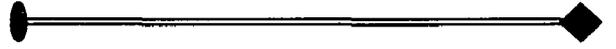


# CONCLUSION



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Poverty and discord, sin and sickness, fear and anxiety, war and insecurity are inevitable. These are all self-invited sorrows, made-to-order by a society infested with idlers and selfish men.

- Chinmayananda

Sircar, like Chinmayananda, affirms that the deeds or actions of man are responsible for the present state of affairs in the world. He believes in dedicated, selfless, cheerful, voluntary, and undemanding service, to redeem the ill-ridden society. Similar to religious experience theatrical experience is transcendental, for it liberates rather than enslaves the body and the soul. Therefore, the immense power of theatre lies in evoking a metamorphosis in people's attitude for betterment.

The excellence of drama over other genres of literature is due to its performance aspect which has three dimensional functions of converting the text into sights, sounds and actions on the stage. To ascertain the impact of the performance aspect it is said that a play text belongs to the dramatist and theatre belongs to people.

Drama is a communal art which is directly related to life, society, and time facilitating every individual to realize the inherent meaning and destiny of life. It performs multifarious functions beneficial to society right from edutainment, social sanitation, community health, mass communication to conscience-raising. Theatre, thus, sharpens people's sensibilities, intellect and sense of values. So the business of theatre is not dissimulation but revelation. It expresses the dynamic relationships between text and theatre space, characters and their conflicts representing the

evolution of a human being from darkness to self-discovery. Therefore theatrical experience takes the audience on a journey into themselves.

In India, the origin of drama is ascribed to divinity and it has come to be called 'Natya Veda' or the 'Fifth Veda'. The growth of Indian theatre, as has been vividly discussed in the introductory chapter, marks the culmination of three major streams namely, the classical Sanskrit drama, the ancient folk forms in regional languages and the Indian drama in English. The latest offspring of Indian drama is contemporary theatre in regional languages which has gathered momentum due to the national consciousness created through translations. The history of drama shows a thematic gradation from Gods to kings and from kings to ordinary men. Accordingly, the focus of the modern dramatists is on the relationship between man and his universe.

The purpose of all art, according to the classical writers, is promotion of moral values. Like the Sanskrit plays, the folk dramas derived their inspiration from the national epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The classical plays had an array of material from rural life with thinly veiled allusions to real events and people, which caricatured all classes of humble folk and their follies and foibles. The Indian dramas in English before Independence were essentially lyrical, allegorical, and symbolic productions with exalted aesthetic pleasure. Another category of plays with social realism revealed a matter-of-fact reality. However, the English plays produced by Indian writers were not up to the mark. The rich urbanites and the British gentry had their city theatre, the common class had their folk theatre, but the educated middle class did not have a theatre of their choice and this awakening also led to a new theatre movement in India. A group of regional writers with their

exposure to western techniques of dramaturgy emerged. They adopted the western modes, brought their traditional roots and created a living hybrid form.

The pillars of Modern Indian Drama, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Badal Sircar belong to this group and have contributed enormously to the growth of Indian drama through their bold innovations and fruitful experiments. These rare literary geniuses have never accepted the traditional set up and launched something new and challenging. Their plays have a strong sense of the stage and vary in texture, rhythm, choice of words and stance from play to play. They try to project the inane of life with all its elemental passions and conflicts. Their unconventional mode of expression and the treatment of daring and controversial themes lead to theatrical exuberance.

Sircar has been a civil engineer, actor-director and the doyen of Third Theatre. He has an astounding output of more than fifty original plays and some adaptations to his credit. Sircar has contributed a common dramatic mode which assimilates folk forms, the theatre of the absurd, and the happenings of the Sixties. He entered the Bengali stage at an appropriate time of explorations and renovations in Indian Theatre.

Sircar began his career with light frothy comedies in the proscenium. After sometime the change of venue of performance from proscenium to Third Theatre took place due to various reasons. The prominent ones are the theatrical impasse created by the first and second theatres of Calcutta, the financial constraints, his visit to some foreign countries and the subsequent influence of playwrights like Jerzy Grotowski, Richard Schechner and Julian Beck, and above all his humaneness to take theatre unto the last man.

Sircar, the recipient of covetable honours, is a writer with a social purpose. His primary concern is to awaken the slumbering conscience of his fellow human beings to the existing condition of the society which is sick. He gives a clarion call by integrating emotion and intellect to induce some meaningful action which can change the world for the better.

The recklessness and maladies of the contemporary society have a massive impact on Sircar. As a result, he has projected the sickness of the society, maladjustment and enigma of people and their inescapable condition through his plays. So this playwright with a different perspective, has focused the attention of the audience not on the mediocre personal problems of individual life, like the complexities of love or familial issues, nevertheless has projected the failures and dissatisfactions of individuals arising out of their warring instincts in collision with the society.

Theatre, to Sircar, should transmit the ideals, observations, and suggestions of the dramatist about the society for a collective mass, to look back, redress and create a better life style for the present and the future. The proscenium stage was inadequate for his purpose. Despite the inadequacy of the 'peep box' set up, his best output has been exemplified through an analysis of his proscenium plays Evam Indrajit, Baki Itihas, and Sesh Nei under the caption, "Confrontation", which forms the essence of chapter II. His analysis of life and approach to theatre have added a new dimension to the genre and also offered a novel experience to the audience with their display of the conflicts in the external world as well as the turmoil that afflicts the internal psyche.

Theatre should not be a mere imitation of the brighter side of life or a display of a colourful pageantry alone, but should bring to light the darker side of life too.

The plays scrutinized above voice out the multifarious problems and infirmities of both man and society. The dramatist's feeling of anxiety about the state of the world forms the kernel of his plays. They explore the uncertainties and incompleteness of the processes of life as well as of history which project the death-in-life nature of modern life. Sircar's successful transmission of some of the Pirandellian perplexity of human existence and value structures to the Indian scene have added a new dimension to Indian theatre by holding the audience responsible for their prevailing gloom and doom.

Accordingly, the plays deal primarily with human condition, man's inhumanity to man, his vicarious guilt and existential responsibility. Evam Indrajit, a seminal play, presents the theme of existential angst wherein fear, frustration, despair, isolation, and anxiety are the pivotally important experiences of modern Indian educated middle class youth. This existential crisis exposed in Evam Indrajit shapes up as man's awareness of guilt in Baki Itihas, which deftly portrays oppression, guilt and responsibility. The guilt complex, proclaimed in Baki Itihas, leads to the affirmation of human irresponsibility as the cause for the pathogenic condition of the world in Sesh Nei. Sircar's adroit handling and blending of such themes reflect not only his concern for the welfare of humanity, but also his theatrical sensibility.

The vague hope for deliverance from human condition of consciousness is strikingly illustrated through the three male protagonists namely Indrajit, Sharad, and Sumanta. A dramatist who works with human nature is surely interested in delineating individual characters, but Sircar is concerned with the relationship between the individual and the society. Consequently, his characters are individuals as well as types, for they represent the middle class urban intelligentsia. The

dramatist has brilliantly maintained a thematic continuity, endowed his central characters with similar attitudes, and prompted them to undertake similar actions. So, they are in fact, three-in-one, “prototypes” – representatives of modern men. Therefore, their existential conflict, guilt and responsibility become the reality of everyman’s life. Sircar, the founding father of modern drama, makes his readers/audience think and prompts them to be introspective.

Since Sircar’s aspiration is the projection of multiple problems of existence, he found that he could not effectively or adequately convey what he wanted to, through a story with characters having definite identities. Hence, his choice is prototypes rather than individuals.

Sircar’s chief concern is to bring his audience to confront the truths of their lives, to explore the value of human lives and social relationships in a hostile world that constantly flabbergasts the individuals. The treatment of man’s predicament and his helplessness to extricate himself from the web he has created, sensitize the readers and the audience to metaphysical questions about the nature of human existence. Man’s unending quest for the meaning of life and death is the homogeneous trait of the archetypal heroes of Sircar. They are sensitive intellects, helpless rebel-victims, and compassionate human beings who realize their responsibility in shaping the attitude of the middle class society, but are guilty about their inactivity.

The words on paper become both alive and live celluloid projections only through the amazing craft of the writer. But Sircar, being neither ritualistic nor bombastic, revolutionizes theatre acting by employing simple and unconventional methods. He makes use of new techniques to unfold the theme in each play. Not only the theme and characterization assert the absurd condition of man but the

dialogue also epitomizes its place in the realm of absurd theatre through stichomythic, repetitive and cynical exchanges in Evam Indrajit. Baki Itihas presents a novel device of narration from three different points of view, unfurling three different possibilities for the same ending. Sesh Nei is proffered through a kafkaesque trial.

The three plays highlight Sircar's notion that the message is more important than the aesthetic means by which it is conveyed. Hence, the dramatic devices inherent in the structure of the plays are not embellishments but serve the desired purpose. Evam Indrajit, Baki Itihas and Sesh Nei are stylistically similar and have unifying leitmotif and characters. A strong sense of the frustrations arising out of intellectual aspirations, the failure to get involved and the resultant feeling of guilt are the vital synthesizing experiences of the protagonists. The protagonists are put to trial and they come out with self discovery. The self dissection of the heroes creates discomfort among the readers or the audience, the purpose for which Sircar left his job of a town planner and became a full time theatre activist.

Writers are torch-bearers to the society and a writer like Badal Sircar, "the never-say-die theatre man" sweats to liberate his fellow human beings from their claustrophobic existence through conscientization. First he creates awareness in the minds of the audience/readers about their existing condition through the experience of quandary and disturbed conscience of his character Indrajit. Secondly he makes them feel guilty for the happenings, tyrannies around them through Sharad, and finally he involves them in the confirmation of guilt and their responsibility, with Sumanta. Sircar has portrayed the three protagonists in such a way that a logical connection evolves among them. Sircar's obsession with the dire need for change in social system becomes the connecting link.

Through the judicious blending of recurring themes and characters, Sircar rivets the attention of the audience to ingrain in their psyche, the prevalent maladies and awakens their conscience for collective action. Sircar's life is inextricably interwoven with theatre and the subsequent confrontation with both culminates in sensitizing the masses to an awareness of their absurd condition, responsibility, and also promotion of thought in the direction of ultimate action. Since "conscience is God's presence in man", Sircar, a conscientious playwright functions as a facilitator who helps the people to be clued in on their condition and social commitments.

According to Sircar, theatre embodies the main hope of humanity. This humanist has utilized the proscenium theatre to re-orient every individual to contribute for the welfare of humanity by dealing with issues, experiences and emotions of collective life. The proscenium arch has become the venue for the privileged few and denied admission to the unaffordable lot. "If theatre is free conversation among free people about the mysteries of world then it is precisely what will show humankind the way towards tolerance, mutual respect and the respect for the miracle of Being"(Sumana 62) and this idea has intensified Sircar's search for a new theatre. Chapter III "Experimentation" explores the giant leap that the playwright has taken from the proscenium to the open air theatre and the tremendous impact it has created on the theatre world and the human world.

This chapter analyses two of his famous plays Procession and Bhoma and highlights the concepts of his Third Theatre and proves his efficacy-oriented experimentation. His daring rejection of the proscenium arch has resulted in the avoidance of every component of familiar theatre features like lights, costumes and make up, the trimmings that made play-watching entertaining. He has broken all the barriers that came between him and his audience. His Third Theatre, literally

levelled with people, has exploded all illusions that blind spectators to the truth of his radical message. Unlike his proscenium plays which strike a discordant note of pessimism by curtailing hope for those who value ideas, dreams and poetry, the Third Theatre plays reverberate with Sircar's full-blooded humanism and optimism.

Through Procession, Sircar exposes some of the Post-Colonial problems like unemployment, frustration, unhealthy politics, religious fanaticism, loss of direction, materialism, heartless business and administration sectors – all leading to human degradation. The term 'procession' itself emanates from the painful Post-Colonial situation. It concretizes the agony of the suffering masses at different levels and serves as a metaphor for fighting against the evil forces.

Procession, the most famous production of Sircar's Third Theatre, ends with an upsurge of optimism. The young man Khoka, who has seen himself being killed over and over again by different agencies of the state, is about to give up his life when he is urged by the Old Man to go in search of his "really real home". In order to discover the same he must await and recognize the procession of real men. Procession has been a tool of revolutionary protest. However the practice has been misused by all and sundry. But the Khokas, both young and old wait for the "really real" procession which does arrive at the end of the play. The actors see it and join in. They call upon the audience to do the same. The last barrier between the players and the audience is broken. Together they form a serpentine chain – a symbol of people's power. Through Procession Sircar has introduced a way to articulate the questions, doubts and uncertainties that have been gnawing at the vitals of society.

Badal Sircar, an experimenter and planner of communicative processes has given up the traditional traits of drama like plot, story or character in his Third

Theatre plays. His unconventional dramatic techniques nourish the themes and give wholeness to the plays. Though he refuses the employment of theatrical devices to enhance the play, his presentation techniques are exemplary and unique.

Procession is highly rated not only for its revolutionary thematic content but also for its modernist forms or techniques like montage, simultaneity and juxtaposition. It is not meant to be performed on the proscenium stage. It has to be staged in open space with the audience seated around the playing area. The play has a troubled, fast pace. Scenes change in quick succession at breakneck speed. The actors are able to cope with such strenuous processes of acting, because they are volunteers, like Sircar, with a mission. The fact that they do not receive any monetary benefit for their job adds another feather to their caps. The uniqueness of Procession is the use of haunting music, familiar rhymes, earthy metaphors and traditional symbols to highlight the soullessness of modern religion and politics, the endless crowds, continuous agitations, serpentine queues and senseless rush of contemporary Indian life.

Sircar's next play Bhoma depicts the miserable dichotomy between urban and rural life which is fundamental for the disparities at different levels like economic standards, development services, education and culture. The play also deals with man's callous disregard for his fellow human beings, and spiritual deformity due to exploitative endeavours.

Bhoma is a dramatization of the life of the oppressed peasant in rural India projected through a series of sequences which portray the social and economic disruption. Sircar does not stop with presenting the exigency of the problem, but offers a solution by employing powerful symbols and images. His communication

of clear-cut facts and concrete truths about the rural set up are intended for the urban elites.

A series of chorus-created scenes alternate between city preoccupations and the life of the villagers. The interweaving themes like the place of love, humankind's inhumanity, usury and its impact on agricultural development, third world debt, "the atomic sword of Damocles", and the calamities of flood and famine bind the rural and urban worlds together. Apart from these, many strong issues like the deadening impact of atomic warfare and radio activity are also discussed in the play. Though he attacks the bourgeois values and innate selfishness of his spectators, he appeals to their humanity earnestly. He urges them to be sympathetic towards the underprivileged sections of society who are denied the basic amenities of life.

Bhoma, the protagonist, constitutes personal victimhood, like Khoka's oppression in Procession. His image also encompasses the forces of disintegration acting on both individual and cultural identity. Sircar explicates that violence, oppression, and man's inhumanity are indications not only of chaos and caprice, but of moral disorder. The play ends with an optimistic note. The hungry and exploited Bhoma is shown as rising up with his sharpened axe to strike out the evil forces of oppression symbolically represented as "poisonous forests". The chorus accompanies him throughout and their energetic struggle is mimed. The play thus harnesses people's collective will to struggle against the forces of oppression.

To make his plays very effective Sircar makes use of non-verbal, unconventional devices. The play is a melange of events strung together in a dramatic structure, through the brawn of the message. The structure of a play is the network of tensions that holds its different parts together. Once that is grasped, everything

becomes clear. In Sircar's Bhoma, the central theme becomes the network of tensions which connects the different sequences in the play. Sircar's experiments in Third Theatre demonstrate his protest against the existing system. According to him collective endeavour or combined action will ward off calamity and function as an effective balm to heal the wounds of society.

Sircar has created history by establishing theatre as a potent instrument to raise public conscience, to bring in change in the attitude of people. This challenging task is accomplished not only through the plays of serious vein but also through plays of lighter vein like Scandal in Fairyland and Beyond the Land of Hattamala. The various devices adopted to pass on his serious message in a lively and distinct manner are examined in chapter IV entitled "Contribution".

Sircar's strong belief that content is primal and form always follows content stresses the importance of his message. He has nullified the general notions of comedy as mere entertainer by dealing with the most complex problems and social issues, because his intention is to provoke both laughter and thought thereby stimulating man to think over the realities of his life.

The wonderful incorporation of the element of fantasy, to conscientize the masses in Scandal in Fairyland and Beyond the Land of Hattamala springs as a pleasant surprise. These plays, which are presented in a real fairy-tale fashion, 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 unmasks the ugly face of commercialism, an adult theme in children's theatre.

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

Sircar demystifies the concept of money by shunning it as an obscene object. According to him, 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. Scandal in Fairyland portrays the corrupting influence of money. Beyond the Land of Hattamala presents in a romanticizing manner Sircar's vision of a Utopia, where the very concept of money is nullified.

Sircar's credo is simple that everyone should work according to his capacity and get according to his needs. Beyond the Land of Hattamala is a fantastic vision of a Marxist paradise, where there is sharing and no shareholding, righteousness but no religion, co-operation and no conflict, peace and not private property reign supreme, giving scope for the creation of a bright Utopia. It teaches a valuable lesson in non-possession, reminding the reader/audience of Gandhiji's advocacy of voluntary poverty. There is enough wealth in the world for man's need, but not for man's greed. Sircar thus wants to establish a classless society based on equality.

Following the convention of his Third Theatre he has made his actors and actresses appear in everyday clothes, with a tag on their backs to identify their roles as the King, the Minister, the messenger and others. Sircar merges the identity of his characters with the universe, presenting them only as types representing humanity, yet the central characters are given names. The other characters are given only numbers, not names in order to depict a world of everyday reality and a world of non-heroism.

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 so on. This device grants provision for role-playing apart from lending an aura of timelessness, so that the plays carry a universal dimension. The presence of the inanimate objects is depicted through the effective body language of the actors, the associates of the chorus who role-play such forms.

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 in Scandal in Fairyland. 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. As it is customary with Sircar, he has used circular dialogues and utterances typical of Third Theatre whenever the chorus appears.

Despite the negation of story element, Sircar's theatre is a colossal success owing to the power of the voice of the actors, their body language, the proximity between the actors and the audience and above all the power of the message. The most important feature of Sircar's actor-training is the relentless training of their physique to eloquently convey the message through body language. The exercises

borrowed from 'Hathayoga' have finely contributed to culminate in 'organicity', which means a union of body and mind, impulse and action, not mere muscle building or gymnastic virtuosity.

Everything that is uttered in a dramatic dialogue is oriented to affect the consciousness of an important participant, the audience, an amorphous entity, who vary from performance to performance. Audience participation makes the Third Theatre undoubtedly a ritual in which the whole community participates. An examination of the select plays of Sircar reveals the fact that not only his serious plays, but his comedies too aim to propogate social change both in proscenium and Third Theatre.

Sircar's plays and the various theatre workshops he conducted have triggered the thought processes of the theatre populace and humanity at large. Such is the power of his theatre that the trainees of his theatre workshops create awareness of the current issues that require conscientization.

Not only acting but also participating helps one to shed one's inhibitions. Sircar's actor training methods remove 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.

Throughout his journey as an actor, a playwright, and director, Sircar's ethically rich and varied contributions to contemporary society are, physically expressive and 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, 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 their roles and responsibilities.

Sircar's theatre of conscientization makes the working class audience and performers identify themselves with the theme through their willing and active participation in the activity. This theatre is one of the vital means of visual communication in the service of humanity, stimulating people to comprehend the world and themselves. It has ultimately evolved as a theatre of natural environment, physical acting, slogans and familiar sounds, documentary material and sustained movement. Sircar's Third Theatre is an artist's contribution to the theatre community. His street theatre, a non-commercial theatre is used by the government as well as many social activists to carry out social reform schemes for community development through conscientization.

The construction of the plays, the dialogue, the rootlessness of the characters, their environment and their humanity exhibit Sircar's creativity, sound conscience, rare insight, and clear perception. The despair at the sight of the world and the loss of any ideology to depend on, mark the absurd condition of the contemporary man. Sircar's agitation involves a deliberate conscious expression of disgust at and

disapproval of situations, the horrid web of tensions and dilemmas the common man finds himself in. His plays analyse, expose, agitate against, and assault the system responsible for man's present day plight and suffering. Sircar's readers/ audience are compelled to think, interpret, analyse and evaluate life for themselves. The powerful impact of his plays startles the viewers and shakes them out of their acquisitive and complacent existence. He has strongly felt that only when the oppressed rise, get organized and fight back, history can be changed.

Sircar, an avant-garde playwright has revolutionized Indian drama by bringing about a change in the conventional set up like, story, plot, characters, and dialogue. Ultimately, the Third Theatre plays lend a new theatrical experience for both the actors and the viewers. Close contact between the actors and the audience, direct communication, audience participation, dance, music and the employment of the body language to convey the intended message are the significant features which replace conventional methods of play acting. Sircar is far ahead of his times because his awareness of social failings like violence, oppression, selfishness, lovelessness, man's greed for money, corruption, and inhumanity to fellow-human beings are painfully relevant even today. Ultimately his theatre not only takes his audience on a guilt trip but also on a white-knuckle ride.

Conscientization thus ensures a clear stream of reason which results in ever widening thought and action and when man works towards human solidarity there is greater joy and Sircar looks forward to the emergence of a world based on liberty, equality, and fraternity.

The present study is only a drop in the ocean and there is ample scope for further research, since many aspects remain unexhausted. Sircar's theatre activism, existential angst and absurd elements can formulate some of the topics for future

researchers. Comparative studies with absurd dramatists and social reformers both Indian and Western contemporaries can be successfully carried out.

Sircar's masterly use of the Asian and the Western modes of theatre hold promises to the upcoming dramatists, performers, producers, designers, theatre aesthetes, spectators and social activists who may contribute to the fecundity of Indian theatre and society. As a dramatist he has added life to theatre and brought theatre to life. His disposition for theatrical exuberance widens one's knowledge of expression, philosophy, psychology, society and human relationships.

Arousal of conscience through theatre is an unending journey both literally and metaphorically. Sircar, the sensible and sensitive playwright has used theatre to raise the social and political consciousness of people. This act is not revolutionary in itself but "potentially a rehearsal of revolution" which is capable of elevating and ennobling humankind.