

Badal Sircar's Procession; Exploration of Search For Real Home

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Abstract: Badal Sircar was an extraordinary playwright as well as genius in creating plays for reformation of the society. He was a contemporary of Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar in the production of plays. He highlighted social and political issues through his plays. He moulded the plays in a different manner. His innovative themes created many social movements in the area of Modern Indian Theatre. *Procession* was certainly most popular play. It is about the search for a real home a new society based on equality. The chief concern of the play then was to show a real way to a new society in which man does not have to live by exploiting man and in which each works according to his ability and gets according to his needs. The entire play revolves round the mockery of public policies, follies of Police exploitation, crushing the truth. Badal sircar elevated egalitarian society.

Keywords: Procession-Search for real home- exploitation-egalitarianism.

Sircar's *Procession* illustrates how mental deformity (procession) is effected and how it is perpetuated. The play has got either a plot or any characters in the conventional sense. The characters are not types but representative and symbolic. They are Khoka, an officer and old man, a master and a chorus of six people. Khoka and the old man form group and the officer and the master another. Khoka is killed and the oldman is lost in the labyrinthine roads of the city.

Like all large Indian cities, Calcutta too is a city of extremes quintessentially Bengali, unself conscious in its linguistic parochialism, reveling in its idiosyncrasies and yet. It has a peculiar power to attract. Probably no other Indian city has so many ethnic Bengali laying claim to the city as theirs.

The theme of the play is realized through a relentless flow of events most aptly concretized in the choreographic movement of the scene. The characters in the play move either and thither, walking, running and jogging. The on lookers are made to sit on benches with their backs facing each other. In this way a perplexed environment is created with the bodies, backs, faces and profiles of the spectators. Bada Sircar creates an immense dramatic effect to move the actors between the row of spectators standing, walking and how jogging. The spectators feel as though a procession was started winding its way around the streets of Calcutta.

The play begins as five men – one, two, three, four, five.

When the play starts we can observe the conversation of the chorus about power (current). 'One' speaks to two about lights go out. They discuss about the load shedding everyday darkness engulfs the area. "five" warns others to guard your pockets. The chorus hear a piercing death scream here chorus pointout about the screaming. They converse each other about murder. The search for Torch.

One : Does anybody have a torch? A torch?

Two : who would carry a torch in the city?

Here, Sircar highlights about the negligence of Govt's policies. How the people suffer without power is well portrayed in this play. Then several match sticks flickers into a flame. A silent search in the little glow. Then the stick burnout and it is dark again. Some people light their matches and search for the victim. But they find none and one of them says:

“They Must've stabbed some one to death and whisked away the body”¹.

There is a commotion and an officer comes. He has a stentorian voice. Here he inquires about the row. The chorus complains about the ghastly scream. They call up for the police officer rears and he says: “Nobody was killed. Get back to your home”. As he moves upto them Threateningly, they sneak away.

Then, the central character Khoka appears on the scene. Khoka comes and tries desperately to draw the attention of the officer and the audience to himself. But the officer does not notice him even when he comes right in front of him. Then, Khoka says that he is killed everyday. Thus, the beginning of the play shows how the perception of the reality is completely discouraged with oppressive force.

Khoka screams again and falls down. The officer does not notice it and goes away. The chorus comes singing a funeral song. They carry the dead body of khoka. Thus, the first procession in this Play is a funeral. The old man comes and asks the people to join the procession. He, then gives a list of various processions : ‘Michhils for food and clothes, michhils for salvation, michhils for revolution, michhils in military formation michhils for refugees, michhils for flood relief, michhils mourning, michhils protesting, michhils festive, michhils with stars’²

Sircar's use of chorus is vivifying one. He stresses not only the universal nature of the characters he creates in his plays, as the actors fluidly take on roles and then merge back into the group.

As the search for Khoka is about to commence, an old man (in viably played by Badal Sirar himself) who has entered the acting field. He describes the beginning of his own search.

Oldman says:

When I was small, very small, one day one morning, half way between fall and winter, a sweet morning made of al chill in the air and sunshine dripping with sweetness, I walked along the road, holding on to my father [P-8].

This is a fine piece of story telling, as the images conjured are reinforced by points at which the old man begins to walk or stops, as well as establishing a kind of temporal elasticity, a connectedness between generations and the earth.

The image of the procession in *Michhil* is employed to present both negative and positive aspects of the joining together of individuals and communities under a common banner. Sircar ridicules blind faith in religion. Sloganeering for its own sake, communalism and markets of whatever colour:

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Chorus:

Glory be to the lord Krishna, incarnation of the markets. We bow at the feet of the lord black market. Hail to the black god. The lack god will save us all. Vote for Mr. Blakie marketwala vote for Mr. Balckie marketwala [P.21]

The left movement led by the communist party of India gathered strength in the city during the 1950s and 1960s especially among industrial workers, government employees, primary school teachers alongside the struggle of the East Bengal refugees to find their place in the sun. All these struggles were enframed within an idiom of “self less” work, sacrifice and self-effacement for a larger, collective cause. Hence, causes rather than personalities were fore grounded in public.

In the late 1960s and carly 1970s when the maoist left broke away from the parliamentary left parties and called for an agrarian revolution through armed struggle in the countryside, the city space was considered as the bastion of state power and hence an appropriate site for demonstrative punitive action.

As the play progresses, all these religious and revolutionary processions are acted. The inclusion of revolutionary processions in the list unfolds Sircar's own disillusionment with the existing communist parties and their movements.

A critic named Gowri Ramanarayan also remarks: The discovery that some respected leaders were liars and cheats who duped their followers led to disillusionment. In the introduction to three plays, Ella Dutta observes: "He does not wish to create new myths in place of the old. He prefers to raise the consciousness and create awareness of the issues"³ It is, thus, clear that Sircar does not intend to convey that the communist revolution is the real road to the real home.

The old man narrates how he, as a small boy, followed his father and how the criss – crossing roads were labyrinthine:

"I held on to my fathers hands, as the road winded and mended along and recorded under my feet giving place to yet new roads...

All the roads vanished beyond the bend till a new road flashed at the bend till it vanished again at the next bend and a new one again and a bend and the vanishing road the new road the road the ro-o-o-o-ad⁴.

Then, all the pople start searching for Khoka. They describe his features.

One: Have any you seen Khoka?

Two: Snub nose, big eyes, light hair?

Three: Little in years, little in wisdom, little in Knowledge?

In press and on radio and wireless, they announce that Khoka is lost. Khoka is coaxed to return and is offered various things such as bats, balls, biscuits, chocolates, books, college, pass, job, land, house, car, gold, happiness, peace, and salvation⁵.

The old man, then, gives more information about him: His parents named him Khoka. Thousands of parents with thousands of khokas. Khoka means one who hasn't grown up yet. Khoka means Green, Raw, Immature (10-11). The people call Khoka and request him to return home. The old man says that Khoka comes to the new home the real home but not the old one. The words "Khoka" and "home" acquire a new meaning here Khoka symbolizes a child who is not spoiled by civilization. He still possesses humanity. He is not dehumanized. He is an embodiment of humanity. The old home is the present society where humanity is constantly destroyed. The old home Is not all conducive to the survival of humanity. It is a dehumanizing environment where we vainly search for humanity. And the solution of one problem invariably leads to another problem again in the present solutions; we encounter the same problem again in the present society. This is symbolically expressed by the old man as "you go for and wide, you turn round and round and come back to the same road".

Sircar's use of chorus is vital, stressing not only the universal nature of the characters he creates in his plays, as the actors fluidly take on roles and then merge back into the group, but exemplifying yet again the fragmented collage of perspectives and identities, now beginning to find some kind of focus, atleast in conclusion.

REFERENCES

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