CHAPTER - X

CONCLUSION
Rightly hailed as “India’s barefoot playwright”, Badal Sircar entered the Indian theatre at an appropriate time when Indian drama was at the threshold of a new era of innovation and experimentation. As a legendary playwright and director, he revolutionized Indian theatre with his lucid scripts with sharp direct political analysis and with a newer and simple form that made theatre close to the reality of the audience. Taking theatre out of the proscenium into public arena, he evolved the ‘Angan Manch’ (courtyard stage) inspired by the direct communication techniques of Jatra. His Third Theatre, in form and principle, was a protest against prevalent commercial theatre establishment. He actively involved himself in the stage productions and focused more on using the body and voice instead of costumes, props, and make-up.

Sircar’s Third Theatre is an outcome of transcending the confines of the urban commercial theatre and the indigenous folk theatre. Unlike the first and the second theatres, Third Theatre aims at changing the thoughts and beliefs of spectators and leads them to action. It is essentially flexible, portable, and inexpensive. It is a living experimental communication between the performer and the spectator where the play becomes a participatory ritual.
Evam Indrajit becomes an expression of the modern Indian situation which perhaps lost its sheen in a globalized age. It disturbs us by raising unsettling questions about human relationship and human existence. It is about the tyranny of the quotidian experience as seen by an artist engaged in the act of creation. Like Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, it seeks to dramatize the disorganized and fractured life of modern man. It is the tale of a playwright who struggles in vain to write a play. Writer is unable to write a play as modern life is too chaotic and fragmentary to have any meaning. However, he becomes hopeful of finding a hero for his play when he comes across Indrajit who perseveres to know the meaning of life by resisting to become a cog in the wheel unlike his worldly-wise friends, Amal, Kamal, and Vimal. But his brief interaction with Indrajit proves that he is not a fit subject for his play since he does not have a core and a commitment. Indrajit, the revolutionary, dwindles into a Nirmal, "just an ordinary man". Moreover, he is too elusive to be contained within the structured framework of the play. Sircar ends the play with Writer's assertion of his belief in a journey towards no defined goal, knowing for certain that the road is meaningless and the journey is irrational and futile. Sircar, like T S Eliot in *The Waste Land*, offers no hope for a
meaningful personal and social life in a predominantly existential modern world.

After formulating the concept of Third Theatre, Badal Sircar produced several plays, the first being Spartacus. The most significant of Sircar's later plays which are based on the concept of the Third Theatre are Procession, Bhoma, and Stale News. Procession is certainly the most popular of the three plays. It is about the search for a real home—a new society based on equality. It presents a series of colourful processions in the streets of Calcutta each suggesting various means that are generally used to change the society. But, Old Man and Khoka do not believe in these processions which have turned into processions of death. At long last, a real procession consisting of the proletariat enters to show a real way to the real home. Old Man and Khoka join the procession calling upon the audience also to join them.

An extremely realistic and satirical play, Procession is known not only for its revolutionary theme but also for its modernist techniques like montage, simultaneity, and juxtaposition. The play is a sardonic satire on Calcutta which symbolizes India. Calcutta is satirized as a city of processions which are short-sighted and showy, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.
Bhoma is a unique play in conception, composition, content, and structure. It is one of the plays of Sircar in which there is no story, no character, no plot, and no continuity. As a committed playwright, Sircar does not simply present the gravity of a problem, but offers a solution by employing powerful symbols and images. Bhoma is an archetype of the oppressed and exploited peasant who, at long last, takes up his rusty axe, grinds and sharpens it to cut the poisonous trees that grow around him. The message that Sircar seems to convey to the spectators at the end of the play is that if they do not take the axes and rise up with Bhoma to cut the poisonous trees in the forest of society, there will be no end to exploitation of man by man. Bhoma is Sircar’s most vigorous indictment of West Bengal’s urban bourgeois. He shows how the rich landlords exploit the poor peasant by extracting a lot of work for very low wages. Sircar also satirizes the nationalized banks which serve only the interests of the rich. The play serves as an ardent, but, implicit appeal to the audience to sharpen their axes to cut the poisonous trees of social evil in the forest of society.

Stale News is different from both Procession and Bhoma not only in conception but also in production. It deals with the theme of revolt. It centres round a young man who is bombarded with shattering bits of information full of contradictions and contrasts which come to
him in the form of stale news. Though he becomes aware of this through the inspiring guidance of Dead Man, the young man is not ready to come out of the strong hold of the traditional and routine life. He is also presented with a vivid picture of the exploitation of the peace-loving Santhals by the Indian landlords and British rulers. Deeply moved by the tragic history of the Santhals, the young man undergoes a change and realizes his social responsibility. He develops a sense of commitment so as to revolt against the social and economic justice. The play is not realistic and satirical in the conventional sense. But realism and satire veritably constitute the play.

Though *Scandal in Fairyland* looks like a fairytale written for children, it is a satiric comedy that brings awareness among the people of Calcutta about the media. Press is a boon as well as a curse in the contemporary society. Sircar beautifully portrays how a constant repetition of news creates negligence among the people in the society. To make his livelihood, a paperboy works for a news paper agency named Daily Fairy Green. He attracts the people with his beautiful American accent. He criticizes the public for not reading the editorial columns in the newspaper. Midas runs the Daily Fairy Green for his personal benefits and misleads the citizens of Fairyland by providing them false news daily. He prints about a prince who kills ogres and
frees several kingdoms as a part of his journey. At the end when
everything is revealed about Midas' false attempts, he was exiled by
the king of Fairyland. Paperboy plays a key role in the play. He
continually tries to inform the public who are living in a false
ambiance created by Midas.

In *Indian History Made Easy*, Sircar covers the period of three
hundred years of British rule in India. When Sircar was asked in an
interview about the purpose behind writing such an historical play, he
replied that he actually framed the play not only to bring the awareness
among the people of Calcutta but also to show the deformed status of
the contemporary society by comparing it indirectly with the period
before independence. Sircar presents how the East India Company
starts its humble beginning as a mere trading company and later
becomes the ruler of the entire country. He uses the form of classroom
teaching where Master instructs the three teachers to tell the lost
history of India to the students starting with the dark period. During
this process he too involves himself and tells the students history which
covers the period of seventeenth century to the period when India got
freedom. The play survives on its own merit where the playwright uses
a number of dramatic and theatrical devices to make it both effective
and memorable.
With his *Beyond the Land of Hattamala*, Sircar communicates a relevant social message to the contemporary society. It tells about two thieves who choose a wrong path to fill their stomachs. During their chase by the villagers they come across an imaginary land where people live by working all the time to make their own livelihood. After many instances on the unknown land they at last come to know the happiness in the real hard work. They at last leave the profession of stealing others properties and engage themselves in various works where they find the godliness. Through the two imaginary characters, Kena and Becha, Sircar passes the message to the people of Calcutta who are leading the life of laziness. He reminds them of the peace and satisfaction in hard work.

The only play written by Sircar where the pure humour of the early period and the serious message of the Third Theatre phase combine is *Life of Bagala*. Sircar creates a character named Bagala who shows disinterest regarding his own name and surname. He was made fun of for bearing such an odd name right from his childhood. It leads him to the thought of committing suicide. But with the help of Old Man he comes to know the importance of life and throws out his pessimistic views in order to live happily. Sircar gives a message to the depressed youth of Calcutta who consider failures as the world's end.
He tries to bring about a change in the minds of youth who are unable to cope with the difficult situations. He guides and motivates them through his character Bagala to face the hurdles that people come across in their lives. He makes them believe that only through human will and action something worthwhile can be achieved.

Sircar discovers a new inflection of modernism in the mature phase of his career. Starting with *Evam Indrajit* he develops both performance and stagecraft indices that would sustain his sensibility. Many of his plays revolve round the characters that are so much like Sircar himself: an educated middle-class Bengali, who declasses himself, refuses to accept the existing unjust socio-political system and urges others (the audience) to take an active part in bringing about a radical change in the society. He uses theatre as a tool for social change. In order to reach the peasants and workers he gradually evolves the concept of Third Theatre: a theatre that is inexpensive and can be taken anywhere with ease. Accordingly, Sircar devised a new kind of playwriting and acting style that suited his purpose. He was inspired by both foreign and indigenous theatres. He manages to adapt these to the conditions prevalent in India.
Indian Theatre lost one of its major exponents on 13 May, 2011 when Sircar breathed his last. Far away from the glare of publicity and political patronage, Sircar treaded on his chosen path, remaining silent but resolute in the face of hostile criticism bred by vested interests. He worked towards furthering the cause of socialism by exposing the contradictions prevailing in the present society and by advocating the need to resolve them. Remaining firm in his conviction, Sircar waged a life-long war, through art, against the injustices of the socio-economic system and sowed the seeds of resistance. Without yearning for recognition and profit he went on working wholeheartedly for the people's cause. Lying on his deathbed, he could, therefore, look back on his life and derive satisfaction from the fact that he had lived a useful life.