

A CRITICAL STUDY OF POSTMODERNIST TECHNIQUES IN EVAM INDRAJIT

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Abstract:

The present research article aims to depict postmodernist techniques in the play *Evam Indrajit* written by popular Indian playwright Badal Sircar. The play talks about different social concerns. The playwright has tried to elaborate the life of middle class people through this play. The postmodern era of writing a play has totally been modified with the writing of Badal Sircar. He has brought the West Bengal culture of writing the plays. In the modern age, the struggle is an indivisible part of one's life. One has to struggle a lot for no particular reason. We find all individuals want to be successful. Human being, a social animal, runs behind the happiness and completely loses the human values and social tasks. So, the individual fights with an individual. The existence of man is totally depended on society. No man is fully free of problems and frustration. The play conceals the human struggle and it is quite relevant in modern context. It shows the identity and existence crisis of modern man. The use of postmodern techniques makes the play rich in property.

Keywords:

Postmodern, monotonous structure, absurdity, myth, pessimism, etc...

Introduction:

Evam Indrajit (1963) is the masterpiece born out of the box of Badal Sircar. It has gained highest significance in the list of Sircar's plays. The play focuses on fragmented human life and existence of man in the postmodern social scenario. He reviews the problems of middle-class society in the play. The originality and quality of this play made him one of the renowned contemporary playwrights. The play was translated from Bengali into Hindi, English, Marathi, Gujarati, and Kannada. Girish Karnad translated Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* into English in 1974. He uses different structure and the themes of social customs. It deals with the Badal Sircar portraits the life of middle

class people with the help of the characters in this play. The play starts with character of Writer, who is in search of the play. He is shown tearing manuscripts frequently. His source of inspiration was Manasi. His dilemma is related to his limitedness of his experience. He does not know outside world and people as he is fully addicted with theatre. He hasn't experienced life at its primitive and basic reality.

The characters of Amal, Vimal, and Kamal are shaped in set of rules as they all move in a circle having no forward or backward movement. These characters are depicted thoughtless as they look to be least concerned with their meaningless activities. They do not feel tense about their future life. Except Writer and Indrajit nobody fights for changing their futile life. Indrajit indicates the educated middle class people, who hope for the better life. He also represents the people who always struggle for changing their current identity by taking ceaseless efforts throughout their life. He visits to London, but returns within a short period of time. So, he comes to such a conclusion that: "*The past and the present are two ends of a single rope.*" (49)

Postmodern techniques used in the play:

Monotonous Structure:

The play is known for its monotonous structure. Most of the things described in the play seem dull and boring. The protagonist, Indrajit is born free, but caught in the chain of society. There are many men, like Indrajit, are born free but caught in the taboos of the society. In the play, the playwright shows that all characters are busy in doing their daily routine with an uninteresting manner. Their life is shown as a routine that is *School- College- Job- Marriage- Children*. (EI. 30) The same chain is repeated for many times in the play. Beena Agarwal rightly mentioned in her book about the dull structure of the play. She states:

In Evam Indrajit, the entire dramatic structure follows a sort of fluid structure and it is impossible for the audience to extract anything significant, meaningful and traditional. This consistent meaninglessness constitutes the character of Absurdism. (Agarwal. 42-43)

The play becomes monotonous and dull because of such repeated incidents. The play is a perfect illustration of a Bengali middle class which struggles to come up in life beyond all the social evils. The use of this technique suits to the play, as the playwright wants to bring a complete attention of the audience on the modern youth, who do not have optimistic approach to their life. The same dialogues are repeated many times.

Element of Absurdity:

The features of absurd plays include anti-character, anti-language, anti-drama and anti-plot. Contrary to the conventional plays in 'Theatre of the Absurd' no regular rules are followed while staging a story. Since it does not have any normal starting, developing and resolving on-stage story, therefore common people will find difficulty in understanding the character's words as well as behaviors. In the traditional plays the life is represented in realistic, naturalistic or symbolic ways with proper resolution to the conflict. However, the focal point of the absurdist plays rather lies in the poetic images and dream situations with almost no conflict during the entire performance (Power. 2008)

Shailaja B. Wadikar in her article *Evam Indrajit: A Struggle for Existence* calls this play as *Indian version of Waiting for Godot* (Wadikar, 4). In the postmodern era many dramatists acquired a technique of writing absurd dramas. Badal Sircar developed this technique in India. The absurd drama focuses on isolated existence of human being. The journey of human lies in the unknown universe. The values like truth and meaning are lost. It also focuses on fruitless search for nothing. It projects the irrationalism, helplessness, and absurdity of life in dramatic manner. It rejects the realistic settings, logical reasoning, or a coherently evolving plot. Aimlessness and hopelessness are the two major issues around which absurd drama moves around. The dialogues uttered by the characters create humour.

Evam Indrajit is the best example of absurd play. It demonstrates the isolated, hopeless, dull, and futile existence of human life. With the help of characters of Amal, Vimal, Kamal, and Nirmal (*Indrajit*) playwright depicts the miserable and boring life of modern people. They just wait and wait for goodness, but nothing happens and life becomes awful. When Amal and his friends face an interview, we find the corruption and absence of honesty and truth. They have the quality, but the panel selects another candidate having money and power.

The life of Amal, Vimal, and Kamal signifies the absurdity of human life. They want to live the usual life. Emptiness displays in all their work. Their lives are void of novelty. It becomes futile when they feel depressed with the life they live. Their dialogues are full of negativity and anxiety.

Use of Myth:

Badal Sircar uses the myth in *Evam Indrajit*. The name of the main character shows some mythical reference of the Ramayana. The name *Indrajit* is form the story of Ramayana. *Indrajit* was the brave son of Ravan. He was so brave that he hides his identity by covering the clouds around him in the war. He was later known as *Meghnad*. In another myth, *Meghnad* defeats *Indra*, the King of

god. The same thing happens in the play too. The main character Indrajit hides his name at the beginning of the play. His purpose is the same as Indrajit in the mythical story. He wants to protect himself from the social norms by hiding his real identity. He adopts a fake name Nirmal to hide his identity. The prime aim behind showing the myth is to show the elements of existentialism. Indrajit admits his knowledge about his existence, and he observes it when he speaks out to Manasi:

“If I hadn’t tested the fruit of knowledge, I could have gone on living in this paradise of your blessed society of rules.” (EI. 23)

The play has used another mythical reference that of Sisyphus. The Myth of Sisyphus was a philosophical essay written by Albert Camus in 1942. Camus introduced the philosophy of absurd in it. The character named Sisyphus, a figure from Greek mythology, who was condemned to repeat forever the same meaningless task of pushing boulder up to the mountain and wait for it to roll down back again. The activities done by the characters in the play resemble the activities of Sisyphus. So, Writer uses the symbol of Sisyphus to demonstrate the meaningless activities of the characters.

The play is quite applicable to the post-modern state of India, as it shows ambitions, desires, frustrations and suffering of the youth of the contemporary time. Humanity is given importance in the play. The suicidal step is entirely opposed. The human life is made for celebrating beauty, truth, love, and likings. Sircar is quite positive in his approach of life. Through his plays, he wants to show the cruel personalities in the society. The present is destroyed due to the pessimistic approach of life. The protagonist Indrajit is ironically symbolic. A modern Indrajit Ray is a rebel defeated by the system.

Use of Pessimistic Tone:

Many poems of pessimistic tone are used in the play. Indrajit recites several poems showing negative impact on audience. These poems show the futile life of the characters as well as youth of modern society. He recites the poem:

*Life resting of the wretched faith of a believer.
The land is blurred
In a grey mist of sighs,
The bright realms beyond the clouds Are lost in lies
In his love sojourn.
So, take away the crutches of false consolations!
Take away the blindfold of faith from the eyes!
Go under and see
How far is the bottom? How deep! Man moves;
Man is the strangest of creatures! He builds his house on the rocks In the depth of seas. (EI.
51)*

The poem itself signifies meaninglessness and pessimism in the life of characters. The life becomes worthless due to losing the faith in human being. The land which we live, that is

blurred and looks like smog. People show false sympathy to one another. Everything has become artificial. Indrajit is worried about this condition of people in the society. Another poem using word play or pun is presented in the play. The repeated numeric numbers signify the boring and dullness in human life. The repetition of number shows the day-to-day activities and nothing new in the life of characters.

Writer recites many poems and pessimistic dialogues for showing the futility in the life. He sometimes asks meaningless questions to the other characters that do not have proper answers. By mentioning the environmental issues he frequently diverts the topic. The tone and words of the poem are so distressful and negative that the readers automatically change their mood.

Angry Young Man:

The character of Indrajit can be called angry young man. He possesses all the characteristics of angry young man. He is always scared of meaninglessness of modern life and goalless life of young generation. Many times, Indrajit shows his anger on his futile existence. Indrajit disagrees with the people who are busy in their jobs, promotions, anxieties of profit, loss, insurance, and marriage. Indrajit finds nothing exciting in discussing about cricket, football, literature and politics. Then he becomes angry for not having anything new in life. He angrily state in the conversation with Writer:

*INDRAJIT: I am tired of being a student. WRITER: What do you want to do?
INDRAJIT: I don't know. Sometimes I just want to run away. (EI. 10)*

Manasi finds Indrajit angry and depressed mostly. The main reason behind his annoyance and distress is the monotony of human life. He wants diversity in his life, but most of the time it is missing. While he is speaking to Manasi, he shows his anger and speaks the uselessness of our life. As there is no destination to reach, our life has become dull. Manasi can't marry him for abiding the social rules. There too, Indrajit displays anger. He is quite upset with the condition of a girl named Leela. He knows it well that his anger is helpless and useless. He thinks his life would have more blissful if he is unknown to the problems of existing society.

Role Playing:

Badal Sircar has cleverly used the technique of role playing. The characters are allotted the particular roles at the beginning of the play. As the play proceeds, we find the characters doing different roles. All the characters keep on switching their roles. There is a scene of office, all are the officers and Writer is peon. He fulfils all demands of them by serving them water, tea, cigarettes and

other things. He also passes files to other tables and also works as receptionist. His pet name is Hareesh there and all are shouting on his name for the different requirements.

Conclusion:

The characters of Amal, Vimal and Kamal fight against social strata for making their life luxurious, while doing it they do number of worthless activities. They never worry about others, though they are shaped in the social rules. They are found moving the boxes here and there frequently. These characters are known for their meaningless activities. They are always busy in doing that, so they never feel restless. The characters of Writer and Indrajit hurt enormously with their capability of searching and criticizing their pointless life. The awareness of the futility of life makes them restless and disturbed. They suffer a lot. They are unable to understand the meaning to life. Indrajit comes across the loss of his identity when his teacher addresses him just with a roll number. In order to search a purpose in life, the playwright is ready to neglect the biological functions.

The play *Evam Indrajit* moves around the eponymous character, Indrajit. He never accepts the society as it is and he always tries to seek the right way to walk upon. Amal, Vimal, Kamal, Nirmal and Indrajit are archetypal characters. The first four people are caught up in the web of futility, self-centeredness, and uneventful existence. They never blame the social system. They always keep mum and tolerate the difficulties in their life. They prefer accepting everything as it comes without raising a question. Indrajit is somewhat exceptional, hence, he wants to rebel against senseless obedience and conformity.

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