

Evam Absurd: Badal Sircar and the Matrix of Absurdism

Tapu Biswas

Abstract

Samuel Beckett's masterpiece *Waiting for Godot* was originally written in French as *En attendant Godot* in Paris between 9th October 1948 and 29th January 1949, perhaps as much as a response to the changing socio-political climate in post-World War II France as a consequence of the philosophical and artistic ferments of the time. Somewhat similarly, Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* was born in, and out of, a time of intellectual, political and cultural flux. Originally written in London in the form of a draft poem in 1957, the play was produced in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1963. Only ten years then separated the staging of the two plays, since Beckett's play had been first enacted on stage in 1953. If Beckett's pen had moved in a current of change and unrest, Sircar's too had been written when Indian, and especially Bengali society and culture, were in the throes of a radical conversion.

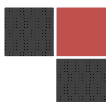
Drawing upon Martin Esslin's monumental work *Theatre of the Absurd* to define the matrix of absurdism, I have in this paper tried to locate the absurdism of Badal Sircar in *Evam Indrajit* with reference to the critical envisioning of western theoreticians like Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus et al, and occasionally argued against Indian critics like Rustom Barucha, Manujendra Kundu and Subhendu Sarkar who would deny Badal Sircar the status of being an absurdist.

Keywords: *waiting for Godot*, *Evam Indrajit*, absurd, imperialism, partition, communism, existentialism.

It is not always remembered that Samuel Beckett wrote his masterpiece *Waiting for Godot* in Paris between 9th October 1948 and 29th January 1949, that is, a little over four years after the liberation of the city from the German forces which had taken place on 25th August 1944. Beckett's years in France under Nazi rule had been not a little traumatic. Whatever theatrical activity had been allowed in France had occurred under the watchful eyes of the German censors who were quick to detect any expressions of anti-occupational sentiment. With liberation however there was the dawning of a new age of artistic expression. Yet, life in Paris was not easy at this time. During the German occupation there had been wide-spread shortages in food and fuel, and these continued in the months after the liberation. During post-liberation there was widespread anger against the former Vichy governmental authorities and against those who were regarded as collaborationists. Herbert R. Lottman in his book *The Purge* [New York: Morrow, 1986] has estimated that thousands were punished, many simply shot after being sentenced through arbitrary court-martial judgements. The new incoming Provisional Government in France was quick to dispense rough justice to a whole range of people: clergy, bureaucrats, policemen, businessmen, actors, writers and intellectuals. In an article entitled "France After the Liberation: Settling the Score" published in *The Washington Post* (on 6th July 1986), Douglas Porch has quoted Pierre-Henri Teitgen, the Minister of Justice after the liberation, "that his courts had sentenced 3,920 *ci-devant* collaborationists to death, 1,508 to hard labor, and 8,500 to prison." (Web) [<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/1986/07/06/france-after-the-liberation-settling-the-score/1da560c2-6b3d-4da0-a551-124f36c131dc/>]

There was a great deal of political and social uncertainty too, with the American President Theodore Roosevelt being suspicious of the French leader Charles de Gaulle, and the latter resigning as the leader of the Provisional Government in January 1946, after less than two years of taking up of office. There was a prominent Left presence in French politics too, with trade unionism on the rise. *En attendant Godot*, in other words, was perhaps as much a response to the changing socio-political climate in France post-World War II as a product of the philosophical and artistic upheavals of the time.

Somewhat similarly, Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* was born at and out of a time of political and cultural flux. Originally written in London in the form of a draft poem in 1957, the play was produced in Calcutta (formerly Kolkata) in 1963. There were only ten years, then, that separated the staging of the two dramas since Beckett's play had been first enacted on stage in 1953. If Beckett's pen had moved in a current of change and unrest, Sircar's too had been written when Indian, and especially Bengali society and culture, were in the throes of a conversion. The Government that was in power in the State of West Bengal at that time was a Congress one, but the Communist Party of India was growing increasingly popular. Part of the reason for this was that millions of refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan had poured into Bengal and that food, employment and even shelter was in short supply. The deteriorating economic condition of the state coupled with what was perceived to be widespread corruption in the functioning of the government led to feelings of dissatisfaction and even frustration spreading amongst large sections of the populace, particularly of the lower middle-class segments. The middle class which was economically more secure had their own aspirations. Since a great many of them were educated with college degrees and they had found employment in jobs that left them with a certain amount of leisure time, they turned to the pursuit and enjoyment of culture. Films and musical soirees (sometimes

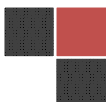


running from the evening of one day to the morning of the next day) were popular recreations. Songs and theatre were both widely appreciated, and the writing of Bengali literature reached new heights. The roots of the cultural traditions of West Bengal, already strong since the time of the late 19th century Bengal Renaissance, had been refreshed and strengthened by the time Badal Sircar emerged on the scene. Hence it is no surprise that *Evam Indrajit* was acclaimed upon its first production.

Like Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* which touched a nerve in its original Parisian audience because its spirit was in consonance with the deep-seated anxieties, fears and uncertainties of a people who were living in a nation after several years of military defeat and subsequent Nazi occupation, *Evam Indrajit* too affected the consciousness of its Bengali audience. A number of critics of Badal Sircar have placed and regarded the two plays within the same matrix. In his study, *Rehearsal and Revolution: The Political Theatre of Bengal*, Rustom Bharucha for instance has suggested that Beckett and Sircar had some shared perspectives between them.¹ (133)

Other commentators have even gone beyond this and implied that Badal Sircar may have been influenced by either Beckett in particular or by the European tradition of Absurd Drama in general. Even without directly addressing this contentious point, it may be said that the staging or enactments of these two plays were events of great cultural and theatrical significance. Both plays substantially broke with the conventions of age-old theatre and did away conclusively with the older norms of characterization, plotting and on-stage realism. At the core of such radicalism and experimentalism probably lay the two playwrights' effort to portray what they felt was the sense of absurdity involved in an acceptance of lived life. It seems to have been felt by Beckett equally as by Sircar that the conventional modes of theatrical representation were insufficient to express their vision of the meaninglessness of human existence. This may explain the commonality between the Irish-born France-expatriate Beckett and the Kolkata born Bengali-Indian dramaturge Sircar's parallel dramatic innovativeness.

Samuel Beckett's membership (at it were) in the group known as the dramatists of the Absurd was the result of a single late 20th century critic, Martin Esslin. It was this critic's seminal book entitled *Theatre of the Absurd* that contributed to the creation of a critical consciousness about a new tradition in dramatic writing initiated by the likes of contemporary European dramatists like Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet and Samuel Beckett. According to Esslin in his book the idea of the Absurd was "based on ancient strands of the Western tradition and has its exponents in Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Eastern Europe and the United States as well as in France."² (26) Nevertheless, Esslin argued that Absurd Drama emerged in Paris and not in any other British or European city because Paris was a place that was receptive to new ideas, cultural practice and innovative artistic creations.³ In India, the cultural atmosphere in Kolkata (then Calcutta) was equally open to new cultural progressions. There was the existence in the city of a vibrant intelligentsia and a cultural circle devoted to the writing and singing of new songs and the circulation of new ideas. The front organizations of the Communist Party of India like the Indian People's Theatre Association that featured artistes like Bijon Bhattacharya and Utpal Dutt in drama, Ritwik Ghatak in cinema and Salil Choudhury and Sudhin Dasgupta in songs and music, brought about a minor revolution in the aesthetic tastes of the people. The new educated middle class reacted to these trends and responded to the new wave of avant-garde thought that emerged in the wake of the post-Independence euphoria. Calcutta had for nearly two centuries been a

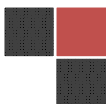


fertile soil for theatrical activity. The establishment of a native Bengali theatre from the late 18th century had led to the emergence of literary giants like Girish Ghosh. In the 1950's and the 60's however, the professional theatres in Kolkata saw a new challenge emerging in the shape of a non-commercial amateur theatre. Unlike the older stage productions which tended to verge on mythological or melodramatic themes, the new amateur productions focussed on social and often economic issues relevant to the times they were written in. There can be little doubt that without this new heritage of theatrical activism the plays of Badal Sircar may not have been conceived. Both the actors as well as the directors of the new Bengali theatre were educated young men and women who were well informed about the cultural practices and innovative ideas that were developing in the Western world. Badal Sircar was one such artistic and creative individual who formed his own group of theatre workers (a group he named Satabdi), and he adopted, adapted and sometimes rejected some of the practices of the Western theatre practitioners, including those of Absurd drama.

The Absurd movement in the West was not born in a vacuum. It was a consequence of the fact that European civilization was caught up in a crisis after the First World War and even more after the Second World War. The two wars had resulted in the deaths of nearly a million young men and the rise of Communism in Russia and Fascism in Germany and Italy had changed the course of European history. The decline of imperialism and the ruin of national economies, the shift of political power to between the United States of America and the Soviet bloc, the division of Germany into two zones East and West, the coming of the Cold War and a general apathy about religious faith all caused men and women to drift apart from their societal moorings. As the bonds between individuals continued to erode, the time became ripe for the popularity of philosophical models like Existentialism which questioned belief itself. The philosopher Jean Paul Sartre wrote a book he named *The Philosophy of Existence*, and in it he declared the core existentialist perception: "existence before essence."⁴

It is probable that Badal Sircar was unacquainted with the writings of Sartre, and this is why the Badal Sircar scholar Manujendra Kundu has criticized those who "have created a space for debate by pointing to the influence of the theatre of the absurd and/or existentialism on *Evam Indrajit*."⁵ Kundu is sceptical about any effort to relate the Absurdists with Sircar. He notes that while Sircar had indeed read Esslin's text *Theatre of the Absurd*, this was much long after his writing of *Evam Indrajit*. Subhendu Sarkar is also in disagreement with those commentators who have "linked *Evam Indrajit* to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*"⁶. Sarkar highlighted the fact that "while Beckett ends his play at waiting, Sircar determines to continue searching."⁷

However conclusions like these may be challenged on the ground that they assume that drama in India is totally different from drama in the western world, and that there is no interflow or transmission of ideas from west to east. Badal Sircar who had spent a number of years outside India and had watched and learnt from many famous practitioners of theatre in England, America, Germany and the Soviet states was neither ignorant of contemporary developments in other parts of the world, nor unwilling to borrow from them if it suited his own interests and needs. The fact is that Sircar quite often adapted Western texts, novels like Howard Fast's *Spartacus*, plays like Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of a Playwright*, and even Rajani Palme Dutt's prose work on the economic history of colonialism. In other words, while it is true that the Theatre of the Absurd may not have directly inspired a play like *Evam Indrajit*, a



study of the play against the backdrop of western Absurdism may be legitimately carried out.

As has been noted above, the cultural climates in Paris and Kolkata in the fifth and sixth decades of the twentieth century were not entirely dissimilar. There was in both metropolises the presence of an intellectual avant-garde that was open to the taking in and application of new ideas especially in art and culture. The experimental artist often saw himself as a pathfinder, a visionary and a guide working towards an illumination of the dark corners of the human experience. He also frequently regarded himself as an isolated mind cut off from the ordinary people around him. Often, his very feelings of alienation provided the substance for his compositions. This was most pronounced in European culture where a dramatic genius like Eugene Ionesco could declare in his play *Improvisation*,

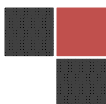
it is neither from the wretchedness of the poor nor the unhappiness of the rich that I draw the substance of my drama. For me, the theatre is the projection on to the stage of the world within – it is in my dreams, my anguish, my dark desires, my inner contradictions that I reserve the right to find the stuff of my plays. As I am not alone in the world – as each one of us, in the depths of his being, is at the same time everyone else – my dreams and desires, my anguish and my obsessions do not belong to myself alone; they are part of the heritage of my ancestors, a very ancient deposit to which all mankind may lay claim.⁸

It goes without saying that such feelings are common to many Absurd dramatists, Camus, Sartre and Beckett, apart from Ionesco. But what is important to take note of however is that such feelings of isolation were represented in drama not in terms of the conventional mores and techniques of dramatic writing but through innovative deviations from standard practices. This is what the playwright Albert Camus indicated in his “Preface” to the collection of plays *Caligula and 3 Other Plays*. He wrote here:

After a rather long experience as director, actor, and dramatist, it seems to me that there is no true theater without language and style, nor any dramatic work which does not, like our classical drama and Greek tragedians, involve human fate in all its simplicity and grandeur... Psychology, ingenious plot-devices, and spicy situations, though they may amuse me as a member of the audience, leave me indifferent as an author.⁹

These words may be read as a manifesto of Absurdism in theatre. Camus is indicating that plotting, consistent characterization, the featuring of an evolving action etc is not essential to the art of drama. These may have been lessons that Badal Sircar came to learn during his stay in England from 1957 to 1959 and his subsequent exposure to the drama that was being staged in countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia in 1969, and his experience of watching the work of directors in America. The following part of my paper will discuss the sameness of certain aspects that may be detected between Absurd Drama and Badal Sircar.

Among the earliest practitioners of the so-called Absurd drama was Eugene Ionesco. His famous plays ranging from *The Bald Prima Donna* (which was first performed in 1950), *The Lesson* (staged in 1951), *The Chairs* (1952), *Amedee* (1954), *Rhinoceros* (1958), to *Exit the King* (1962), *The Cop* (1966), *The Killing Game* (1970), *The Man with the Luggage* (1975), *Anti Dots* (1977) and *Journeys among the Dead* (1980), Ionesco



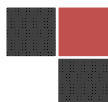
reflected the fundamentally absurd nature of all human existence. In his well known play *The Bald Prima Donna* Ionesco said that he had attempted “To make the mechanism of drama function in a vacuum.”¹⁰ Calling his technique “An experiment in abstract or non-representative drama,”¹¹ he stated that he wanted to produce the effect of “dramatic tension without the help of any proper plot or any special subject.”¹² As he declared,

The progression of purposeless passion, a rising crescendo ... is all the more natural, dramatic, and exciting because it is not hampered by content, and by that I mean any apparent content or subject which conceals the genuine subject from us: the particular meaning of a dramatic plot hides its essential significance.¹³

Ionesco thus showed that he was more interested in theatrical form than in the expression of a content. Commenting on the same play, he emphasized that he had attempted to take and “to render the strangeness and the farcical, the prosaic and the poetic, the realistic and the fantastic, the strange and the ordinary as a basis for a new dramatic structure.”¹⁴ He confessed that his first endeavour at writing a play had originated in “an attempt to parody the theatre,”¹⁵ with the intention of mocking the banality of most human behaviour. It is because of this that despite the specificity of the title of the play, its reference to a prima donna, there is no such character in the play. Instead, we learn in the play about a couple named the Martins who come to the home of another husband and wife, the Smiths. It seems that the neither family knows the other till a series of bizarre “coincidences” indicates otherwise. The husband seems to be ignorant that the woman accompanying him is his wife until they discover that they have the same daughter. Other bizarre occurrences include the ringing of a hour-clock at odd times, including striking not twelve but seventeen on one occasion. On another one, a man who claims himself to be the Fire Chief appears after ringing the door bell and running away to hide himself, and declares his love for the maid-servant who reads out a poem that is a collection of meaningless words. The play concludes with the two couples screaming out at each other, and their shouts lapsing into silence as the lights suddenly go out.

The element of Absurdity to be found in Camus’s play *Caligula* which was first performed in Paris in 1945, led John Foley to describe it as a “historical Homo absurdus.”¹⁶ The play is about the Roman emperor Caligula who is a good and just ruler till the death of his sister and mistress Drusilla transforms him into a complete tyrant. But even more than the death of his lover, what transforms Caligula is the truth he discovers when she dies, the “childishly simple, obvious, almost silly truth, but one that’s hard to come by and heavy to endure”, the fact that “men die, and they are not happy.”¹⁷ Caligula all of a sudden becomes aware of the absurdity that exists “between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints”¹⁸. Another character in Camus’s *Caligula* who is conscious of the same absurdity is Cherea, the antagonist of Caligula who memorably says that the absurd can “transfix lives, like a dagger in the heart.” Finally, the play concludes with the downfall and death of Caligula which is highlighted as a climax of Absurdity. “My freedom isn’t the right one,”²⁰ Caligula declares just before his assassination and as he dies with a final gasp of both laughter and choking, he says: “I am still alive!”²¹

A few years before Camus saw *Caligula* staged in Paris in June 1945, he published in 1942 an essay which he entitled *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Here he defined the absurd as coming out from the space between making sense of a world that is inexplicably silent. The old classical myth of Sisyphus, was interpreted by Camus as

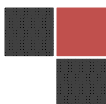


indicating that the absurd may be one related to knowledge as well as to existence. The latter implies that existence is devoid of meaning, and the former suggests that existence is without significance. At the same time, Camus proffers the understanding that the realization of the absurd may make it possible for human beings to live “in harmony with a universe without future and withoutness.” As Camus declares, “This absurd, godless world is then peopled with men who think clearly and have ceased to hope.”²¹ This is precisely what the dramatists of the Absurd depicted in, and through, their plays.

Even beyond Camus, the playwright who is identified with the Theatre of the Absurd is Samuel Beckett. His seminal play *Waiting for Godot* broke new ground in theatrical representation and in a sense challenged the notion of signification itself. In *Waiting for Godot* Beckett used the stage to showcase an action that is marked by an absence of meaning. Neither place nor time is specified in the unfolding action. The characters are without any background and devoid of personal history. The setting is vague, and the stage-time progresses not by the diurnal clock nor by the seasons but through a series of events that are temporally disconnected. Like *The Bald Prima Donna*, Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* is a play that is parodistic of the convention of realism in theatre. Its intention is the communication of a sense of the absence of meaning through on-stage physicalized action and the delivery of dialogues. Action and dialogue are of course essential to theatre, for it is by such means that the objective of *mimesis* or the imitation of human action can be communicated to a watching audience. Only, Beckett in *Godot* wishes to communicate that life itself is absurd, devoid of meaning, even though we like to think that there must be some significance in human existence, some Godot who or which will be revealed before us some time in the future. A somewhat similar realization may be seen as underlying many of Beckett’s other plays too.

In *Endgame* we see that a character named Clov goes up a ladder in a room and draws back two window curtains before uncovering two ashbins and another character named Hamm who is seen in an armchair. This stage action draws our attention to the props, but unlike in an ordinary play the props are not inanimate objects for the two dustbins on the stage have two more characters, Ham and Nagg, inside them. Even more than in *Waiting for Godot*, physical action is reduced to meaningless insignificance in this play as the two major characters in it are incapable of any movement, incarcerated as they are in two bins. The title of the play which refers to the ending of a game of chess suggests the final climax to a long sequence of tactical moves leading to a definitive conclusion, but quite ironically in this piece of dramatic writing, there is a marked absence of any final point. Beckett thus implies in his play that human action is meaningless for human life is absurd and despite what human beings may think, we are all encaged like Hamm and Clov in our own individually isolated dustbins of solipsism or alienation from the outside world.

Among other things, an emphasis on the fact of human alienation connects Badal Sircar’s *Evam Indrajit* to the Theatre of the Absurd. It is noticeable that as in the perception of Camus and Beckett, Badal Sircar in his play too registers a recognition of man’s suffering from isolation. As in many Absurd plays, in *Evam Indrajit* there is to be seen a reflective commentary on the repetitive meaninglessness of human existence. Of course we realize that the dramatic technique of Badal Sircar is different from that of Beckett. Unlike in the drama of Beckett in which the characters are unusual or different, Sircar represented some personalities who are conformists and orthodox but set off against them another powerful figure standing in for an alternative realization. It should



be stated that this is what the American playwright and absurdist Edward Albee did through his portraiture of the characters Peter and Jerry in the play *The Zoo Story*. Apart from this, Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* communicates the Absurdist conclusion about the meaninglessness of life through a reiteration of a trope of circularity which itself is typical of much absurd drama. Indeed, *Evam Indrajit*, clearly reflects Adamov's own dictum that the "Impersonality of circularity of movement is enhanced by mechanism of the play."²² A parallelism in structure may be detected too between *Evam Indrajit* and a number of the plays of Adamov, particularly his *Off Limits*, *Ping Pong* and *The Parody*. Adamov shows in all of these plays situations in which the movement of the characters indicate that they are in reality stuck in an endless circularity. This idea of circularity which amounts to signifying zero is Adamov's way of indicating the reality of human existence being stuck in a condition of sameness and inertia. Interestingly enough, this is exactly what Badal Sircar also embodies when in Act I of *Evam Indrajit* the Writer says:

WRITER: One-two-three! Amal, Vimal, Kamal. And Indrajit. And Manasi. From home to school. From school to college. From college to the world. They are growing up. They are going round. Round and round and round. One-two-three-two-one. Amal, Vimal, Kamal. And Indrajit ...²³

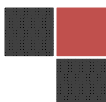
The routine bound circular lives of the three characters Amal, Vimal and Kamal who represent ordinary existence is presented in Act II of the play. This humdrum existence is likened to files in an office moving from table to table. Life to the likes of ordinary human individuals like Amal, Vimal and Kamal involve the same rounds of monotonous circularity worked out in various different forms:

After the files, tea. Then files. Then snacks. Then files. Then tea. Then files. Then tram-bus-train. There are bigger offices where even more important business is transacted. There files - then tea - then files - then lunch - then files - then coffee - then files and then office transport, taxi, car.²⁴

It is because of this that the Writer speculates if 'Birth, marriage, and death'²⁵ are the be all and end all of human existence. So, at the end of the Act, he recites a poem about longing to pass away:

I am tired - I am very tired.
Let all these rapid questions be.
In the mute enveloping darkness let me just go to sleep.
What's the use of all these words?
Why fling arguments in the wild winds?
I am sick of reasoning now.
Alone, in the depth of shadows, let me just go to sleep.²⁶

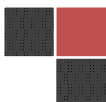
The notion of the unexciting circularity of life surfaces once again in the play at the start of Act III in which Sircar depicts Amal, Vimal and Indrajit playing a game with cards in which each round is marked off by dialogues. These utterances concern not only issues like the history of colonialism and imperialism, the coming of democracy and post-Independence corruption in Indian politics, but also lesser more personal and private concerns like promotions being denied at office, difficulty in finding suitable accommodation, declines in business activities, to such more intimate reflections on incidents of personal life as those on the death of a father and a son not being able to pass in school.



The third 'different' character in *Evam Indrajit* who is Indrajit himself comes to realize that: "The past and the present are two ends of a single rope. They are apart because the dream is alive. Otherwise the future could easily be broken down and thrown into the arms of the past."²⁷ Having come to understand that life is a dream which is an absurd, farcically meaningless one at that, Indrajit's reaction is a burst of laughter. But Badal Sircar shows that Indrajit is not altogether different from the other men in the play as he in one of his several avatars marries a woman who he says to the Writer is Manasi. In front of this Manasi the Writer admits that he can never finish writing his play because "there isn't much difference between the beginning and the end [of it as] it's a circular play,"²⁸ like the meaningless coil of existence in which Amal, Vimal and Kamal are caught up and from which no one can escape. Yet the Writer explains to Indrajit at the play's end with a clear allusion to the myth of Sisyphus which had also caught the mind of Camus: "You and I can't be Nirmals. For us there is only the road - so walk on. We are the spirits of Sisyphus. We have to push the rock to the top - even if it just rolls down..."²⁹

One commentator on *Evam Indrajit*, Arup Ratan Ghosh has in his work *Bangla Absurd Theatre* commented on this specific allusion and has stated that Sircar's thesis was similar to that of Camus.³⁰ An earlier critic of Sircar's play, Ajit Kumar Ghosh had also observed certain aspects of correspondence between the tradition of Absurd theatre and Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*. He took particular notice of the fact that Indrajit's dialogues about the meaninglessness of existence and the Writer's perceptions about the emptiness of life are comparable to Samuel Beckett's projection of nothingness in *Waiting for Godot*. Apart from this thematic parallelism, Ajit Kumar Ghosh also noted that in both *Evam Indrajit* and in *Waiting for Godot* the playwrights showed a similar preoccupation with the incapability of human language to express meaning and effectualize communication. Ghosh has written that there is reflected a note of exhaustion in the words of the Writer in *Evam Indrajit* which may also be found in Vladimir's anguished pronouncement "I can't go on"³¹ in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Ajit Kumar Ghosh further asserted that the death wish indicated in *Evam Indrajit*, is an idea not infrequent in Absurd plays, and that there are certain formal features like a marked deviation from the tripartite exposition-complication-conclusion structure to be seen in conventional drama that is absent in both *Evam Indrajit* and in Absurd plays. These violations, points out Ghosh, are in conformity with Strindberg's statement: "Time and space do not exist"³² in his 'Introduction' to *A Dream Play*. Other similarities between *Evam Indrajit* and Absurd drama that may be cited include Badal Sircar's use of what Adamov described as the functional application of "vague nomenclature as enables character to skip effortlessly into their ascribed position in the recognizable mechanism of the play."³³ In consonance with this ideation, in Sircar's play the characters easily change from being Amal to Kamal to Vimal to Indrajit, and from Indrajit to the Writer and so on. There may also be detected a sort of a parallel between the plot-structure of *Evam Indrajit* and that of several of Adamov's plays like *Off Limits*, *The Ping Pong* and *The Parody*. In all these play-texts the characters seem to move while they remain stuck in the same situation.

As a matter of fact, while Badal Sircar may not have read or may not even have been aware of the writings of Albert Camus when he was composing *Evam Indrajit*, he perhaps coincidentally echoed some of the key thoughts of the French philosopher. To provide a specific example, the Writer's efforts to finish writing a play in *Evam Indrajit*



is reminiscent of Camus's declaration: "The absurd joy par excellence is creation."³⁴ And this is not all, for Sircar's conclusion to his own play may be read as highlighting Camus's key statements that an individual becomes aware of the absurd when he discovers that life has to be lived "in harmony with a universe without future and without weakness,"³⁵ and that "it is not the discovery which is interesting but the consequences and rules for actions which can be drawn from it."³⁶ In fact, what *Evam Indrajit* as a play appears to be expressing is the core truth of Camus's realization that "This absurd, godless world is then peopled with men who think clearly and have ceased to hope."³⁷ This is precisely the sentiment that without despair and without bitterness but only a pervasive awareness of reality that brings *Evam Indrajit* to a close:

There's no end.
There's no hope
Of fulfillment
By the holy shrine
At journey's end.
Forget the questions...³⁸

Notes:

¹Bharucha, Rustom. *Rehearsals of Revolution: The Political Theatre of Bengal*. Calcutta: Seagull, 1983, p. 133.

²Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Penguin Books, 1991, p.26.

³ibid. p.26.

⁴ibid, p.26.

⁵Kundu, Manujendra. *So Near, Yet So Far: Badal Sircar's Third Theatre*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 92.

⁶Sarkar, Subhendu. *Badal Sircar's Two Plays: Indian History Made Easy, Life of Bagala*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 80.

⁷ibid. p. 80.

⁸Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Penguin Books, 1991, p. 171.

⁹Camus, Albert. "Author's Preface." *Caligula and 3 Other Plays by Albert Camus*. Translated from the French by Stuart Gilbert. Vintage Books, 1958. p. x.

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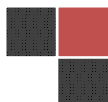
¹¹ibid. pp. 180-181.

¹²ibid. pp. 180-181

¹³ibid. pp. 180-181.

¹⁴ibid. pp. 180-181.

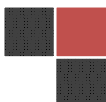
¹⁵ibid. pp. 180-181.



- ¹⁶Foley, John. *Albert Camus: From the Absurd to Revolt*. New York, 2008. p. 22
- ¹⁷ibid. p. 23.
- ¹⁸ibid. p. 23
- ¹⁹ibid. p. 74.
- ²⁰ibid. p. 11.
- ²¹*Theatre III*. Paris: 1966. p. 95.
- ²²Sircar, Badal. *Evam Indrajit*. 1963. Translated by Girish Karnad, *Three Modern Indian Plays*, Oxford UP, 2008. p.19.
- ²³Ibid. p. 32.
- ²⁴Ibid. p. 36.
- ²⁵Ibid. p. 45.
- ²⁶Ibid. pp. 239-40.
- ²⁷Ibid. pp. 239-40
- ²⁸Ibid. p. 59.
- ²⁹Ibid. p. 59.
- ³⁰Ghosh, Arup Ratan. *Bangla Absurd Theatre*. Kolkata: Lekhoni, 2003. p.104.
- ³¹Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting For Godot. A Tragicomedy in Two Acts*. Introduction and Notes by Javed Mallick, New York: Oxford UP, 1989. p.124.
- ³²Brochure published by National Theatre Education. England in 2005 on the production of August Strindberg's *A Dream Play*: in a new version by Caryl Churchill. p. 6. Available at file:///D:/Data/Downloads/Documents/ a_dream_play.pdf. Accessed on 07.11.2019.
- ³³Theatre III. Paris: 1966. p. 95.
- ³⁴Foley, John. *Albert Camus: From the Absurd to Revolt*. Routledge, 2008. p. 11.
- ³⁵Ibid. p. 11.
- ³⁶Ibid. p. 6.
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