

Voice of the Voiceless: A Study of Badal Sircar's "Procession" as a Drama of Protest

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 12

Special Issue: 1

Month: September

Year: 2024

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Citation:

Raja, S. "Voice of the Voiceless: A Study of Badal Sircar's 'Procession' as a Drama of Protest." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 12, no. S1, 2024, pp. 101–05.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v12iS1-Sep.8347>

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Abstract

Literature projects the life of human in its own way. The mode of expressions may be different like poetry, drama, fiction and prose but the ultimate goal is to hold the mirror of life. The objective of literature can be defined according to the choice of writer and the time. Moreover, the objectives of literature can be determined by so many factors. From Chaucer to Postmodern Age, in the English literature, from Orature to Salman Rushdie in India, the mirror of literature has been projecting various ideas, images, symbols, stories and lives. But the goal of literature is always attained without any doubts. This paper "Voice of the Voiceless: A Study of Badal Sircar's "Procession" as a drama of protest" analyses the elements of protest in nature.

The role or objective of Literature is getting changed as the ages moved on. Postcolonial literature is a result of the interaction between colonized and the colonizer. Postcolonial theory has existed for a long time before it became popular. Postcolonial literature or postcolonial theory expresses the tension, psychological trauma, voice of the suppressed and it has become vibrant and powerful. It further reveals the wonder of mixing the 'colonizer's language with colonised's language and it produces the effect of 'new culture'. Postcolonial Literature deals with various themes like migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, sender, place, locale, reactions and responses to master discourses, history, philosophy, linguistic issues and gender issues. Postcolonial Literature or theory is not an individual body that exists but it is an amalgamation of various complex fabrics like, socio, cultural and economic fields. Most of the writers in Postcolonial Literature or Postcolonial theory argue about the problems in colonization. They voice against the horror of colonization in all levels. This paper is an attempt to analyze the work of Badal Sircar's, "Procession as a piece of protest in postcolonial Literature. Badal Sircar, a revolutionary third theatre artist, has contributed a lot to develop protest literature in India through his successful dramas. Among his plays, "Procession" is a very famous for its protesting ideas and its voice for suppressed and marginalized.

The city Calcutta in India is famous for processions. So it is entitled as the 'City of Processions'. The play Michhil (Procession) was performed in 1974. It was a year of politically turbulent period

of Bengal and had many processions. It unfolds the nature of the procession and is the critique of the processions in which procession for the humanity's well-being - the true procession- goes missing. The two primary characters of this play Khoka and the Old Man are presenting two phases of life the present and the past respectively and are in search of the true procession which will bring redemption to society, while the character The Officer patrols the present society.

The play begins with the darkness which arouses various presentiments in the minds of characters. The darkness symbolizes multiple things. In one way, it unfolds a picture of the society that people who are intolerable to the present day social conditions. Badal Sircar uses the words "Loadshedding" and "sabotage" (Sircar, Three 14), which shows up that there are inadequate managements to secure people and at the same time, it is a conscious deed that is an exploitation. In another way, the darkness is a symbol of confusion, and of death which is psychologically and physically and death of hope for better future. In another way, it is a symbol of present day processions which is guiding to the dark and does not solve the problems of human beings.

A piercing scream interrupts the flow of the play as if someone has been murdered. As the dark floods, no one could get into the problem. Each character imagines differently what would have happened. This is the real problem and a portrayal of present day society. In the Capitalist society, everybody is alienated from the society, so no one could understand the problems of other human being as well as never get a way to understand it because politically they are put into darkness and hopeless situation. Even if they try to get into the reality, they will be forced to accept as if they are wrong and nothing has happened. The lights come with the Officer - the representative of Repressive State Apparatus - who comes in the military uniform and represents those who are policing in the society. He forces everyone to believe that nothing has gone wrong.

This is the way police stands as the mouth of rulers to bring back peace as what they think as peace, but the confusion of the representatives remain. But there is no rebel of procession and change.

Badalda uses the character Khoka as an Invisible Character who represent the psyche and the consciousness of people which lies dead in the present that died in the past and will persist to die in the hands of rulers, capitalists and Repressive State Apparatus such as police. They forgot to voice against the oppression.

When Khoka speaks of the problems, the officer does not notice him and does not hear his words. Badal shows the behaviour pattern of the authoritarians who do not lend ears the words of sufferings.

The scene shifts into a funeral in which the chant by chorus is sung to hail for the divine presence in a funeral that ends up ironically. The old comes up in the disguise of clown imitating the call of the road-side circus troops to attract the audience. Sircar satirizes the utility and reasons of the processions for the farcical purposes. He speaks his aversion of the contemporary processions and lists the different types of processions that the city experiences.

The call for the processions follows a song by chorus which enhances the farciality. It shows that it is become a sort of entertainment for the masses.

Next, the old man - now represents the past Khoka - talks of his younger days that he had urge to search and see the reality beyond what he saw then. It is the search for beyond the present situation. But Badal Sircar now shows how the anomaly is treated in one hand politically and on the another hand culturally in the society. The anomaly could never reach another paradigm that now exploits masses. They goes politically "Missing. Assassination. Abduction." (Sircar, Three 20). So politically the anomaly is put into death. This is the Repressive State Apparatus in which he or they goes missing physically. So he never reaches the change. On the other hand, Badal Sircar does not miss the mental inhabitation of anomaly for the change from the cultural artifacts which indirectly

favours the supplanters. He depicts how the society, performed by chorus, allures the anomaly not to take step in front for the change.

Now he takes the role of a commentator. Here it gets clear that the name Khoka represents the consciousness in everyone and so he once represented as Khoka. Moreover it also represents the rebellion and transformation of the individual and the society. He defines Khoka is “little... hasn’t grown up... green, raw, immature” (Sircar, Three 21). Badalda juggles the word khoka with some other West Bengal words boka-dumb- and dhoka-betrayal. Here he adumbrates that Khoka, anomaly for change, has gone dumb and betrayed so far by society and political force directly or secretly.

Now the old man becomes commentator of the contemporary society. It becomes a commenting narration of absurd procession in the society. He declares the procession, “round and round and round” (Sircar, Three 22). It could never find the right road of procession and destination of it.

The following episode documents contemporary newspaper satirically. It begins with portrayal of the global issues concerning war, scientific experiments, natural and political events and ends with narrowing down exploitation, jobs played by the local administrators, authorities and rulers. It enhances the job played by local newspapers which thin suffering of natives in its focus and exhibiting their issues. The mouth for change such as news papers which spread the news what actually happens in the society, but never reveals reality of society and indirectly supports the rulers. The newspapers have become Ideological State Apparatus to share the discourse employed by authorities and administrators, compelled by the Police - Repressive State Apparatus – as if the existing society is nothing wrong and suitable while the political, social and economic condition is intolerable.

Now, the episode moves dealing religion satirically as “Spiritualism alone can bring property to the nation” and “Blessed... to be born into this land.”(Sircar, Three 23) Being a Marxist, Badalda satirizes all the religious processions, regardless of the religions and their gurus. He shows how the call for national pride, heritage, responsibility and harmony and national independence has lead ultimately to the procession of disintegration and displacement. People had to leave from their native and motherland and had to settle in unfamiliar places which was the only deed and irrespective of their religions whether Hindu or Muslim. It places the impact of such fanaticism on human mind which develops aversion with another human and the politics played with people by people of religions. It foregrounds hatred than love for humanity. Moreover, the character points out that the present day government also rules as British ruler as an inclination to favour on capitalism.

Meanwhile, the play depicts sarcastically how sales representatives employ to sell the product without defining price of products. The pattern of price system is a systematic exploitation. It also displays the commodification on basic needs like food, water in addition to drugs. Badal Sircar presents the different mode of measurement, “Tons. Hundred weight. Pound. Kilogram. Foot. Metre. Gallon. Pint. Litre. Dozen. Gross. Sack. Carton. Wagon. Packet. File. Quintal.” (Sircar, Three 26). He shows the commodification in every field such as sports, music and food. The world, people live in, is the world of commodification in which people do not coexist but controlled by it.

Meantime, the episode is apparently comic. However, it is a depiction of the problem in the most crowded or populated city. People suffer due to insufficient and inadequate management and administration for country where the population is always increasing.

Badal Sircar is sarcastic about Black Market by appraising it. Here, he points out the merchants make money through unfair means. Promotion of commodification in the capitalist world, as suggested eagerly, makes money in anything without humanity as well as illegal means of commodification. It results to plead even for basic needs as the character pleading for a crust of

stale bread. The officer reiterates that no one is killed and to continue everything. This typically shows to portray the meaning of death in the play. It has multiple meanings and gets the meaning accordingly where ever it is used. Here it talks about starvation. Again the Repressive State Apparatus is used to hide truth of the society and follow what the Government wants to carry out. In the same sarcastic mode, Sircar portrays how the society has become capitalist as Karl Marx interpreted the human history which has been a history of production. Moreover, he questions the concept of civilization in which unequal distribution and slaves are made. The civilization is synonym for capitalism.

The episode that follows, which depicts how religion played it parts in reiterating the culture that the hierarchies are brought and brings servile attitudes against the oppression and favours on capitalism. He satirically depicts the principle of religion that everything is decided by the ultimate authoritarian God while the lives of human beings are decided by the mean of production. But people are instructed to obey the instructions which promote the hierarchy.

The adjacent episode is the collage of individual problems in various dimensions in the society. Being drunkard, Khoka represents as these individuals. Sircar shows that the capitalist has given pauperization and the way of oblivion. They have plied the liquor and people have held it to be oblivious of the life which is usually painful, frustration, and injustice. The liquor has become elixir and provides them “comic relief” (Sircar, Three 36).

In the succeeding section, the conversation between Khoka and the old man that follows shows the old man searches his home in the northern side where the true procession and change lies. He gets absurd by reaching the place even with Khoka of the present, but failed.

After the scene that collage of voicing different issues and problems of the society and a song that praises this country as glorious crown of the nations but in corruption, Khoka suddenly leaps into the scene and outcries to stop all the fallacies of claiming greatness that this nation has achieved. He addresses directly to the audiences and readers and urges them to struggle against all the fraudulent claims and oppressions. It agitates them to take action, to revolt against the injustices.

Here, Sircar criticizes the capitalist strategy of cultural and artistic intoxication to the masses. It makes men and women to be drowned in illusion of pleasure while they are exploited. They are intoxicated to make believe what they are not. The aesthetics of Bourgeoisie suppresses the impulse of change and make them to be suffered. He shows and validates Althusser’s Ideological State Apparatus that cultural artifacts are the product of capitalists who reinforce their values on common people and justify their exploitation. This is projected with the officer carrying in a procession along with the officer who follows making him baton the dog-tail. In addition to, it pictures the administrators who merely follow the path of the rulers, and makes everything what they want. They are tailing to exercise power on people. Sircar now points out the various modes of Ideological State Apparatus which favours Capitalism and is very conscious not to get into the procession.

The scene that follows Old Man lists out the processions that he has undergone by him throughout his life. These processions can never lead to a revolution because it lays on capitalism. It is done for useless matters. They do not call for a mass-struggle for a society without division and a revolt for the cause of humanity. The address to the readers and audiences follows.

While the depiction of the various ways that Khoka has been killed so far beginning with decapitation, following hanging in the gallows, locking in gas chamber, dropping of atomic bombs representing how the silence to be brought of the voice of masses by various murders. Meantime, Badal Sircar brings a procession having the gist of the revolution which is very needful for the cause of humanity across the world and more specific for our country.

CHORUS. Students' unity zindabad-zindabad, zindabad!

Workers of the world, unite-unite, unite!

Inquilaabzindabad-zindabad, zindabad!

Break the black hand of Imperialism-break it, crush it!

Finish off capitalist exploitation- Finish it off, finish it off! (Sircar, Three 46-47).

The episode that follows is beginning of the conclusion of the play. The play has clamoured for difference and difficulties in the society pessimistically so far, now it gives optimistic note that the procession and human spirit for change has not gone forever, it is actually lost. So it can be regained by searching it. Though capitalism suppressed for long time, it can be retained. The concluding conversation between the Old Man and Khoka gives that both have been lost. Both identify each other as their past and present in the loose. As the Old Man could not get into the revolution, he told Khoka to lead him for the future.

KHOKA. (after while) What's your name?

THE OLD MAN?Khoka. It was. Yours?

KHOKA.Khoka. It is.

THE OLD MAN (to himself). Was.Is. Was.Is.

KHOKA (to himself). Is.Was.Is. Was. (Sircar, Three 51).

Sircar seems believing that it is only the combined forces of the old and the young can bring revolution. At last, optimistically the play ends with the hope to reach both of their homes soon. The sound of the Procession for the change - True Procession - is slowly rising. The chorus represents the Procession that they have dreamt of change, of transformation reaching the society without difference.

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