

CONTRIBUTION



CHAPTER IV

CONTRIBUTION

Whatever action is performed by a great man,
common men follow in his foot steps
And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts,
all the world pursues.

- The Bhagavat Gita.

Badal Sircar is seen as one who leads the theatre community by personal example and his contribution is indispensable for the well-being of the society. He concludes in one of his lectures, "theatre by itself will never change the world for the better, but let us allow theatre to stake a modest claim in the process of that change", (Changing 37) and he has been actively involving himself in the theatre activities of his group 'Satabdi' till date.

According to Sircar, "content is the main thing. Form comes later" (Ghokhle 2) So, he focuses all attention on the message. The ideology behind the Third Theatre is that development will come only from the people, when they become critically aware of their situation and their potentialities to bring about social change. This principle of Third Theatre is best illustrated through the comedies too by Sircar.

The plays taken for analysis, Scandal in Fairy Land and Beyond the Land of Hattamala in this chapter are close adaptations of Premendra Mitra's Roopkathar Kelenkari (Scandal in Fairyland) a story written for children, and Hattamalar Deshey, a novel by Premendra Mitra and Leela Majumdar, serialized in the children's magazine "Sandesh", edited by Nalinidas and Satyajit Ray. These children's stories are works of fantasy. Makarand Paranjape's observation, "Reality

is harsh, unkind, and cruel, but fantasy, art, love is more fulfilling, satisfying and energizing" (92), is true because fantasy deals with events that are impossible by real life standards.

Sircar, who is committed to the cause of conscientizing the masses through theatre, makes use of the element of fantasy to demonstrate a dream world in which 'money' plays a vital role. The avarice for possession of wealth producing fraudulent people in Scandal in Fairyland and the rejection of the concept of money or private property, leading to equality and plenty thereby creating an ideal world in Beyond the Land of Hattamala are proffered through comic situations which have contemporary relevance. Freud's view that "a happy person never fantasies" and "the motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality" (38) is applicable to the reverie of Sircar.

The intention of comedy is to provoke laughter by means of which man thinks over the realities of his existence. Sircar actually began his career with comedies and has written many more even after his serious plays like Evam Indrajit and Baki Itihas. In his opinion it does not mean that comedies are ranked low in dramatic categories. He does not accept the view that comedies do not have a message, or discuss social issues, or voice out opinions. He rather wants to stress the value of laughter: "We can laugh in the midst of the greatest sorrow, we can heighten the profoundest tragedy through laughter, deal with the most complex problems through laughter" (Sinha 113). He further adds, "If laughter is healthy, if it can be aroused without buffoonery or the exploitation of physical defect or facial distortion, then that laughter, to my mind is not without purpose" (Sinha 113).

According to the above standards Scandal in Fairyland and Beyond the Land of Hattamala are plays of lighter vein presented in a real fairy-tale fashion. These plays use witty tongue-in-cheek comedy to communicate relevant social messages. Scandal in Fairyland unravels yellow journalism. It presents people's craving for sensational news and how unscrupulously the media is bent on providing thrilling accounts of news. Consequently, this play is a brilliant critique of the media and their machinations for sensation and money. It unmask the ugly face of commercialism, an adult theme in children's theatre.

Scandal in Fairyland was first performed on 18th January 1975 at Curzon Park, Calcutta by 'Satabdi'. In a fairy-tale framework Prince Thunderbolt, the hero, goes about killing ogre after ogre and saves eight kingdoms from the ravages of the wicked ogre and then marries Princess Rose in a happy ever after manner. Towards the end, the play subverts the image of Prince Thunderbolt. Ayyappa Paniker critiques: "The hero's discomfiture comes to light when the veracity of his having killed so many monsters is questioned and he himself produces witnesses [. . .] to prove the allegation that he has not slain any Ogres and that he has used fraudulent means to acquire kingdoms and gold" (34). The prince becomes a cheat by paying heed to the words of the owner and editor of the Daily Fairy Green Midas Speculatorotti, who is an embodiment of corruption.

The play opens with a newspaper boy, who speaks in a flamboyant American accent like a caricature of a Chicago gangster, and runs in calling people to buy the newspaper 'Daily Fairy Green', as it provides sensational news about Prince Thunderbolt's brave deed. He offers extra special edition for the same price. So, four members of the chorus representing common folk throng to buy papers and read. Sircar makes a hit at the mania of people to buy anything that is offered free.

Prince Thunderbolt emerges as a slayer of ogres in six countries so far. The names of those countries are Gold Landis, Silver State, Pearl Kingdom, Diamond Isle, Emeraldia and Land of Gems – all indicating their wealthy status and the importance given to riches as in a fairy-tale and also echoing the materialism of the modern world. 'Copper land' calls for immediate attention to carry out his seventh mission. In his unique style he has killed the seventh ogre also and the ogre's body is said to be cut into pieces "and scattered over the seven seas at the ends of the earth, and not a sign of the beast remains, except in the blood stains on the Prince's victorious sword"(42), reads the Daily Fairy Green Version. As in Shakespeare's plays this particular idea which appears in the opening scene strikes the key note of the play.

The character of Prince Thunderbolt evolves only from the newspaper version and the discussions of the chorus and never from his direct presence until the climax. He appears before the audience only at the end in the trial scene. From the discussion of the chorus, it is understood that Prince Thunderbolt has been offered half of the kingdom and the hand of the Princess by every King for every successful venture. But he has declined the offer of the Princesses and instead has gained an equivalent value in gold. So he remains a bachelor still and the citizens of Copperland avidly wait to know his decision and the Daily Fairy Green makes a successful market on this issue. When Thunderbolt takes the stock decision of not marrying the princess, the members ONE and TWO of the chorus congratulate him as a worthy, brave and true knight.

Prince Thunderbolt is looked upon as the wealthiest and the most powerful prince who retrieves countries in distress like Christian in Bunyan's Pilgrim's

Progress or Spenser's Red Cross Knight in Faerie Queene. The chorus considers him a great hero, a saviour of mankind:

THREE: It is our hope that Prince Thunderbolt will forever remain loyal to his mission,

FOUR: And save more such kingdoms from the onslaught of ogres (44).

Sircar's satiric tone at the expectation of the people is very obvious. He rather expects everyone to take up the responsibility on their own shoulders for common good in which case there is no need for hero-worship.

The paper boy functions as a bridge connecting the fairyland and the real world. He publicizes the stance of Fairy Green about Prince Thunderbolt's issue. When Thunderbolt refused to marry the princesses, the people of the fairyland were confused and felt insulted as it was quite unusual for princes in fairylands, to accept the reward but to decline the princesses in marriage. But Daily Fairy Green praises the exceptional Prince Thunderbolt by publishing a sizzling editorial on him: "Sacred vow to save Fairyland – the bachelor Prince's noble ideals – sacrifices connubial bliss for love of Fairyland" (45).

The paper boy announces that he sells papers in Ironia and attracts the attention of the chorus. He comes with the hot news that an ogre threatens Ironia demanding one human a day. King Boneyhead Ironheart proclaims half the kingdom and hand of his beautiful, educated, honey-voiced daughter Rose, who is also well-versed in royal duties. The chorus announces the entry of super star Prince Thunderbolt dressed for battle against the ogre. The dialogue between the King and the Chief Minister reports the arrival of Prince Thunderbolt and the commencement of his battle with the ogre. The entire conversation provides fun and hilarious comedy. The King asks the Chief Minister whether the dead line,

seven days given by the ogre, is over. Then he answers: "Today is the seventh day, Your Majesty. And this makes it the seventeenth time I have breathed it into your royal ears, Sire" (46). The King is portrayed as an absent-minded comic figure.

Again the King is about to disclose the opinion of his queen about Thunderbolt to the Minister-in-Chief. A sudden thought stops him. He says:

KING. You see princess Rose's mother was saying – No, never mind

– I don't suppose it's proper to discuss these private problems in public.

MINISTER. Wisely have you spoken, Sire, (Aside). The whole kingdom

knows that the Queen is dying to make Prince Thunderbolt her son-in-

law, and he says we should not discuss these things in public! (47)

In this illustration, Sircar uses 'aside' as a conventional device befitting the fairy tale framework. The use of aside creates a humorous situation, provides ample scope for laughter, and establishes direct contact with the audience.

Mistaken identity is a conventional device of comedy. Similarly, misunderstanding the utterances also pervades good humour in the play. The King awaits the arrival of Thunderbolt with success and hopes to give his daughter in marriage. The Minister opines that the Prince has already refused seven princesses and may not marry Princess Rose. The King asks: "Yes. But how can you be so sure that it will be the same the eighth time around?" The Minister answers, "Sire, you have spoken wisely. This time Prince Thunderbolt may well end up inside the Ogre's stomach" (47). The King is really annoyed and calls the Minister terribly pessimistic and foul-mouthed though shrewd and efficient. The Minister apologizes telling, "It's all this worry and tension" (47). The King interprets the cause of his worry and anxiety as due to the demand of the ogre. But the Minister clearly explains that he is worried only about his position after the depletion of

wealth from their treasury and fears his salary may be cut as in the case of the previous seven kingdoms, and not about the demand of the ogre. In this conversation, the misunderstanding of the Minister is feigned and intentional, for he exploits the opportunity to express his heartfelt hidden thought, whereas, in the case of the King the misunderstanding is real and shows his gullible nature.

Sircar's sense of humour finds exposition in the words and deeds of the Minister. When the messenger brings news about the victory of Prince Thunderbolt, the King out of excessive joy takes off his gold necklace to reward the messenger. Suddenly, "Quick as a flash the minister clutches the necklace and stops him" saying, "What are you doing. Sire? If you give away half your kingdom, this necklace will double in price". He does not stop with this and continues thus: "Messenger, His Majesty, pleased with the news you have brought, has announced a reward of five silver pieces. If you go tomorrow to the Lord High Chancellor, you will get your reward. In cash too, not a due slip" (48). The thoughtfulness of the Minister is presented in a humorous vein. Such examples prove the fact that all exchanges of opinions between the King and the Minister are not only hilarious, but highly thought-provoking too.

Sircar's attention is drawn towards Mitra's fairy-tale because it unveils the manipulation of the print medium in a humorous vein. Media should be a torch-bearer and not a torture giver. The power of press to rule the minds of people is best brought out by Mitra. The press with a vested interest unfolds a shady game of 'dying and vanishing' of a wild ogre to kindle the curiosity of the public thereby increasing the circulation of their paper. The ending of the play, with the final subversion or exposure of the truth by the press itself, "is a brilliant critique of the media in their machinations for sensation and money" feels Sircar about the

original. The same truth or message is effectively highlighted in Sircar's adaptation also. The press exploits the human tendency to crave for sensational news or scandals. Sinha says that the Daily Fairy Green "uses its editorials to whip up public hysteria, with little juicy tit-bits to keep the emotional interest of its readers at fever pitch" (116).

The editorial which glorified the Prince as a sage or a super star adopts a fresh ploy to increase the sales of the paper as soon as the public interest wanes. It begins to criticize the decision of Thunderbolt to get married. The editorial questions his stand thus: "But should not a man who chose the welfare of the nation as his cause be made of sterner stuff?" (49). It further deplores and condemns him for having stooped to his personal comforts and happiness without any consideration for the welfare of the nation. As the Prince is steadfast in his decision, the press makes a diplomatic maneuver of subverting the fairy-tale version of Thunderbolt and exposes him. The paper boy very loudly shouts "Prince Thunderbolt a fraud! Corruption in Fairyland! Prince Thunderbolt exposed!" (50). The sensational hot news sends sales soaring sky high.

The impact of the mass media on the public is so tremendous that they indubitably believe everything that is told from the view point of the media. The masses sail along the current of media waves. This attitude of the public is well brought out when the citizens of Ironia question the authenticity of Prince Thunderbolt's encounter with the ogres and their killings. The Daily Fairy Green editorial which extolled the virtues of the prince turns the tables against him and calls him a fraud and cheat. The people demand proof for the death of the ogre and ask for the corpse or a part of the ogre's dead body.

On seeing the agitation of the people, the guileless King orders his Commander-in-Chief to declare emergency to subdue the agitation. The timely intervention of the wise Minister has contemporary relevance with a tinge of satire on the handicaps of democracy: "Your Majesty, we still stand for democracy, and that means there'll be too many embarrassing questions – freedom of the press, the right to public assembly, and all that" (52) and the King angrily asks to arrange an enquiry commission. Then the Minister continues the old vein of satiric remark: "After seeing the performance of ten of those enquiry commissions, the citizens of our country only laugh at the mention of one. Even if they do not laugh, the Daily Fairy Green will see to it that they do" (52).

After much dispute, the King reluctantly agrees for a public trial of prince Thunderbolt, his would be son-in-law. The King and the Minister heave a sigh of relief when Thunderbolt himself volunteers to undergo a public trial. The Prince produces two witnesses, a weeping Ogre and Midas Speculatorotti, proprietor of Daily Fairy Green. The Ogre is a harmless old creature but Midas is greedy, selfish, shrewd and cunning. Thunderbolt accuses Midas of shady business dealings. But Midas is not ashamed of his act of paying money to write for him or bamboozling people, rather makes a loud and proud proclamation of his dealings:

We're all over the world making business deals. I make films too. All those religious stories – Jazz them up, cut and paste them, and make them into box office hits. I make so many things – ask me what I don't make! Parties, revolutions, plays, temples – you name it, I make and unmake it! (56).

Sircar's role as a satirist is discernible here. "If it had not been for him and his 'crooked ideas', both the Ogre and the prince would have been nowhere", (117) comments Sinha, exploring the villainous role of Midas.

In the process of explanation, Midas exposes himself while unmasking the 'gallantry and chivalry' of the prince. He points out that the prince has amassed wealth by means of the so-called adventures. He claims himself to be the master brain behind: "Think how he must be enjoying his huge estate – seven halves make three and a half kingdoms! And all that gold? How do you think he's got such power and wealth? Who gave him the idea of making a deal with that Ogre? Yours truly, Midas Speculatorotti" (56-57). His brain child, the master plan brought him thirty-five percent commission. He considers Prince Thunderbolt, a fool who has lost a fine business at the sight of the princess. When he is exiled, he is not in the least bothered. He is glad enough to leave for Bengal and become a prosperous black marketeer. Midas says, "Bengal, I guess. I'll hoard and trade in rice, cooking oil, baby food, permits and stalls on the pavements. Plenty of black marketing there" (57). Here the intention of the playwright is satiric to the core.

Coming to the next witness, the Ogre, it appears well-dressed like a gentleman. The very entry of the Ogre shows that he is 'gentle-manly' though a monster. His deposition brings out his genuine acceptance of his flaw. He states that he is unlucky to live up to a ripe age because, he has not been slain by any brave prince like his father and grand father and adds that "just because I was greedy I've got to suffer all the pains of old age" (55) by listening to the crooked advice of men and points at the direction of Midas. The Ogre seems more humane than Midas. In the form of a modern day parable Sircar criticizes the modern world which is filled with not non-human but inhuman characters. The Ogre and Midas are juxtaposed to stress home the point that at least the Ogre regrets and asks forgiveness, but not Midas, an inhuman wretch. Vijay Tendulkar in an article, "Breakfast with evil" states: "one sets up demons as targets of hate, so that they symbolize disowned

aspects of one's own self" ("Breakfast with evil"). The Ogre in the Fairyland symbolizes a human frailty like violence or oppression, an animalistic impulse. When man succumbs to it he becomes inhuman. The Ogre, a monster is a foil to Midas, rather it serves to heighten by contrast, the sharpness of satire. It has been said by James Sutherland that "the satirist is most devastating when he appears to be most disengaged" (Sinha 114-115). It is this disengaged stance that Sircar achieves in this play and Beyond the Land of Hattamala.

Beyond the realm of fairy-tale glitter, Scandal in Fairyland lends itself to various interpretations. It can be looked upon as an allegory, as has been clearly pointed out by Neelima Talwar,

From Northrop Frye to Frederic Jameson, a number of critical insights about allegory as a determining factor in philosophical, educational and fictional enterprise have been offered....Allegorical pattern in drama is intrinsically related to performability of the ideas. (110)

Allegorization is a central aesthetic principle in 'Theatre of Development where science allegories get a unique Indian flavour. Here ideas are presented in the form of characters. These characters either perpetuate or subvert cultural stereotypes. Badal Sircar offers allegorization of ogre in Scandal in Fairyland, for educational purposes. Through the creation of the ogre, Sircar teaches the masses the process of tackling violence.

The alternative measure to violence is peace and not more violence. Prince Thunderbolt overpowers the Ogre not by fighting with it or killing it but by means of love. The Ogre is tamed into a submissive creature. While talking about its future it says, "Living on milk and honey for so long I've forgotten how to eat human beings. I can't even raise a feeble Fee Fi Fo Fum" (50). Originally the ogre

lives on human flesh but it has been tamed by Thunderbolt. If a wild, man-eating ogre can be domesticated, why man cannot be reformed, whose oppressive, inhuman actions are not inherent traits, seems to be the question that Sircar wants to raise. Though this reading touches the extreme edge of imagination it is not impossible. Usha Jesudasan in her article "The Ahimsa way" speaks about violence at work place. She points out that having recognized violence, the most common response is to act with a similar kind of violence and it begets more violence and the vicious cycle continues. Every individual should realize that he/she is a perpetrator of violence and a little care and compassion for others will make a vital difference. She enumerates upon the reaction with ahimsa as follows:

It may seem as if being an ahimsa person is akin to being a door mat, allowing others to walk all over you. But, it gives you inner strength and power over the person who hurts you (Hindu Magazine 4).

Only little drops of water make a mighty ocean, similarly the small and humble attempts of non-violence will lead to a global change.

It is highly relevant as the above newspaper article appeared on the same day when India was frozen with a shock of a series of bomb-blasts at two major cities Bangalore and Ahmedabad on consecutive days. The faith-shattering, heart rending untoward incidents remind one of the words of Vijay Tendulkar: "The anomic violence that finds expression in religious and ethnic riots in the lonely streets of urban India is an example of [...] self-hatred" ("Breakfast with evil"). His words refer to the inhumanity of man towards his own clan. The root cause of all these anomalies is the wrong choice of man. He takes up the weapon of violence ironically both to protect and also attack and thus becomes an enemy of mankind.

Every man is both divine and degenerate in himself. Accordingly, Prince Thunderbolt under the evil influence of the owner of Daily Fairy Green, Midas, is attracted towards money and power through fraudulent means. Having reproached by conscience he throws away his degenerate self and tries to become human. He extends his concern for the Ogre too by telling that he will provide a lifetime pension for it: "Don't worry ogre. I've saved a lot of gold. I'll arrange for a good pension for you" (58). Despite his trickery, Thunderbolt is forgiven for he has saved many kingdoms from the troubles of the ogre. So the play, as a true fairy-tale comedy, ends with the ringing of marriage bells.

Many great prophets are of the opinion that if man hears the inner voice, the voice of God within, it will lead him towards the right path. If the intuitive power of man is tapped through 'spiritual sadhanas' like yoga and meditation, the real communion between man and his maker will be carried out. If it is done in a proper way every individual will be led by his unfailing power of intuition. It is apt and altruistic to quote the words of Bhaduri Mahasaya, a spiritual guru of Paramahansa Yogananda: "What rishis perceived as essential for human salvation need not be diluted for the West. Alike in soul though diverse in outer experience, neither West nor East will flourish if some form of disciplinary yoga be not practised" (Yogananda 65). Though Sircar does not rely on religion for the salvation of humanity, it is certainly one of the unfailing means of solutions. Like Emerson he has faith in himself, in his fellow human beings and makes a clarion call to unite them for combined endeavour resulting in beneficial action.

Through children's theatre Sircar, the satiric critic of social failings, conveys a serious thought-provoking message to adults – the message of non-violence, one of the ever greatest principles advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji instructed

people to develop moral courage, because he knew that with undaunted moral strength, insurmountable hurdles could be easily overcome. Referring to the way shown by Gandhiji, Srinivasa Iyengar remarks:

The way of 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' cannot lead to a lasting harmony, for what is gained through force is constantly in danger of being lost through even greater force. The way of salvation would therefore be to meet the menace of evil, not with the weapon of Duragraha, but with Satyagraha, the force of Love and Truth (257).

Similarly, Sircar sows the seeds of non-violence which will lead to the blossoming of love and compassion in the hearts of men to face the problems of the modern world. Above all, Sircar considers money as the corrupting force of humanity. He primarily whips at man's infatuation with money, for the love of possession of it paves the way for dehumanization. His play Prastab which has no script, acted by Sircar himself, discusses money as an obscene object, as a degenerating factor of humanity.

Despite the knowledge of what usually happens in a fairy-tale, suspense is created by the editorials of the Fairy Green. The spectators eagerly await the judgment and fate of Prince Thunderbolt after the trial. It is proved that the view of J.L.Styan in this regard is exact and exegetic:

The end of a play introduces a revolver shot which is perhaps the more effective shot to drama. It effects the conjunction of the real and the unreal, hits off the climax of our emotions and sums up the play's puzzle. By this shot, shadow is made solid, and the spectator dizzy with a terror of the unknown. (187)

The end of the play gives a new colour to the heroic ventures of Prince Thunderbolt, a champion at beheading ogres. It is described thus on the blurb of the text: "As the action unfolds we discover wheels within wheels, double-dealing and behind-the-scenes fixing", all of which make the audience gape at the unbelievable events.

Though Scandal in Fairyland is a fairy-tale, Sircar has not made a dazzling display of the fairy world. Following the convention of his Third Theatre he has made his actors and actresses appear in everyday clothes, with a tag on their backs identifying the king, the minister, the messenger and others. The role of the prince was played by a large, towering personality but after he left the group, it was replaced by an actress who appeared in salwar and kameez, her hair tucked under the collar of the kameez. The major characters are given names and the members of the chorus are given numbers. The princess Rose and the queen are prominent off-stage characters.

The names of characters are symbolic and ironic. The King is referred to as 'Boneyhead Ironheart' as he is neither diplomatic nor sagacious. Midas, the owner and editor of Daily Fairy Green is a replica of King Midas, a mythical figure in his greed. The name of Prince Thunderbolt is highly symbolic. In Hindu mythology Thunderbolt is the deadliest weapon. It was made out of the bones of a great sage Dadhici, who willingly sacrificed his life for the manufacturing of it. Since then "Thunderbolt became a symbol of a number of moral virtues both in Hindu and Buddhist traditions"(Lokeswarananda 93). Buddha was seen meditating on a seat marked by the thunderbolt which symbolizes "an iron will of purpose, selflessness, purity, courage, vigour, readiness to suffer any amount of physical handicap"(Lokeswarananda 94). Prince Thunderbolt who possesses all these

virtues, under the ill-advice of Midas takes sides with falsehood, consequently he meets with his downfall and in the realization of his mistake, truth triumphs.

When the newspaper version subverts the image of Prince Thunderbolt, his role and the symbolic significance attached with his name subverts the myth. Only right can thwart wrong. The weapon given by Dadhici, the embodiment of righteousness, strength, selflessness, magnanimity and compassion, alone can succeed.

Paniker compares Kavalam Narayana Panikkar's The Lone Tusker with Sircar's Scandal in Fairyland for sharing meta-theatrical features. The Lone Tusker demonstrates how life enters into theatre and theatre enters into life. He says, "The alteration between fantasy and reality, between the traditional and the modern, between the lokadharmi and the natyadharmi is a device used both by Sircar and Panikkar" (34). In Scandal in Fairyland, the newspaper boy functions like a Sutradhara, by linking fantasy and reality, marking the transition between them and commenting on the fairy-tale nature of the play. "This kind of undercutting the realistic dimension, while the surface text appears to move on the realistic level, is a feature shared by the works of both playwrights"(34), says Paniker. He further points out some more common features between the playwrights, like employing parable as a viable mode with stress on religious or moral significance and the bright and lively sense of humour with occasional touches of sharp political satire.

The paper boy, like a Sutradhara, narrates the entire story of Fairylands and highlights the role of Prince Thunderbolt in controlling the ogres to connect the past with the present and to integrate fantasy and reality. He takes leave of the audience only after the departure of all the characters. He gives the last piece of information that the Daily Fairy Green has folded up and says "I swear this rotten

government paper doesn't sell at all. Drat! I'd better go along to Bengal too. I betcha Midas has brought out a nice, juicy, quick-selling paper there already!"

(58). Here he reflects the majority attitude to earn quick money by hook or crook.

As it is customary with Sircar, he has used circular dialogues and utterances typical of Third Theatre whenever the chorus appears. In the beginning of the play when the members of the chorus meet they read out the newspaper information about the ogre as follows:

ONE. The demand of one stout citizen daily—

TWO. As a snack for the bloodthirsty ogre----

THREE. Had made the citizens of copper land----

FOUR. Go without food and sleep for three days. (42).

Again when the chorus expresses public opinion, after reading news about Prince Thunderbolt's corruption in Fairyland, they whisper to each other: "Ogres – corpses – Prince Thunderbolt – fraud – Ogres – corpses – Prince Thunderbolt – Ogres" (51). This utterance is typical of Sircar.

The paperboy establishes direct contact with the audience. As soon as they receive news about the decision of Prince Thunderbolt to marry Princess Rose, the chorus cheerfully leaves the stage. After they exit, the paperboy directly addresses the audience and reads out the editorial which criticizes Thunderbolt's decision as neglecting his responsibility to his society. He also comments on the mass mentality to remain satisfied with tit-bits of gossip, instead of gaining deeper knowledge and understanding in any issue: "You saw it for yourself, Sir. They just read the headlines and went off, dancing in joy. Nobody cared to turn to the editorial. That's what education and culture have come to in this country" (49).

Sircar is very well aware of the dictum "Too much of anything is good for nothing" and applies it to the possession of money as well. The excessive greed and covetousness for money deprives anyone of his/her conscience and the best example is Shakespeare's character, Shylock in The Merchant of Venice. In the modern scenario, in a third world country like India, excessive money in the hands of youngsters who work in the Information Technology and Software fields without financial constraints or family commitments, leads to depletion of all moral values and virtues and proves that money is corruptible. According to Sircar, money is the root cause of all evils and therefore educates his readers/audience in almost all his works. Evam Indrajit projects the failure of materialism through the meaninglessness and emptiness which pervade the whole play. Baki Itihas presents oppression and exploitation as a result of the greed for possessing wealth. Sesh Nei points out that selfishness and greed for money lead to guilt and irresponsibility. Procession centres on the various processions which end up with materialistic demands and Bhoma states that man's inhumanity to man and callous disregard for fellow human beings are results of excessive love of material possession.

In addition to the above mentioned plays, the two plays which are being dealt with in this chapter are based exclusively on Sircar's concept of 'money'. Scandal in Fairyland portrays the corrupting influence of money. Midas, fabricates sensational news only to earn a good income. He employs Thunderbolt and the ogre in his service. They dance to his tunes and carry out his orders for the sake of money only. Even the ogre, a non-human creature admits that he is greedy. In a mild satiric tone Sircar thus exposes the foibles and follies of man due to his excessive greed. Finally, the newspaper boy says that he will also go to Bengal

following the foot prints of Midas, for the rotten government paper does not sell properly and he is unable to get a good commission.

The next play Beyond the Land of Hattamala presents Sircar's concept of money in a romanticizing manner. His vision of a Utopia, a Marxist paradise unfolds before readers/audience. Before examining this play in detail it would be better to have an understanding of Sircar's concept of money. In one of his works, Prastab (Proposition), a play which has no script, Sircar makes a lengthy monologue about money as an evil system of the society. He considers money as 'obscene'. It is a one-man show performed by Sircar periphrastically voicing the essential credo of the Third Theatre also. Bharucha holds that "its denunciation of money is so violent, so absolute, that one is almost tempted to reject it as an appallingly simplistic statement. It is difficult to speak of Prastab as a theatrical event, because it defies all notions and conventions of entertainment" (154). It can be considered nothing less than 'a human act' according to Sircar's ideology of theatre.

A sincere and an honest actor is less convincing than a technically equipped one in a normal theatre atmosphere. But Sircar is an exception because his honesty is the distinct feature of his message which often presents the indifference and inhumanity of man and intimidates the audience. In consequence, a crisp and condensed summary of Prastab follows to prove how daring and honest Sircar is. As soon as the audience enter the Angan Mancha, a small room, Sircar is found spread-eagled on platforms that are shaped to form a 'T'. His wrists and ankles are tied with a rope and stretched to the four corners of the room. All lights in the room are switched off and a strong light shines on the platforms. The audience, expecting great suspense, focus their attention on the still, corpse-like figure of

Sircar, behind which loom three silhouettes of "sentries" who hold a knife, a whip, and a gun respectively.

When Sircar the propagandist of revolutionary ideas, asks the audience to have a look at the obscene picture kept behind the screen, they are embarrassed. With throbbing hearts they peep at the picture and find nothing but a collage of bank notes and coins. "When the audience returns to their seats, Sircar makes his 'Prastab' to abolish the obscene picture and the materialism it represents" (154), says Bharucha.

Bharucha, who has seen almost all the productions of Satabdi escalates Sircar's talent sky high. Since no text or script is available for the monologue, he quotes the words of Sircar, with regard to his concept of money in Prastab as follows:

I believe that the resources in the control of Man – most intelligent man in this planet – are enough to provide everybody with the basic necessities of life, even much more than that.... The system has made money a monster which, instead of serving man as it was supposed to do, has made slaves of human beings. (155).

Sircar's monologue is so simple, uncompromising and clear that everyone is compelled to listen to it.

After the monologue the sentries exhibit the picture to the audience. On seeing the picture three actors who are implanted among the audience rush toward the picture and genuflect in front of it, their tongues hanging out. It is a trenchant criticism of the enslavement of human beings to money. Bharucha states:

"Sircar believes that it is 'genuine theater – a theater of feelings, a theater of direct communication' but he also acknowledges how hopeless it is to describe it in writing (156). Sircar's appeal to the on lookers to change

their lives by changing their attitude to money is less a message than a plea" (Bharucha 156). The crux of the monologue thus explicates Sircar's contention of money.

The power of communicating messages is best illustrated in the theatre of Sircar. The note worthy comment of J.L.Styan in this regard is that "All values in art depend on the power of communicating them, making them a wholly felt breathing force to the recipient" (165). Being dissatisfied with the present, man longs for an ideal world either by looking at the remote past or to the distant future. Thomas More's Utopia and Francis Bacon's New Atlantis are such works of literature which visualize a golden age or an earthly paradise. The conception of a Utopia is based upon a planned imaginary human community, humanly organised for human well-being. When human values are in a state of disintegration the need is felt for an ideal state. New Atlantis is a plea for scientific research. More's Utopia is a fictitious far off perfect state with sweeping reformist ideas about the perfect governmental, economic and social system. Sircar's Beyond the land of Hattamala is also an ideal World.

Sircar communicates his conception of an ideal world, in the structure of a fairy-tale reality in Beyond the Land of Hattamala. He recalls that this play is close to his heart as it has touched the limits of imagination and idealism. The story of two thieves, who alight in a terra firma where people have no concept of money, becomes a myth of possibility. Sircar's credo is simple that everyone should work according to his capacity and get according to his needs. Such a set up requires magnanimity of heart on the part of the people as Tagore prays in Gitanjali: "Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service. Give me the strength never to disown the poor..." (verse 36,21). With unfaltering concern,

Sircar usually speaks of middle class guilt and complacency. But this play is a fantastic vision of a Marxist paradise, where there is sharing and no share holding, righteousness but no religion, co-operation and no conflict, peace not private property reign supreme, giving scope for the creation of a bright Utopia.

Beyond the Land of Hattamala revolves around the exploration of two thieves namely Kenaram and Becharam into a new land. Having submerged in a river during their flight from irate pursuers they find themselves in a fairy-tale world that resembles a lovely garden – a world where peace, happiness and unity prevail. It has also abolished crime, police abuse and aggression of all kinds. When Becha wonders whether it could be Calcutta, Kena firmly asserts that it cannot be, because there are no trains, or cops at every crossing. Moreover Calcutta is known for bigger crimes and there is no place for petty thieves like them.

To clear their doubt, they enquire THREE, a member of the chorus, where the police station is. His expression shows his ignorance of such a place: "Police Station? I don't think I know any place called the police station" (11) and further misunderstands prison or dungeon as luncheon. This instance provides merriment as well as magnification of Sircar's ideal world.

Since it is a fairy-tale, nothing serious happens and all misadventures of Kena and Becha end as pleasant surprises right from their entry into the new found land till the end. Looking for water to drink, they see an old woman with 'green coconuts', device a plan to cheat her and quench their thirst. They pretend innocence after drinking tender coconut. They do not realize that the lady has no concept of money. After they go off, FIVE who plays the role of the old woman does not understand the word 'cash' and speaks as follows: "Hash? Or did they say 'sash' or 'ash'? God knows!" (9) The thieves go to the 'eatery' and eat a sumptuous

feast with the intention of cheating the hotel authorities as they did the green coconut vendor. But to their surprise, no one demands any money, since it is not a hotel owned by individuals. The eating house is a public property and everyone's belonging. The thieves are puzzled when the supervisor in the eatery does not understand the meaning of the words, 'shop' and 'paying'. The thieves think that they are wise enough to escape from the place telling they will be regular customers paying by the end of the month where there is no need for it at all. Again when they go to the fruit stall they try to steal a bunch of banana but the fruit seller gives them more than what they want. He also sends a jack fruit through them to a doctor at the end of the street. All these make the thieves doubt whether it is charity or the act of policemen hiding themselves in ordinary clothes to catch the wrong-doers. Becha asks Kena: "What's happening Dada? I just don't get it. Is everything on charity here or what?" (17) Kena answers that they are misunderstood for other people and the police, the sniffers might catch them.

The play succeeds as a rollicking comedy emanating laughter. Kena and Becha who flee from their pursuers are in panic. They hide themselves in a cowshed. Becha complains that he is bitten by mosquitoes and the ensuing conversation is funny:

BECHA. Dada, there must be thousands of mosquitoes here.

KENA. What do you expect in a cowshed, fairies flying about?

BECHA. But they are killing me!

KENA. So put up a mosquito net! Or bite them yourself! (4)

Becha shouts 'oof!' and slaps at a mosquito and the cows start lowing at the disturbance. The housewife comes with a lantern and shouts, her eyes almost popping out "Th-th-thief!" on seeing them.

After this, to escape from the angry farmers, they jump into a river and begin to drown, even at that moment they mock at each other:

KENA. I know, I'm wet too.

BECHA. No, not wet.... water.... I keep swallowing water.

KENA. Really? I'm having....ice....ice....cream. (5-6)

The thieves find the place too good to be true and do not glean the ideal set up but fear that they might be caught. Kena, an adept in using his poker is unable to resist temptation and resolves to break into the eatery at night and steal away the stainless steel dishes. As their pokers drill into the brick work at the back, they are stunned to find that the front door is kept open always, so that their purpose remains unfulfilled. Above all, the people, who rejoice at night singing and dancing around, look at their awe-inspiring talent with stupefaction and ask to be initiated in the technique of making holes in walls. The comedy arises when both parties misunderstand each other thus:

KENA. You've caught us red-handed. So do what you want, but finish it, man.

.....

TWO. Caught? Caught what? What are you talking about? Who's catching what?

KENA. You're catching crooks, that's what. As if we don't know that you're sniffers (19).

In addition to this, when the people of the ideal world appreciate them as 'architects' for their talent in making a hole in the wall, the thieves without knowing the real meaning of the word, consider it as a term of insult pronouncing it as 'narkytecs'. Still they have not understood the real nature of the ideal world.

The playwright integrates reality and fantasy through the encounters of the thieves Kena and Becha from Hattamala, with the seven members of the chorus representing people of the fantasy world. Gradually Kena and Becha realize that the people of the fantasy world have no concept of money. It is expressed through their ignorance of certain words like shop, market, sell, seller, pay and so on. The audience cannot help smiling when FOUR and THREE describe money as "ornaments—round, flat discs—made of silver" or as "paper, with pictures on them" (24), without attaching any monetary value to them. It is so fanciful that a momentary oblivion of the fact that the whole world revolves only on 'its' axis, is a pleasant vision of a Utopia, an ideal abode where no private property exists.

People do not own money or valuables, so they are kept at a library for public use. Jewellery, statues and clothes for special occasions can be borrowed. Moreover they are kept on open shelves for easy replacement. Moreover, there is a sea-change in the attitude of the people. They are not interested in jewellery as SIX says, "Who wants silver and gold when you can get lovely fresh flower ornaments. A couple of old-fashioned women borrow them sometimes or sometimes people borrow them for fun" (29).

The doctor's words resonate the words of Sri Paramahansa Yogananda about the quality of combined effort, carried out with kindness and concord: "If you all work together with love, harmony, kindness and humility the work will sweep the world" (34). These words reinstate Sircar's idea of concerted effort and equal sharing of benefits as expressed earlier in both Procession and Bhoma.

Like Charles Dickens who held a notion that the 'haves' can lose a part of their asset to the 'have-nots' to gain fulfilment in life, Sircar wants to establish a classless society based on equality. Beyond the Land of Hattamala, teaches a

valuable lesson in non-possession. Losing and not possessing paves the way to fulfilment in life. It reminds the readers of one of Mahatma Gandhi's greatest ideals 'voluntary poverty', the contention of which is possessing riches in excess, more than what is needed is also a sin. The wise remark of Mahatma Gandhi, reverentially called the father of India, is worth quoting here: "There is enough wealth in the world for man's need, but not for man's greed!" (Dandapani 14) Sircar accords shape to the vision of Gandhi too by reflecting the same ideas here. It stresses the significance of simplicity and philanthropy.

Materialism has no value in Sircar's Utopia. The people hold their heads 'high above the daily trifles'. They attach great value to precious possessions such as books, manuscripts, scrolls and tapestry. They are avidly used but carefully preserved in the library. There are many book worms whose quest for knowledge never saturates and they refuse to leave the library until late in the evenings. So, to keep them off during the late hours the library is closed. Sinha rightly states, "The two thieves struggle to comprehend this topsy-turvy world and the experience results in a complete change of perspective" (116) undoubtedly on the two migrants and considerably on the play-goers who would certainly wish for the establishment of such a society. As the chivalry or gallantry of the knights are praised and rewarded, the talent of Kena and Becha in making beautiful holes within a short time is admired as a great work of architecture, contributing to the welfare of mankind. Work is worship for the people of the ideal world and as they share the efforts, they share the fruits of their labour also according to everyone's needs.

The message of Sircar is also the same. He puts it as follows: "At a counter revolutionary act, I have over heard people in a village discussing the play after a

performance and saying, 'Well, there is no reason why it cant' be like that!' if we can set people thinking, isn't that the most we can achieve?" (Beyond and Scandal ix). Sircar admits that he is proud of his work because it upholds a possibility of what he has projected in his Prastaab (Proposal). Badal Sircar and Jonathan Swift have successfully highlighted the vileness of humanity in their works. What Swift accomplished through satire in his Gulliver's Travels, has been achieved by Sircar through fantasy and satiric humour in Beyond the Land of Hattamala.

Paniker's comparison of Sircar with Kavalam Narayana Panikkar for his art of integrating the past and the present is very apt. He holds that it is one of the chief preoccupations of both the distinguished playwright-directors to integrate contemporary relevance with traditional perceptions using histrionic devices handed down from generation to generation. "Both resort to magical realism and fantasy and enrich the mythical dimension to ensure contemporary and topical resonance" (Paniker 34). The thieves belonging to Hattamala find a topsy-turvy world in the dreamland of fulfilled promises.

They are unable to reconcile with the ideal world where they cannot practise their craft, instead "they get their lessons in non-possessiveness in the new socio-political set up where money is an unknown concept" (Paniker 34).

In their search for food and money through a series of comic situations they come into contact with the fantasy world. Unable to believe the happenings, peace, plenty and prosperity of the land they try to ascertain whether it is real or not.

Kena asks Becha to pinch him to know whether he is awake:

KENA. [...] here Becha, pinch me, will you? Let's be sure I'm not dreaming. (22)

Becha pinches so hard that Kena slaps him and the chorus who witnesses this considers it to be yet another game of Hattamala like making holes in the wall.

The benign and the malign are the two forces at work in nature. An evidence for the conflict between these two is present everywhere, whether it is in the mind of an individual or the society in which he himself is an integral component. Kena and Becha experience both internal and external conflict because they are unable to believe the life style of people at the dreamland as there is an ocean of difference between their world (Hattamala) and this. It makes them feel like fish out of water in the new condition. Becha the younger thief gradually changes his old way of life as his needs are fulfilled but not Kena, the older thief for his love of trade and greed has been imprinted deeply in his psyche. Becha after having got accustomed to the new life borrows a gold watch and a ring. When Kena asks him to come with him to break open the library the difference between their mental make up is observed in the ensuing conversation:

BECHA. Gold! Gold! Here's gold. A watch, a ring.

Why don't you take these?

KENA. No. Those are borrowed. I want my own.

BECHA. Why do you need your own?

KENA. (turns on him with fiery eyes). I need them.

I'll love them. I'll sleep with them under my pillow. I'll bury them in the ground. They'll be mine! All mine! (33).

Kena refuses to understand the differing values in the dream world which is an inversion of their world.

Kena fails to comprehend the fact that the absence of market in the new world makes their profession quite redundant and provides them with plenty. His innate

longing to possess everything and his selfishness makes him restless. He is also greedy like Midas, the editor of Daily Fairy Green in Scandal in Fairyland. He does not give the jack fruit given by the fruit seller to the doctor, but keeps it for himself. Again the similarity arises out of his covetousness to own gold. Kena says, "Leave me. Let go of me. Gold. I want gold" (34). He suddenly recalls with an air of vindictiveness how he was ill-treated and punished for stealing just a pair of silver anklets at his place. So, on seeing gold in enormous quantities, he cannot control his urge to steal. Four members of the chorus rush to the spot where Kena and Becha indulge in verbal and physical clash. After witnessing the way Kena behaves they catch hold of him. The chorus identifies them as Hattamala men whom they have heard of only in grandma's stories. Seeing the thieves play several 'games' unique to Hattamala repeatedly, they come to a conclusion that they need treatment since the disease of greed and possession is chronic in them.

One of the great Indian epics the Mahabharata proclaims that where there is 'dharma', there is victory. The ideal world of Sircar in Beyond the Land of Hattamala establishes a society based on love, compassion, equality of status, concern for fellow human beings sans love of possession of material goods – ultimately a good life depicted like the central essence of "Dharmasastra". The doctor, hearing the rumpus created in the middle of the night comes to the rescue of Kena. He approaches the angry and disgusted Kenaram as if hypnotizing him and then pacifies him through his elucidations. The doctor, an excellent psychologist begins with appreciating their talent in using their pokers and offers to be their student. He learns from Kena to work with the Jemmy, simultaneously explaining in a rhythm the importance of work thus:

DOCTOR. (speaking on each blow). Each blow – a straight one – a

straight one – hit straight – straight work – work work – man and work –
man works – why does he – why does he?

KENA. (Like him in rhythm). He has to work – that's why – how can you
live – without work? (36).

The doctor makes them realize the ideology behind the Utopian world. Since they all work together and make everything, they all enjoy the fruits of their labour together. Kena gets irritated and shouts, if they too have such a system they need not steal and go to prison to be flogged as thieves. The system adopted in the real world is that the poor people like them starve to death while the blasted rich people hog everything for themselves. Sircar contrasts the merits of life at Utopia and the demerits of the real world through the words of the doctor and Kena respectively.

The world has witnessed numerous social, political, and religious upheavals on account of narrow-mindedness and sinister objectives. They create mistrust and hostility and encourage policies of separatism, and thereby victimize innocent people and bring destruction and death. Observing the agonizing condition of the world, the former President of India, Dr.S. Radha krishnan states:

In the progress of societies three stages are marked: the first, where the law of the jungle prevails, the second where there are rule of law and important justice with courts, police and prisons, and the third where we have non-violence and unselfishness where love and law are one. (238)

The third stage of society is a dream of Radha krishnan which is the vision of Sircar too with stress on unselfishness and love of humanity.

Transformation of individuals as well as society is effected upon through love, concern, and non-violence. The words of the doctor bring about a gradual but definite change in the attitude of both Becha and Kena. Kena does not want to live

like a parasite living on the labour of others for long and instantaneously decides to become a mason. He takes up this job to silence his pricking conscience as a way of retribution for his past misdeeds of breaking so many houses as a burglar.

Becha takes up the job of a gardener who makes perfect holes to implant new plants and tend them. The pinnacle of Sircar's achievement is that he converts the thieves into useful citizens and makes them join hands with the chorus who sings the significance of combined effort. Sircar reinforces the same simple message 'united we stand, divided we fall' in almost all his works time and again. The suggestive ending is evocative of Procession. Kena and Becha along with the chorus sing:

Whatever we need in this world, whatever,

We can make it all if we work together.

We'll work our best indeed,

And take whatever we need,

We'll share every thing we have together.

Come let us share everything together. (38)

Gandhiji has stressed the importance of non-violence to effect a social and global transformation. He interrogates:

The world of tomorrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence.

It may seem a distant goal, an impractical Utopia. But it is not in the least

unattainable, since it can be worked from here and now.... And if an

individual can do it, cannot whole groups of individuals, whole nations?

(230)

Since great men think alike, Sircar too aspires to cultivate change in every individual to change the society. It is not a far-fetched conceit if the change occurs

from within, in the basic attitude of the people themselves. Sircar functions only as a tool in bringing about such a change. He enlarges his vision of an ideal world to such an extent that he shows his disregard for money by creating a world devoid of 'money'. Though, in the modern scenario, the play looks childish, it has a serious message, meant for both children and adults.

After entering the realm of the Third Theatre Sircar did not retrogress towards the proscenium. But the plays Scandal in Fairyland and Beyond the Land of Hattamala, though meant by Sircar for Third Theatre can very neatly and magnificently suit the proscenium especially in a children's theatre. In the Third Theatre each production is experimented in a new space designed for the actors and spectators, so that each and every creation becomes unique. All the conventions typical of Sircar's poor theatre are perceivable in Beyond the Land of Hattamala too. The central characters are identified by their names whereas minor characters are ascribed numbers and they perform the function of the chorus. Attributing numbers lends a great deal of flexibility for the actors to take up various roles like the cow, trees, river, door, wall, hole in the wall, chorus and the like. When the play opens, the two thieves Kenaram and Becharam are fleeing in panic. Four villagers represented by the members of the chorus ONE to FOUR, chase them. As soon as the thieves slip away, they become cows in a cowshed. The thieves enter the cowshed and hide themselves behind the cows. The device of attributing numbers instead of names grants provision for role-playing apart from lending an aura of timelessness, so that the plays carry a universal dimension.

Right from the time of Shakespeare masks and disguises have been used to heighten the intensity of theatrical experience. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Bottom appears with a mask of the head of an ass and a horse's head is worn by

Hayavadana to represent a man with a head of a horse, a symbol of incompleteness in Girish Karnad's play Hayavadana.

According to Subramaniam, "a mask can create fantasy and bizarre world" (97) but in Sircar's plays role-playing is an alternative to mask and disguise. The runaway thieves who jump into the river to escape from the angry pursuers, land at the bottom of the river which seems to be a new place. The seven members of the chorus take up the role of trees in a beautiful garden. This is well brought out by creating bird calls from the trees. The chorus takes up another role – the role of playing music too. They imitate musical instruments to denote change of mise en scene. Again the members of the chorus ONE and SIX who take up position at the restaurant gate become the back wall when Kena and Becha go there with the intention of breaking the wall using their jemmy. Then FIVE and SIX make use of their arms to show the hole being made. This in particular reminds one of a chink through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe, converse in A Midsummer Night's Dream or Vijay Tendulkar's chorus who transform themselves into walls and swaying human curtains in Ghashiram Kotwal.

Even inanimate objects like river, trees, door and wall are depicted through the effective body language of the actors, the associates of the chorus who role-play such forms. Like the stream of consciousness technique adopted by the novelists to probe into the psyche of the characters, Karnad has effectively animated the dolls to report Padmini's psychological reaction to the transformation of Devadatta in Hayavadana. In such cases, mask and disguise serve as indirect means which support the progression of the play. On the contrary Sircar does not depend on any such means but employs role-play as a direct device of unfolding the play.

Ultimately the chorus-based sequences become inseparable from the main point of

discussion as there is no division of main-plot and sub-plot as in conventional dramas.

Sircar's Street theatre attracts large crowds, willing to sit throughout a performance in any kind of weather. He recalls one night when they performed through a continuous drizzle interspersed with heavy showers. The audience of about 3000 people were so enthralled and seriously engaged that for about three hours they sat through the rain. If the audience is so large like this they use a mike otherwise they do not use it. Similarly "No make-up is used unless mime is the medium. Then the face is painted white and the eyes an exaggerated black to highlight expressions.... There are no separate costumes for the actors. They might all wear a black robe but that depends on the theme" (Biswas).

In Beyond the Land of Hattamala Kena and Becha enact a mime. After reaching the new place, as they are unable to locate their own whereabouts, slowly and carefully assess their surroundings. They mime walking while the trees move about as if they are the ones who are changing their positions. The movement of the actors who stand as trees is quite unconventional and unconvincing but Sircar's experiment proves successful in bringing about the desired effect. Becha and Kena mime 'walking'. But the simultaneous movement of the trees points out the fact that Becha and Kena have been walking for a long time crossing many trees or gardens covering a long distance. The dialogue between the central characters adds meaning to the mime:

BECHA. I don't think these are our parts, Dada. I can't recognize a thing.

See that tree, I've never seen a tree like that.

KENA. Oh that's a whatchamacallit tree – what's its name now? I've seen hundreds.

BECHA. And that one? The one with the feathery leaves? (8)

The most important feature of Sircar's experiments is based on the "actor's training" which appears in Jerzy Grotowski's Towards a Poor Theatre. Many of the exercises are borrowed from 'Hathayoga' and aim at developing 'organicity' which means a union of body and mind, impulse and action not muscle building or gymnastic virtuosity:

Like Patanjali's [a great sage and spiritual preceptor of yoga sastra] meditation, actor training at the Polish Laboratory Theatre was a 'process of devolution' an evolution in reverse through which the performer simultaneously' goes inward seeking always the cause behind the appearance, and then the cause behind the cause, until the innermost Reality is reached' and goes toward, seeking to manifest that innermost reality physically and vocally at the moment and level of impulse (Lavy 185).

All the sequences of acting require dexterous training of the actors. The readers wonder at the actability of the scene where the members of the chorus role-play a river. The four villagers who pursue the thieves follow them until they plunge into a river, to escape from the irate pursuers. The chorus, ONE to FOUR face one another in two rows and become the river undulating their arms like waves. Three others join them to make the river. When the scene is enacted, the audience doubtlessly are stupefied by the deft performance. Kena and Becha are shown as struggling in the water. The dialogue between them supports the projection of the role of the chorus as river:

BECHA. Dada! Are you alive?

KENA. Yes... Still...glug...glug (sinks)

BECHA. I can't... much longer ... glug ... glug (sinks)

KENA. (floats up again) O Becha...

BECHA. (floats up) Dada! ... Wa... Wa...

.....

BECHA. Oh Dada! ... I'm gone ... glug ... glug (sinks)

KENA. You won't believe this but ... I'm gone too ...glug – glug. (6)

It is really amazing to understand the amount of work shared between the actors and the director behind such a theatre. Therefore the observation of Panikar comparing Sircar and Kavalam Narayana Panikkar in this connection has a great relevance: “Both exploit the body language to put across their understanding of the human predicament. Both resort to magical realism and fantasy and enrich the mythical dimension to ensure contemporary and topical resonance.” (34) In this way Sircar integrates traditional perceptions with contemporary relevance through a fantastic fairy-tale.

The expressive function of an utterance is one of the most important characterization techniques in drama. The utterances of a character reveal the mentality and verbal behaviour of the speaker and bring him/her to life. Though Sircar does not attempt to create full-fledged characters but only prototypes, their utterances reveal their attitudes, motives and their state of mind. Kena and Becha go to a fruit stall and try to pilfer a bunch of bananas. The subsequent conversation between Becha and Kena clearly illustrates their attitudinal difference:

BECHA. There's no one on this side. Shall I pinch a bunch of bananas?

KENA. Careful. That man may be a sniffer. (Becha steps forward a couple of places but comes back again).

BECHA. A sniffer? Forget it, then!

KENA. Stupid coward. Move, I'll go. (15)

The expressive function of the communicative system here also persuades the dialogue partner to do something. Becha is very cautious and avoids risk whereas Kena is daring and ready to face the risk. Ben Johnson's emphasis on the close connection between speaker and utterance is thus true of dramatic speech:

"Language most shows a man: speak that I may see thee. It springs out of the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the image of the parent of it, the mind. No glass renders a man's form, or likeness, so true as his speech" (Pfister 109).

Everything that is uttered in a dramatic dialogue is oriented towards an important participant, an amorphous entity which varies from performance to performance, the audience to affect their consciousness.

It is said that the source of theatre is ritual. The Third Theatre is undoubtedly a ritual because the whole community participates in it. At the end of Beyond the Land of Hattamala, as in Procession, Kena and Becha join hands with the chorus and sing striking the central idea of the play. Moreover, it is result-oriented like "warding of calamity, bringing rain [...] initiating a child into adulthood.... But, ritual is also entertainment" (Changing 21). So, it is theatre committed to a particular cause, which desires to change the attitude of the spectators and leads to some beneficial action. In this regard theatre is moving closer to ritual, interweaving efficacy and entertainment with much greater audience participation. What Nirmala says in her article "Theatre as Yajna" attracts attention for the expression of a similar idea. In her view theatrical performance has a social and communicative function. It can be compared to a yajna, which is a sacred performance with a social purpose like praying for rains or good harvest or good government carried out by a performer for an audience. Accordingly, Sircar's

theatre is a sacred yajna, for it is carried out by the performer and the audience to effect a social change for the welfare of humanity.

The only aim of Sircar's comedies, as in his serious plays, is his missionary dedication to the cause of social change. He presses theatre into service to highlight the ideal by exposing the gap between the ideal and the real as in Beyond the Land of Hattamala. According to Sinha, "This in fact, is the satirist's role, which can take the form of direct exposure, where the balance is weighted in favour of judgment, or it can be oblique, where the underlying sympathy for human weakness and folly tones down the abrasiveness" (114). Both Scandal in Fairyland and Beyond the Land of Hattamala as children's stories retain the flights of imagination and fantasy. Yet the apparent simplicity masks a deep concern with moral values and a pungent criticism of the ugly face of commercialization.

The quintessential message of Sircar's theatre is that money is not the be all and end all of life, because all evils in society flare up only as a result of man's lust for money.

About style Swami Vivekananda once remarked: "Simplicity is the secret. My ideal of language is my master's language, most colloquial and yet most expressive. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed" (Selections V: 259). Sircar's style though unique is simple, expressive, and most suitable to his purpose. Samik Bandyopadhyay in his introduction states that Sircar has been serving as playwright, actor and director for many years and "has pursued simplicity in theatrical means and ideas alike, in his urge to take theatre to the people to conscientize them to social change with a 'missionary' dedication to the cause of propagating the essential values of a revolutionary project" (Beyond and Scandal x).

"Theatre is life. There is no art, no craft, no learning, no yoga, no action which cannot be seen in it", says Bharata's Natyasastra. It is equal in proportion to what Shakespeare says, "All the world is a stage. And all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances;" (As You Like It III sc viii). Both the quotations highlight the long lasting, inseparable relationship between theatre and life. According to Sircar, theatre and life are one and the same. His involvement with theatre is so grappling that it makes his life inseparable from theatre. Sircar and his group of street theatre actors are committed to the cause of bringing about social change. So, they do not expect anything in return.

Sircar and his group have been doing theatre with unselfish missionary dedication. But what sort of impact it makes on the audience or their out look of life seems to be a genuine question. Feisal Alkazi who teaches street theatre at the Jamia Millia University in Delhi responds hopefully: "If the communication has been worthwhile then there must be some tangible impact. What is important is that the plays make people think. The play is seen by many people of different age groups who then question and discuss the contents of the play. This evocation of questioning is by itself an impact" ("Street Theatre"). In Sircar's theatre the reward for their tireless efforts came in a different way. The kind and reciprocal gesture was shown by the villagers who sat through the rain for nearly three hours enraptured by the performance. It meant that the message was getting across.

By producing a literary text, a writer is making a public statement. So, the eminence of any artist or writer is measured on the basis of the impact or influence of his/her works on the succeeding generation through which both the writer and the works withstand the test of time. Perhaps the test of a person's influence is the extent to which his/her ideas continue to inspire, to give example of a path that

others can for themselves substantiate. Such a great personality's life and career become reference points in their experimentation, commitment and the possibilities of success to the successors.

Talwar quotes the view of Punwani in "The Street is the Thing" thus: "Street Theatre has mushroomed in India perhaps because of the possibilities of theatre that Badal Sircar's Julius [Procession] opened up" (97).

Apart from regular public performances, Sircar's theatre group undertakes 'Parikrama' or travelling company tour of villages and conscientize the villagers to the condition of their lives and that of the world. The movement has spread through workshops conducted by Sircar in other states including Assam and Tamil Nadu. Those who got trained in Sircar's theatre workshops fanned out with their own agendas of theatre and social action. As has been pointed out by Sircar, observes Chanda "the availability of a circuit in which productions can be presented, coupled with the extreme flexibility and mobility of the productions themselves (he often talks) of a 'theatre mounted on our shoulders' have encouraged more groups to join this wave" (69).

The chief aim of Sircar's Third Theatre is to attain wider reachability. His theatre workshops are so effective and influential that not only his 'Gram Parikramas' but also the inspired trainees actively take his message to the various parts of India and enrich the Indian theatre. There is no star image for any exclusive artist but only the group image persists. Sircar's Theatre workshops are training grounds for many creative artists. His ardent followers by forming various theatre groups spread his ideals adapting their own styles.

The Living Theatre of Khardah, a non-profit regional theatre in Khardah in Bengal, closely resembles Sircar's Satabdi in its artistic direction. The proximity

of the actors and the audience, dramatization of everyday life in Calcutta, the close observation of lower-middle class people, their attitudes and habits are evocative of Sircar's plays. "Samudaya", a Bangalore based theatre group and many other similar theatre groups were trained by Sircar and they have been doing theatre for awareness building which is the motto of his theatre.

The cynosure of Sircar's contribution to theatre community is that a group of speech-impaired actors in Calcutta, The Action Players (TAP) has proved that silence is no barrier to expression by enacting his play Beyond the Land of Hattamala. Zarin Chaudhuri, artistic director and the force behind the group says, "Mime is the language of sign, more universal than the spoken word". She reiterated, "Even if we don't know a particular language, our eyes, our body movements are enough. For those with hearing impairment it's the perfect creative language" (Biswas). Performing on stage means gaining self-confidence. Theatre provided an opportunity for the differently abled members of TAP to gain self-confidence through acting which also proves therapeutic at times.

Another theatre group "Forum Three", based at Bangalore on their theatre festival in 2006 has staged two plays one among which is Sircar's Baki Itihas. The festival has been organized not only to popularize Indian plays in English but also to support an under-privileged section of the society. The funds raised thus are utilized for the physically challenged. This gesture is equal in merit in enunciating Sircar's humaneness – an expression of concern for fellow human beings.

Two great creative artists trained by Sircar namely, Dr.M. Ramasamy, Head, Department of Drama, Tamil University, Tanjore and Gnani, a versatile writer, communicator, and director of dramas in Tamil are living practitioners of Sircar's Theatre. After attending Sircar's workshop, theatre became a passion for Gnani.

Much impressed with Sircar's street theatre, he started the theatre group 'Pariksha' in 1978. Evam Indrajit and Baki Itihas are among his best productions. It is his view that nobody is as visible as before, because life is so frenetic that visibility lasts only for a few seconds before something else demands people's attention. He further ascertains that in the media explosion, everything gets flattened. According to him theatre space and suitable auditoria are the chief lacunae on the theatre scene in Chennai. He is still performing Sircar's plays. Recently Sircar's play Bhoma has been presented on 17.8.2008 at Chennai and photographic illustrations of the performance have been incorporated in the appendix.

Dr. M. Ramasamy's production of Sircar's Spartacus in 1989 was appreciated by Sircar himself. He has evolved his own form of theatre having the prominent features of Sircar's Third Theatre. The greatest achievement of his productions is the overwhelming response and willing participation of the audience in the discussions that follow. These are unfailing evidences to the gushing influence of Sircar, a legendary theatre man. Such is the power of theatre that the trainees of Sircar's theatre workshops create awareness of the current issues which require conscientization. Sircar's street theatre with reduced stage properties thus has given rise to numerous theatre groups to sprout and flourish enriching and enlightening themselves and the audience alike. These are unfailing evidences to the gushing influence of Sircar, a legendary theatre man.

As Freud had detected, the instinct to play is inherent in all human beings. It becomes dormant in adulthood. While 'playing', the instinct gets gratified and relieves the player from mundane stresses and pressures thereby providing psychological relief. Not only acting but also participating helps one to shed one's inhibitions. Sircar's actor training removes the 'psychological blocks' and help the

actors gain self-confidence and resourcefulness. These factors help them develop their inner personality to a very great extent and make them excel in their life and career with sound body, mind, word, deed, action and spirit or conscience. In Sircar's theatre, the active participation of the viewers through undivided attention and discussions leads to an interest in theatrical performance and they learn the art of decision making and problem solving.

“A theatre catering to a large and varied audience has necessarily to be entertaining. Almost inescapably the ‘entertainment’ element gravitates towards the lowest common denominator of audience preference which given the social conditions of the times, was bound to be for escapism” (198) observes Raha about the plays staged primarily for pleasure and monetary benefit without any sense of social commitment. Far from such a madding crowd, Sircar's plays shone as luminaries in the galaxy of theatre, dealing with serious thought provoking, and conscience pricking issues. Therefore, he does not spare even his comedies from serious messages. According to Sircar, as J.L.Styan remarks, play going is not to be thought of as an escapist entertainment but “...a consuming curiosity about man, about his life, his problems, his loves and sorrows and aspirations, the whole range and sweep of the human spirit in its relationships and conflicts” (289).

It is a difficult task for the performing artists of today to keep themselves away from the lure and lucre of celluloid screen, whether it is big or small. The challenge has been met by dedicated playwrights like Sircar, and their group of actors. Sircar's group of actors will not leave theatre even if a role is offered in films or television because they are volunteers working for a significant common cause, with a long term goal in mind. Sircar's works even in translations come alive, projecting powerfully the main concerns of indigenous theatre.

Subsequently what is said about the ancient but evergreen art of theatre, “Theatre leads, cinema follows” (Dwivedi 73) becomes an authentic statement. The irresistible captivating impact of theatre, a live medium, is so persuasive that some actors and directors of the film medium seem to emulate Sircar’s Third Theatre techniques.

Brecht’s drama is largely concerned with the relationship between the individual and society in their economic and political aspects. In conformity with Marxist ideology, he holds that the human being is the sum of all social circumstances. Like Brecht, Sircar too has worked to change the society gradually through theatre.

Throughout his journey as an actor, a playwright, and director, Sircar’s ethically rich and varied contributions to theatre populace and contemporary society are physically expressive, chorus-based theatre practice, sincere communication with the audience, co-operation of the performers who have eschewed money, name and fame, and above all the immediacy and directness of the performance. The significant contributions which set the third theatre apart visually and conceptually are the intimacy of sharing an experience with the audience, free play of imagination, manifestations through symbolic costumes, liberty to perform within the arena format and the element of body language. Supernal among all these is the eloquent use of the body which relates to one’s upsurge of consciousness, gushing emotions, and spray of knowledge. With great care and concern as he has for himself, he reminds the spectators, of the indignities of their lives. At one stage, he offers the same message to children, the architects of future as they should also be aware of the hostile world as in Scandal in Fairyland and Beyond the Land of Hattamala.

A kind of self-styled, altruistic, morally flawless, factually expert, and guileless giver of advice, Sircar proclaims, just like Mark Antony during the funeral oration in

Shakespeare's Julius Caesar:

I am no orator, as Brutus is

But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,

That love my friend.

For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,

Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech

To stir men's blood; I only speak right on. (III Sc ii 217, 835)

In his usual self-deprecating manner, he never hogs credit for the success of his troupe. As a straight forward fellow-human being, he does not stir people for bloody revolutions, but creates awareness and is able to win the confidence of his listeners and make them amenable to his arguments.

His theatre does not advocate violence. "It does not incite its audience to think in terms of necessary violence. Instead of advocating strikes, lock-outs, and the destruction of government property, it is content with merely disturbing the consciousness of its spectators" (32), justly observes Bharucha. Since the revolution is essential and long due, to bring about social change, Sircar has no faith in violence. Moreover history has proved that every violent revolution has boomeranged and that finally those who have initiated it become its victims. Therefore a spirit of rebellion for the good of humanity is subtly hinted at by Sircar. The audience of Sircar's plays are acutely aware of the exploitation and grave injustices prevailing in both urban and rural Bengal. Sircar makes his audience confront their indifference to the chaos and corruption that characterize urban life. He makes his spectators realize that they are responsible for the condition of the world they live in.

Sircar has been struggling hard till date to serve humanity. His undying urge to conscientize mankind has driven him to search for a suitable medium and his vigorous experiments with theatre ended in the establishment of Third Theatre. His greatest contribution to the Indian drama as well as to the entire human clan is his Third Theatre which has been actively performing. God cannot be everywhere physically, that is why he has created mothers, states a maxim. In the same way, Sircar's sole purpose being service to human race, he has genuinely inspired his ardent theatre groups to conscientize their fellow beings adapting their own styles. The words of Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita to act not only for himself but for the welfare of the entire clan have a striking relevance in this context: "A life of activity is preferable to a life of meditation [. . .]. Only act not for yourself. Act for me [. . .]. Surrender your Karmas to me. And me is your clan, your family, your tribe – act for them. You're not you, you're a part of the rest" (147). Any one who wants to attain the highest ideals of life can realize it only through active struggle and not through passive renunciation. The words of Yogananda which trigger one's thoughts in this regard are amazing. He enlightens thus: "The weakling who has refused the conflict, acquiring nothing, has had nothing to renounce. He alone who has striven and won can enrich the world by bestowing the fruits of his victorious experience" (71). The appropriateness of this yogic truth perfectly befits Sircar's daring and enterprising ventures in theatre.

Drama is a tool for social analysis and Sircar's theatre reveals a concern and responsibility towards society. He desires to change the society by raising social consciousness which inspires action. Sircar, like Blake represents a sort of radical humanism and strongly believes that any revolution is possible only when people are prepared to break the "mind forged manacles" which govern them.