secular concept of "angst" that later dominated European philosophy and post-colonial literature. Whether viewed through a purely psychological, theatrical, or deeply spiritual lens, human beings universally encounter moments where the purpose of existence feels hostile or entirely absent. Badal Sircar's Bengali masterpiece **Evam Indrajit** serves as a poignant cultural case study of this universal struggle, externalising the quiet desperation of the urban middle class.

The Philosophical Foundations of Existential Angst:

To fully comprehend the depth of Sircar's characters, one must look at the historical and philosophical development of the term angst. As a psychological and philosophical concept, angst denotes a strong, baseline feeling of anxiety about life and human existence in general. The term was famously brought to the forefront by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, widely regarded as the father of existentialism. Kierkegaard did not view anxiety purely as a clinical pathology to be discarded; rather, he defined it as a profound and deep-seated condition inherent to human freedom and personal responsibility. For Kierkegaard, anxiety acts as a spiritual schoolmaster. It enlightens the individual regarding their choices, forces them out of a state of unself-conscious immediacy, and pushes them into self-conscious reflection. Through the experience of dread, an individual becomes truly aware of their immense potential and the heavy burden of choice.

In a secularised, strictly materialistic world, however, this burden of freedom becomes an impossible weight. Without a spiritual foundation, freedom transforms into a sense of being condemned to be free, leaving individuals stranded in an existential vacuum. Jean-Paul Sartre later formulated this dynamic into the core existential proposition existence precedes essence. Human beings exist first, find themselves thrown into the world, and must subsequently define their own meaning, value, and identity through their subsequent actions. When an individual fails to establish this essence, or when society systematically crushes their individuality, a profound metaphysical anguish takes root.

Badal Sircar and the Theatre of the Absurd:

Badal Sircar expertly localised these dense Western philosophical concepts, importing the idiom of the Theatre of the Absurd directly into the socio-political milieu of contemporary India. His target was the crushing, mechanical monotony encountered by the urban middle class. In *Evam Indrajit*, Sircar strips away conventional dramatic expectations to expose how modern social systems reduce a person's existence to a pointless particle of dust. Structurally and thematically, the play draws heavy parallels to Samuel Beckett's famous existential play *Waiting for Godot*. Both works depict a world seemingly bereft of divine intervention or authentic human relationships, focusing instead on the sheer sterility and horror of a life devoid of transcendent meaning. The characters in Sircar's work wander through a continuous cycle of unfulfilled desires and professional stagnation, demonstrating a stark life-in-death attitude where they are physically alive but spiritually and emotionally deceased.

Symbols of Conformance and Rebellion:

The play unfolds through the interactions of six key characters: the Writer, Manasi, Amal, Vimal, Kamal, and Indrajit. Each represents a distinct psychological response to the modern existential crisis.

The Writer's Creative Agony:

The play opens with the Writer experiencing a severe creative dilemma. As an honest and conscientious artist, he finds himself utterly paralysed and unable to write a coherent play. To him, modern urban life is too chaotic, fragmentary, and mechanical to cohere into a meaningful dramatic mould. The Writer's personal agony reflects the wider sterility of the information age because his own daily exposure is confined to the mundane, stale, and highly structured urban environment, he lacks access to a deeper, more primitive reality. In a fit of fury and disillusionment, he tears up his manuscripts, symbolising the breakdown of human attempts to force order upon an inherently chaotic secular world.

The Bourgeois Cogs:

Amal, Vimal, and Kamal serve as the ultimate representatives of middle-class complacency. They are the worldly-wise individuals who readily accept the predetermined social structure without internal protest. They voluntarily transform into cogs within the vast bureaucratic wheel, finding complete definition in statistics, titles, and material progress.

- **Amal:** Laments that he has been denied a legitimate promotion and anguishes that life is not at all right for him.
- **Vimal:** Becomes fully absorbed in family security, insurance, profit, and loss.
- **Kamal:** Grieves that the monotonous way of living has completely killed his spirit of hobbies while muddling his life with financiers.

Their entire existence is reduced to a tedious, mechanical loop described explicitly by the play's choric commentary. They are perpetually busy with the anxieties of profit, loss, and social status, entirely blind to the existential vacuum consuming their inner lives.

The Anguished Rebel:

Indrajit is the play's definitive anti-hero. Unlike his peers, he possesses an acute, painful sense of awareness that isolates him from practical, conformist wisdom. When first called upon by the Writer, he attempts to hide behind the false identity of Nirmal. This minor deception stems directly from fear the deep-seated dread of the consequences of deviating from the strict social code. When his true name is forced out, his profound identity crisis is laid bare. The title *Evam Indrajit* emphasises his status as an afterthought within a massive, faceless social system. At school, he is stripped of his humanity and addressed merely by a

statistical roll number. Indrajit attempts to launch a passionate mental revolt against the hypocrisy, walls, and cruel, conventional rules of society—especially noting how these rules mercilessly exploit vulnerable women, such as their mutual acquaintance Leela. Yet, because his individuality is entirely engulfed by the overarching social framework, his rebellion fails to manifest as effective action. He laments his condition.

The Illusion of Geographic Escape and Human Love:

Stranded in existential angst, Indrajit seeks solace through various worldly avenues, yet each ultimately fails him. First, he seeks comfort in his love for Manasi, his maternal cousin. However, their union is strictly prohibited by societal taboos. While Manasi loves him, she chooses to stick passively to the rules of society, refusing to challenge the rope that binds them. Indrajit realises that even if their love had been fulfilled in marriage, it would not have provided an ultimate answer to the vacuum of existence; the bright initial dream would inevitably fade into ordinary routine. Recognising the emptiness of his immediate surroundings, Indrajit attempts a geographic escape by moving to London. He quickly discovers, however, that moving across geography cannot cure an internal spiritual sickness. When questioned if the move brought any improvement, he listlessly responds: “I don’t know either. Actually words mean little. I don’t know what ‘improvement’ means any more. There’s no question of improvement.” He returns to his homeland exhausted, drained of his initial vitality, and thoroughly crushed by the social grinder. He ultimately marries a different woman, accepts a mundane job, and walks the “same old road” between parallel railway tracks that seem to promise a distant meeting point but never actually intersect.

Integrating Divine Solace:

Amidst the exhausting cycles of urban monotony and failed human efforts, theological wisdom presents an anchor for the wandering spirit. While Indrajit notes that one needs faith in life, work, or love to escape his predicament, the scripture targets a deeper spiritual alignment. The Bible contains messages about life, relationships, and work that supply absolute meaning. Reading the scripture renews the human mind, alters perspectives, and uncovers a peace that transcends situational emptiness. When fear and isolation threaten

to collapse an individual's sense of self, the biblical text offers a direct antidote to existential dread, "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Psalms 4:8). Furthermore, the internal chaos that drove Indrajit to psychological exhaustion can be actively countered by transferring trust away from fragile social frameworks and anchoring it into an unshakeable divine presence, "When I am afraid I will put my trust in you. In God, whose words I praise...In God I trust and am not afraid." (Psalms 56:3). Through these directives, the existential vacuum is addressed not by human over-exertion, but by resting securely in a Creator who cares for humanity.

Analogy vs. Christian Hope:

At its climax, Evam Indrajit embraces the classic existential myth of Sisyphus to describe the human condition. Sircar asserts that modern individuals are essentially cursed spirits of Sisyphus who are condemned to continuously push a heavy boulder to the top of a mountain, fully aware that it will inevitably roll right back down. The Writer and Indrajit conclude that despite the meaninglessness of the task, one must simply keep moving, "Walk! Be on the road! For us there is only the road. We shall walk... We are the cursed spirits of Sisyphus. We have to push the rock to the top – even if it just rolls down" (). While this Sisyphean framework offers a form of secular resilience, it fundamentally lacks a source of ultimate restoration, leaving the individual locked in an inescapable loop of personal effort. Christian theology provides a powerful, restorative alternative to this endless cycle of friction where the secular existentialist sees a meaningless road, the Christian believer views life as a purposeful journey overseen by a loving creator.

From a Christian perspective, existential anxiety acts as a profound reminder that human beings were never designed to find ultimate satisfaction or essence within purely material systems, financial profits, or bureaucratic routines. The deep sense of a void is not a sign of pointlessness, but a directional compass pointing toward the need for a restored relationship with the Creator.

Personal Responsibility and Transformation:

Badal Sircar and Christian thinkers meet at an important crossroads the absolute necessity of personal responsibility and conscious choice. Sircar correctly notes that salvation and psychological survival do not come from pointing fingers at others or wallowing in helpless, impotent anger. Instead, a person's life gains genuine value through their direct choices and ethical actions. Dissatisfaction and disillusionment do not have to be completely debilitating; they can serve as a catalyst to hold onto hope and live deliberately.

In the Christian tradition, this intentional living is described as the renewal of the mind. Reading scripture and interacting with God changes an individual's internal perspective, shifting their outlook away from the mechanical anxiety of the world and toward a state of profound internal peace. Rather than viewing oneself as a "pointless particle of dust" crushed by a hostile environment, the individual discovers they are intentionally made, uniquely valued, and protected by an unfailing divine love.

Conclusion:

Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* stands as a brilliant, hauntingly accurate portrait of the modern urban middle-class condition. Through the tragic stagnation of Amal, Vimal, and Kamal, and the exhausted, spent rebellion of Indrajit, the play exposes the ultimate failure of materialism and social conformity to satisfy the human soul. Sircar's ultimate advice is for individuals to embrace the road, maintain their determination, and continue pushing forward despite the apparent absurdity of life. By incorporating Christian themes and scriptural insights, this Sisyphean endurance is elevated from a bleak, exhausting obligation into a hopeful, redeeming pilgrimage. The deep, agonising angst shared by modern characters and ancient psalmists alike finds its ultimate resolution not in geographic flight or social withdrawal, but in spiritual surrender and active, faithful choice. In an information-driven, often dehumanising world, true meaning is uncovered when we accept our personal responsibility, ground our actions in love, and anchor our souls in the restorative peace of the Creator.

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