

# **CONFLICT OF SELF AND OTHER IN THE PLAYS OF BADAL SIRCAR**

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled “Conflict of Self and Other in the Plays of Badal Sircar” submitted to the Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus, Diphu-782462, Karbi Anglong, Assam in partial fulfillment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is a bonafide research work carried out by Binoy Chetia under my guidance and supervision. The thesis represents his original research work and has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or any other similar titles of any university or institution. The assistance and help received during the study have been fully acknowledged.

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis titled “**Conflict of Self and Other in the Plays of Badal Sircar**” submitted to the Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus, Diphu-782 462, Karbi Anglong, Assam in partial fulfillment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in **English**, is a bonafide research work carried out by me under the guidance and supervision of **Dr. Anup Kumar Dey**, Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus, Diphu-782 462, Karbi Anglong, Assam. I also declare that the contents of this research work has not been the subject of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title awarded to the candidate of any other university. I further state that all information in this thesis have been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct.

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## Chapter – I

### Introduction

#### I

Indian drama in English has witnessed a sudden upsurge in the recent decade with the advent of a group of dramatists whose focus is to contextualize the themes of the modern world in their plays. From the 1920s onwards the Indian playwrights began to move away from the form and content of the proscenium stage towards the use of non-proscenium stage. Though drama in the ancient era was also a popular genre among the people of India, but its themes were related to the mythical allusions such as incorporating themes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas. The earlier plays were mostly written in Sanskrit. Theatre has always played a part of being a medium of sensitization and social communication in India. People's Theatre (Loknatya) made an appearance in almost every state of India from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. For example, in Bengal "Yatrakirtaniya" was popular, "Ramleela" in Northern India, "Tamasha" in Rajasthan, "Raas" and "Jhoomer" in Punjab, while in Assam it was "Ankiyanat". On the other hand, the emergence of modern drama dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the advent of British Empire in India occurred. In 1765, Russian drama lover Horasin Lebdef and Bengali drama lover Qulokhnath staged two English comedies *Disgaig* and *Love is the Best Doctor*. In the year 1831, Prasanna Kumar Thakur took an initiative of establishing "Hindu Rangmanch" at Calcutta and staged Wilson's translation of Bhavabhuti's Sanskrit drama *Uttar Ramacharitam*. Indian English drama began when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote *The Persecuted* in 1837.

However, the notable phase of Indian English drama can be said to begin when Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt wrote *Is This Called Civilization?* in the year 1871. The two significant

Indian English dramatists are Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Some of the significant plays of Tagore are *Chitra*, *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice*, *Chandalika*, *The King of the Dark Chamber* and others. On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo wrote five complete blank verse plays. The transition of drama found a new boost during the 1960s when a group of dramatists with an innovative mindset appeared in the dramatic arena. Since the era after the 1960s was touched by postcolonial tendencies, Indian theatre too started getting demarcated in national terms. While considering the development of Indian drama, the year 1962 can be said to be a significant one. It is during this period that Dharamvir Bharati's Hindi play *Andha Yug* was performed by Theatre Unit (Bombay). This play can be considered important because through it, the seeds of creativity were laid into Indian drama. The dramatists from the post-independence Indian era mostly concentrated on themes such as communal violence, conflicts arising out of caste, religious and gender identities. Dramatists such as Badal Sircar, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad are very much aware about their contemporary condition. This is the reason for which they incorporate the prevailing conditions in their theatre with a mindset of overcoming the widespread menaces in the society.

Badal Sircar is one of the dramatists from the post-independence era who made a deep impact on Indian drama. He was not only a playwright but also a director and an actor who wished to change the underprivileged condition of Bengal during his days through his dramatic performances. There is no other theatre personality in India other than Badal Sircar who has had such a tremendous impact on theatre practice and theory in the post-independence era. The formation of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) in 1943 was a major event for the advent of Leftist theatre. The formation of IPTA mainly occurred in order to portray the external aggression of the fascists, the continuous suppression by the colonial government and the

economic degradation of the people. Its aim was to make the people aware about all these sorts of exploitation and find a possible way to counteract these happenings. IPTA was mainly inspired by the workers' theatre of the USSR and China and was designed in such a manner that the audience enjoyed its content to the fullest. It also encouraged open air production by which the audience could become active participants during the performance of the plays.

The most significant step in the dramatic career of Badal Sircar was the establishment of the dramatic group called 'Shatabdi'. This group not only delivered performances on proscenium stage but also went off proscenium stage to deliver their performance. Grotowski's "Poor Theatre" concept helped him immensely in postulating his own form of Theatre known as Third Theatre. Along with "Poor Theatre", Richard Sehechner's 'Environmental Theatre' and Julian Beck's 'Living Theatre' concepts also helped him immensely in formulating the "Third Theatre" concept. The establishment of 'Shatabdi' helped him in realizing that theatrical performances could be made flexible, portable and inexpensive. It could be carried on to the rural areas and could be enacted there. The accessories of drama such as lights, costumes, make-up, sound and props were also rejected by 'Shatabdi'. The audience was made active participant during the enactment of the plays and an intimate environment was created between the audience and the actors.

Another significant aspect of Third Theatre was that it laid emphasis on the human body. Therefore in this regard, Third Theatre was also recognized as 'Free Theatre'. Since the cost for the enactment of such plays was meager and the audience could also go and watch the plays free of cost, there was a large gathering near the theatrical arena. It was portable because it could be enacted at any place, whether it may be a park, a room, or a street. It was meant for people belonging from both higher class of society and the lower class of society. The feedback after the



enactment of the plays was also received immediately. Keeping this fact in mind Kavita Nagpal in *The Badal Sircar's Magic* (Nagpal 10) published in The Hindustan Times observed that the basic concept of this form of theatre was “to free theatre of all restraints of commodity exchange, to bring the spectator and audience in a shared space by removing the artificial, illusionary proscenium so that there could be direct communication without any sense of bondage or dependence.”

Badal Sircar created Third Theatre in order to move away from the limitations of First Theatre and Second Theatre. The First Theatre was mainly enacted on the proscenium stage and was created mainly for the purpose of entertainment. On the other hand, the Second Theatre was produced mainly based on the folk tradition and was enacted in open space where the audience did not have to pay anything to watch these plays. Sircar's Third Theatre was a diversion from its predecessors because it was mainly created in order to establish a direct relationship between the performers and the spectators. It forced the audience to participate directly in the enactment of the plays and by this process it was able to create a lively environment within the theatrical arena. It diminished the confusion and illusion of the audience regarding the plot of the drama. The plot of the plays was so familiar for the audience that they could quickly adjust themselves within the scenario of the play. The contemporary social settings taken by the plays of Badal Sircar made the people believe that it was meant for the creation of a better world where all the troubles faced by them would be removed. Moreover, he also tried to make them visualize the harsher conditions prevailing in the society which they have to learn to tackle.

Badal Sircar was very much concerned about the communication gap arising between the performers and the audience. He often realized that during the enactment of a play, the performer had to shout for the benefit of the back-row audience. This often led to cost of expression of

proper feeling. Moreover in case of theatre, a live person communicates directly to another live person. Therefore, direct communication is very essential in drama. The naturalistic plays try to create and sustain illusion by increasing the distance between the actors and the audience. The proscenium stage with the aid of accessories such as costume, lights, sound-effects try to force the audience to live in an imaginary world. However, gradually theatres enacted on proscenium stage lost its dominance due to the proper deliverance of expression and emotion. Sircar's Third Theatre was introduced in order to establish live communication. In a theatrical performance, communication can take four different angles – performer to spectator, performer to performer, spectator to performer and spectator to spectator. The proscenium stage used the first two forms of communication. Badal Sircar in his "Azad Memorial Lecture" which was later on published as *The Changing Language of Theatre* mentioned about the other two forms of communication as:

When we speak of the other two ways of communication we get panicky. We think that the spectators communicating to the performers or to other spectators would mean chaos. And so it would if we assume that communication is limited to language. The attention of the spectator, concentration, the reaction to the performance reflected in his facial expression or the tension in his body – all these can be feedbacks to the performer or another spectator. (11)

Through the statement of Badal Sircar, it can be deciphered that he was in favour of a form of communication which would link the 'self' with the 'other'. He did not want the barrier arising between the 'self' and the 'other'. The Third theatre was a perfect platform for him to showcase his talent as a dramatist and link the 'self' and 'other' debate surrounding psychology and literature since time immemorial with it.

In the plays of Badal Sircar, we can also notice how the native lower class Indians had to suffer various sorts of exploitation not only from the British colonizers during the colonial period, they had to suffer the same fate from their native upper class people after they gained independence. The plays also depict the reaction and revolt against that sort of exploitation both during and after the colonial period. Sircar gained his motivation for writing plays when he saw the order of injustice and oppression inflicted upon the lives of the poor people. In order to act out the exploitative history and the adverse effects of colonial rule in India, Sircar introduced the Third Theatre concept. He did so because he believed that the British style of proscenium stage was not successful enough to give a new direction to curb out the menaces prevalent in the Indian society. Moreover, the proscenium stage also created a boundary between the actor and the spectator. Sircar also emphasized on direct communication and also in reducing the effect of sets, lights, costumes, background music and other mechanical devices. In this context, Tara Chadha in *Badal Sircar: From Proscenium to Free Theatre* states that Sircar opposes the theatre from becoming a commodity for sale to the audience which may result in a detachment between players and spectators. (Chadha 54) Sircar's Third Theatre is inexpensive, flexible and portable and also could reach the common villagers very easily. His first play to be performed based on the Third Theatre concept was *Sagino Mahto*.

Keeping the above fact in mind the plays *Procession*, *Bhoma*, *Stale News*, *Evam Indrajit*, *An Indian History Made Easy*, *Life of Bagala*, *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal In Fairyland* has been taken for analysis. The above mentioned plays are translated into English. The play *Evam Indrajit* is translated into English by Girish Karnad, *Procession* (Michhil) and *Stale News* (Basi Khabar) by Samik Bandyopadhyay, *Bhoma* by Badal Sircar and Kalyani Ghose, *Indian History Made Easy* (Sukhpathya Bharater Itihas) and *Life of Bagala*

(*Bagalacharitmanas*) by Subhendu Sarkar and *Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland* by Subhendu Sarkar.

The plays *Procession*, *Bhoma* and *Stale News* are also based on the concept of Third Theatre. The three plays discuss about the adverse effect of colonialism on the Indian lower class masses. These plays were staged during the 1970s. *Procession* deals with the theme of the condition of the Indian people during the colonial rule. In this play we can find that the Indian masses were considered as ‘other’ by the colonial people. This othering was done to maintain power over a large group of Indian people who may be considered as subaltern. The play dramatizes how in the city of Calcutta (now known as Kolkata), various sorts of procession were taken out such as procession for food, procession for salvation, procession for festivals, and procession for revolution. These processions prove that there was a distance created between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ by the people who were holding power. The divide and rule strategy of the colonizers which resulted in communal riots and partition of the country has also been discussed in the play. *Procession* was enacted based on the Third Theatre concept with the audience sitting in the open space and the actors moving around the audience while delivering their dialogue.

The play *Bhoma* concentrates on the grass-root level happenings in the rural areas of India. Here, through the character of Bhoma, Sircar wants to give voice to the subaltern people who have been exploited in every possible way by the upper class people and also by the people who are in power. The government always looks in investing towards the development of the cities but they are not willing to spend money for the poor peasants. Sircar through this play wants to stress that though the colonial rule has ended in India but the effects of colonization can be still seen on the common people who are harassed in every possible manner. The actors who

are enacting this play speak directly to the audience through the means of words, sounds and their entire body.

Another Third Theatre concept based play *Stale News* deals with the revolt of the Santhal tribe against British colonial rule in the year 1855. The Santhals who were known as the oldest migrated people of India made their dealings with each other based on the barter based system. However, their economy started to break due to the constant exploitation by the British rulers and their appointed merchants. The money-lenders who were known as the Dikus by the Santhals started exploiting and oppressing the Santhals. When the Santhals could not tolerate this exploitation anymore they decided to revolt. Through the play it is seen that they could also rediscover their lost 'self' if they gained knowledge about the injustice going around them. The play was enacted in an open space through the help of 'The Dead Man' whose entire body is covered in bandages.

*Evam Indrajit* is one of the most significant plays of Badal Sircar which is concerned with existential related issues found in the society and in this regard it is considered as an existential play. One significant aspect which the proponents of Theatre of Absurd want to assert is the cause and effect of lack of communication between human beings. Sircar through his characters in the play wants to assert that due to the lack of communication between individuals there has been a barrier created within the people in the society. Families have broken apart, the friendship bond has been weakened, and also men have become greedy to look for the hidden things concealed within the earth. Sircar decided to deal with absurd themes in his plays when he saw the socio-economic condition of Bengal in the 1960s and 1970s which was rather depressing and dark. The time period after the World War II was rather dark for Bengal because various evil practices existed in the state such as black marketing, famine, communal riots, infiltration of

refugees, post independence economic crisis and also division between the upper and the lower class which resulted in heated revolution. E Renuka and Shampa Bhattacharjee in *Urban Bias as a Postcolonial Distortion: A Note on Badal Sircar's Third Theatre* describes the socio-political condition of Bengal during the time of Sircar through these words:

Sircar, through his plays, could expose some of the postcolonial problems that haunt the city- the unemployed, the frustrated and angry youth, pestering beggars, black marketers, soaring prices, selfish political leaders, cutthroat religious fanatics, status-quoist administrators and domineering magnets- all living in a market place – like society ridden with fake encounter deaths, human degradation and so on. (151)

So, from the above statement it can be said that Sircar through the characters of his plays hopes to achieve a synthesis of absurdist philosophy and that of the Indian reality prevailing in the post and pre-independence Indian society. The characters in Sircar's plays feel that they have failed to communicate their feelings. Sircar's play *Evam Indrajit* exposes the dilemma of the Indian masses by bringing a synthesis of existentialism and Indian reality. It is a play which was first staged in the year 1965 and is about the prevalent attitudes, vague feelings and frustrations which are starting to grip the Indian masses slowly and steadily. The play ends with both the characters Indrajit and the 'Writer' looking for their aim in life when they do not find anything significant in writing and living.

Similarly, *An Indian History Made Easy* and *Life of Bagala* are also Third Theatre plays. *An Indian History Made Easy* covers more than three hundred years of

British rule in India through the use of the form of classroom teaching. Though the students are taught about the exploitation going on during the colonial period it is the audience who become more aware about the adverse effects of colonialism. The dialogues are also not lengthy since in a Third Theatre the characters use their bodies as a medium to convey the message. This play deals with some important themes such as anti-colonial movements, decolonization and the voicing and the revolt of the subalterns against the oppression inflicted by the British upon them. *Life of Bagala* revolves around the story of Bagala who had lost his parents at a very early age. After that he is brought up in his uncle's house where he faces constant humiliation. In the beginning of the play, Bagala is projected as a subaltern who cannot voice his frustrations and also cannot protest against the injustice meted out on him. However, later on through the medium of supernatural intervention he is able to protest against this injustice. The play emphasizes the fact that by gaining courage within oneself one can easily throw the injustice inflicted upon them.

In *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland*, Sircar however uses the medium of fantasy to bring out the evils in the society. *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* portrays an ideal land where no concept of money or private property exists. This play was written by Sircar to satirize the city of Calcutta where all sorts of evil practices prevailed. Both these plays are also different compared to the other selected plays because both are written in comical vein. Sircar believed that comedy could also deliver social messages by evoking laughter at the evil practices. *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* depicts an ideal land where there is no power struggle and hence there is no distinction of class within the society. However, *Scandal in Fairyland* is the

contradictory aspect of *Beyond the Land of Hattamala*. In *Scandal in Fairyland*, Sircar concentrates on the disturbing effects of power struggle and its paralyzing effects on the subalterns.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The research has been undertaken based on the following objectives:

1. To explore the power struggle going on in Indian society and to look at its effect in the characters in the plays of Badal Sircar.
2. To understand if the subalterns in the plays of Badal Sircar have their voice of protest or not.
3. To explore the concept of ‘self’ and ‘other’ in the selected plays of Badal Sircar.
4. To understand the characteristics of Third Theatre and look at its usefulness in delivering social message.
5. To explore different forms of plays dealt by Badal Sircar and its usefulness in exposing the evil practices.

### **Review of Literature:**

The review of literature undertaken for the present study of the plays of Badal Sircar reveals that a number of critics over the years have analyzed various facets of Sircar’s plays from the thematic, stylistic and theatrical points of view. Sircar, in the beginning of his literary career, did not produce any serious plays. In this context, Samik Bandyopadhyay in *Three Plays: Procession, Bhoma, Stale News* mentions Sircar and his friends as “a serious group of people who did not take theatre seriously” (Bandyopadhyay 33) since during this period Sircar wrote plays only to amuse his friends in a club known as Chakra. Tara Chanda in “Badal Sircar: From



Proscenium to Free Theatre”, *New Directions in Indian Drama* mentions that Sircar has opposed the theatre from becoming a commodity of sale to the audience since he knows that by becoming a mere commodity of sale a detachment between players and spectators may be created. Shanta Gokhale too in “Celebrating a Genius” states that “writers are torch-bearers to the society and a writer like Badal Sircar, “the never-say die theatre man” sweats to liberate humanity from its claustrophobic existence through conscientization.” Jasbir Jain mentions that “Badal Sircar has succeeded in transmitting some of the Pirandellian uncertainties of human existence and value structures to the Indian scene. His plays explore the uncertainties and the incompleteness of the processes of life as well as of history” (Jain 30). G.J.V. Prasad in “The Third Gaze: The Theatre of Badal Sircar” that the major concern in the plays of Badal Sircar “is to bring his audiences to confront the truths of their lives, to explore the value of human lives and social relationships in a world that is hostile and constantly fashioned to confound the individual” (Prasad 64). However, Sumanta Banerjee opines in “Playwright in Perspective” that “Sircar does not present any definite solution to the maladies found in individual and social relations.” (Banerjee 12) Preeti Bhatt, while talking about the characters of the plays of Badal Sircar, states in “Absurdist Dilemmas: Sircar’s *Evam Indrajit*” that “Sircar’s deliberate intermingling of identities foregrounds the absurdist contention that in a universe that is indifferent to human needs and suffering, the idea of the significance of Man is a myth.” (Bhatt 208) N. Eakambaram in “Validity of *Evam Indrajit*- An Indian Version of an Absurd Play” states that “techniques like fusing characters and developing a central consciousness, lighting up and fading out scenes and characters, devising a circular plot, creating a dramatic language that is marked by repetition, rapidity, quick exchange, stichomythic lines, exploiting comic techniques like farce, caricature by miming and tableau are brilliantly adapted by Badal Sircar.” (Eakambaram 21) E. Renuka and

Shampa Bhattacharjee in *Urban Bias as Postcolonial Distortion. A Note on Badal Sircar's Third Theatre: Postcolonial Theory and Literature* notes that "Sircar through his plays could expose some of the postcolonial problems that haunt the city – the unemployed, frustrated and angry youth, pestering beggars, black marketers, soaring prices, selfish political leaders, cutthroat religious fanatics." (Renuka and Bhattacharjee 151) Ella Dutta in the introduction to *Three Plays* comments that Sircar "does not wish to create new myths in place of the old. He prefers to raise the consciousness and create awareness of the issues." Nirban Mann too in his article "Geography and Cartography of Reality-A Study of Badal Sircar's Two Fantastical Plays" states about Badal Sircar that "with his plays charged with idealism, he moves from stage to street "not to interpret the world but to change it." (Mann 22) Rustom Bharucha in *Rehearsals of Revolution: The Political Theatre of Bengal* while talking about the play *Bhoma*, states that "I can think of no other play in the Bengali theatre that makes an audience question its relation to the oppressed people with such emotional power and clarity." (Bharucha 11)

Thus, the survey reveals that the plays of Badal Sircar needs to be analyzed from a wider perspective to bring out the contesting relationship between 'self' and 'other' in the society.

### **Hypothesis:**

The present study has been undertaken based on the hypothesis that the marginalized position of Indian people within their own country, both during and after the colonial period, provided the contents for the plays of Sircar. To highlight these conditions he made use of both the proscenium and the non-proscenium stage. The view of the self which forms the essence of identity will be taken into account and surveyed from Sircar's view point through this research. Sircar through his different types of plays wants to stress on the fact that the world in which he

begins to write is one without unity, clarity, rationality or hope and man feels alone and a stranger in a place which itself will one day cease to exist. In this regard, he brings forward the power conflict existing within the society which has led the subaltern group to continuously face identity crisis due to the pressure exerted from the dominant group.

### **Methodology:**

The present study is based on analytical study and is carried out by highlighting the various sources to depict the troubles inflicted upon the Indian lower class society within the passage of time. The study is carried out through the collection of the primary sources which include Badal Sircar's selected plays. The research is carried out based on the 'self' and 'other' theory of Hegel, Subaltern theory of Antonio Gramsci, Power theory of Michel Foucault. The secondary sources are based on library resources like reference books, scholarly journals and also internet.

The chapters following the introduction are divided as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the theme of the present research and explains the topic in detail, stating the problem and analyzing the theories applied. In doing so the researcher tries to situate the topic of the study in the domain of different literary theories for better comprehension.

### **Chapter 2: Exploring "Self" and "Other" dichotomy in *Evam Indrajit*, *Procession* and *Bhoma***

This chapter concentrates on the three plays *Evam Indrajit*, *Procession* and *Bhoma* of Badal Sircar. These plays are also categorized as existential plays. This chapter throws light on how 'self' and 'other' concepts have been a strong basis for these existential plays. The

above mentioned plays show how in Indian society “self” and “other” are explored in the context of caste, economic and social status. The characters in the plays raises question about the power politics existing in the Indian society which alienates the “Self” from the “Other”. In these plays Sircar shows human existence in its unadorned nakedness. Existentialism is a philosophy which centres on the individual which can be termed as the “Self” and his or her alienating effect with the universe or God which can be considered as the “Other”. This chapter also focuses on how Sircar has brought the elements of existentialism to bring forward the reality of the Indian society particularly the inhabitants of the city of Kolkata. Lack of communication between individuals has created a group of people to be considered as “Other” within the society. The people are only running for materialistic pursuits and have forgotten their real goals in their lives and also have forgotten their own identity. The present study also tries to identify the causes and consequences of the dichotomy of “Self” and “Other” within the selected plays of Sircar.

### **Chapter: 3: Negotiating power dichotomy in the comic plays *Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland***

Sircar in his comedies *Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland* adopts the medium of fantasy to highlight how money has been constantly shaping the lives of the modern human being. The desire to possess power and monetary benefits has led to the splitting of people into two groups. The people who do not have the access to power are termed as “Other”. Both the plays are contrasting in terms of their dealing with the concept of money. In *Land of Hattamala*, Sircar projects an ideal world where the people do not know about the concept of money and so they lead a peaceful life. However, Kenaram and Becharam, the two thieves who hail from Calcutta are not free from the avarices of money. In this regard, they constantly go on committing crimes one after another. On the other hand in *Scandal in Fairyland*, Sircar shows

how deceitful people can become due to the avarice of possession of wealth. The play also satirizes the media for producing sensational news only for publicity. *Land of Hattamala* shows how people would know their own ‘self’ if there is no authority to rule over them. There would be no communication gap between the people in such an ideal world. However, *Scandal in Fairyland* depicts the disturbing effects of power on the lives of people. They are not free to make their own decisions and also power struggle has made a group of people marginalized and can be termed as subalterns.

#### **Chapter 4: Exploration of the life of the subalterns in *An Indian History Made Easy*, *Life of Bagala* and *Stale News***

Sircar’s another category of plays which concentrate merely on the subalterns are *An Indian History Made Easy*, *Life of Bagala* and *Stale News*. These plays have been included in this section to show how during the colonial and the postcolonial period the lives of the poor Indians have remained the same. They have constantly been made to realize that they are oppressed and suppressed and also they do not know how to protest against these injustices. They are constantly projected as “Other” by the dominant group. *An Indian History Made Easy*, through the medium of classroom teaching, covers almost three hundred years of British rule in India. It also shows how during this period, the Indian people were projected as “Other” by the “Self” which is the British rulers based on religion and also based on their castes. Similarly, *Life of Bagala* revolves around the character of Bagala, who has to lead a humiliated life in his uncle’s house after his parents’ death. Since no one is there to protect him, he is made an “Other”. Here, the power relationship between Bagala and the other people around him comes into the forefront. It is only by gaining courage within him, he is able to free himself from the bondage life and regain his own “Self”. *Stale News* too presents the struggle of the Santhal tribe

who has been oppressed by the colonizers and made an “other” in their own land. Later on, when they revolt against this oppression they are given the recognition as a special tribe and also are able to regain the selfhood of their own tribe. So, both the plays concentrate on the power struggle within the society in an apt manner. It depicts how within a society people are oppressed by the people who are holding power.

**Chapter 5: Conclusion:**

This chapter is a summing up of the preceding chapters and points out conclusion to the work undertaken.

## II

### Understanding ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ Debate from Theoretical Perspective

In postcolonial studies, the concepts of ‘self’ and ‘other’ have gained prominence in recent times. According to *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, “One of the more dominant aspects of human experience is the compelling sense of one’s unique existence, what philosophers have traditionally called the issue of personal identity or of the self.” (81) The concept of ‘other’ is originally attributed to Hegel in his seminal work *Phenomenology of Spirit* where he states that ‘self’ is recognized by an individual as that which is solely controlled by them both at cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. The ‘other’ on the other hand is uncontrolled by these factors. The complexity increases when the ‘self’ comes in contact with more than multiple ‘others’. In this position the self tends to exert a force which causes the self to identify with or behave as an ‘other’. (Hegel 10) Hegel mentioned in his seminal work that the consciousness of an ‘other’ is the very condition for the emergence of an individual self. Another significant terminology used by Hegel in the same work is the concept of ‘self-consciousness’. He stated that ‘self-consciousness’ is a movement whereby consciousness steps out of it. In this process of movement of ‘self-consciousness’, ‘self’ and ‘other’ are both moments of it and also are dependent upon it. Consciousness can only recognize its self-consciousness aspect by putting an ‘other’ in front of it. In this context, Hegel mentioned that ‘self-consciousness is nothing more than the return from otherness. The ‘self’ at a moment is defined negatively, by what it is not and in the process returns to the object that it must once again overcome. The self/other binary makes a person recognize that, an individual is separate physically and mentally. At that moment, one understands that the separate person is not the “self”, instead the individual is an “other” which is

separate and cannot be controlled or comprehended physically or mentally. Hegel further notes that 'self-consciousness is desire' and therefore is 'certain of itself only by superseding the other', 'certain of the nothingness of this other' (Hegel 174-175). In the postcolonial world, the 'self' and the 'other' are also categorized as the colonizer and the colonized. The othering of a particular group of people was done to establish control over them and prove their dominance of power. According to the people who control the marginalized group, 'the other' lacks identity, decency, culture, history and education. Moreover 'the other' is considered as savage.

Postcolonial literary works also is said to present the uneven relationship of power based on some contrasting terminologies such as "us" and "them", "First World" and "Third World", "White and Black", "colonizer" and "colonized" (Kehinde 108).

Power concept was explicitly analyzed by Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, where he stated that power is created artificially and exercised by the source which is generally the institution. He also mentioned that power is employed in a "net like organization" (Foucault 95) and individuals "circulate between its threads" (Foucault 102). He further states that power has the ability to control, change and enforces itself. Edward Said, a postcolonial critic supports Foucault's concept of power. In his noteworthy work *Orientalism*, he states that "power is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true." (Said, *Orientalism* 19) From the above definition provided by Said, it can be inferred that power is in relation to knowledge. This concept is similar to the concept of power and knowledge stated by Foucault in *Power/Knowledge*. Here, he states that "it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge; it is impossible for knowledge to engender power." (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 52) The institution is the holder of this power and therefore can be considered as



subjective. The authority can be considered harmful since it shapes “canons of tastes and values” (Said, *Orientalism* 20).

The words of Jacques Lacan while describing his own ‘self’ in his book *Ecrits* is noteworthy in context to the ‘self’ and ‘other’ debate (Lacan 35). Lacan stated in a seminar that “I am not a poet, but a poem. A poem that is being written, even if it looks like a subject”. Through this statement Lacan intended to elaborate on the two broad categories of discourse surrounding human self. On the first instance, he mentioned about that aspect of self which is considered as essentialist, stable and capable of creativity. The second aspect is concerned with the self who is fluid, meaningless and incapable of any originations. However, Lacan was a thinker who stressed on the second kind of self. The link referred by Lacan in between a poem and a ‘self’ is also noteworthy. Since both poem and a ‘self’ are constituted by the intermingling of signifiers, therefore he does not hesitate to mention himself as a poem. Similarly, just like a poem, literature is too constituted of signifiers. In this manner it can be concluded that the interpretation of literature just like the interpretation of the self, is a never ending task. Lacanian self also cannot be considered to be the user of a language, it is created in the same manner as a poem is created in language.

So, from the analysis of Lacan’s viewpoints it can be stated that ‘self’ is the centre point through which an individual’s existence can be felt. The character of self is of such nature that with it a hint of indefiniteness follows all throughout its journey. Stuti Khare in the foreword to her book *Self in Post-Structuralist Theory* mentions: “Plato’s self is an appropriation of bio-physical sciences into the metaphysical interplays of the spirit.” In the same work she mentions about Herodotus’s notion of self. For Herodotus, a self dwindles freely between Nature and Spirit (Khare 112). Herodotus too constituted his self in this particular manner. However,

Socrates was a phenomenal philosopher who believed in constituting his self through dialogue between the self and the soul.

The most significant statement made by a philosopher regarding the constitution of a 'self' is of Descartes in his work *Meditations on First Philosophy*. His dictum 'I think therefore I am' (Cogito ergo sum) asserted the process of constitution of an individual's self. According to him, an individual's self is always in the process of discovery. (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* 81) Descartes here stressed about the fact that an individual's self is said to exist due to his consciousness about his own being. Therefore, the statement of Descartes provided forward the argument that 'self' is rational and an immaterial substance which is indivisible. He believed that we can find the origin of knowledge in the human mind. Descartes who was in search of knowledge all throughout his life tried to stay away from skepticism all throughout his life. He considered doubt to be the main enemy in the power of reason and thought. The birth of modern science could be said to begin only after Descartes's philosophical argument. Moreover, he added that the compatibility of the mind and the body was not at ease with each other. It seemed that they were forcefully adjusted with each other.

Though Descartes had provided a sound theory regarding the existence of the 'self' and the 'other', still he did not provide any argument regarding the mode of interaction between the two. This question was skillfully answered by another Jewish rationalist thinker Benedict de Spinoza in his book *Ethics*. He mentioned that the mind and the body or in other terms we can also state it as the 'self' and the 'other' are products of one substance which we can call it as "God" or "Nature". (Spinoza 112) For him, God is the world around which each and every particle of this universe revolves. He considered the self as monistic and the self as a manifestation of God. Descartes holds that he is a materialist because he does not doubt the

independent existence of the material world outside of consciousness. (Descartes, *Discourse on Method* 152) He accepts that this material world is to be experienced in terms of sense perception.

Another thinker who shared with Descartes and Spinoza the views regarding self and the body was Wilhelm von Leibniz. In *Monadology*, he mentioned that the self cannot be either monistic or dualistic but instead of that it was pluralistic. (Leibniz 73) He viewed that the mind and the body was not different from each other; instead of this there existed continuity between them. John Locke was one of the significant empiricists who concentrated on the ‘self’ and ‘other’ debate in a considerable way. According to him, the mind of an infant is a blank paper or a tabula rasa on which the experiences are stamped one by one. He stressed that without the experiences the mind would also be deprived of knowledge. The ‘self’ is helpless in this world without the assistance of the experiences received by the mind from its surroundings. According to him, the mind derived ideas from two sources and they are mainly “perception” and “reflection”. The “self” is an observer of things around it with great intensity so that its formation becomes stronger. (Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 12) identified memory as an ‘anchor’ for identity, coherence and continuity. To him, memories do not really exist as ‘things’, these are rather impressions of perception that can be revived and recoloured each and every time we recall the past. He also mentioned that pain and pleasure are mostly remembered because they have a lasting impression. The pain and pleasures from the past are mostly responsible for creating one’s self. It may be either a united self or a broken self. If the broken self is constituted it may lead to the formation of an “other” that is distanced from the individual’s self. He equated sense impressions with ideas. For him, ideas are nothing but “ideas

of sense”. He considered “ideas of reflection” as the mind’s reflection upon its own activity. He also believed that it is the objects which act on the senses (136).

Scottish historian and essayist David Hume in his *A Treatise on Human Nature* explored the relationship between memory and imagination. According to Hume, there exists an uneasy relationship between memory and imagination and this led him to explore the construction of identity. He considered identity as evolving with time, because memories of the past always make the individual reconsider his identity. Therefore, the “self” also remains in a continuous clash with the “other” due to the evolving of identity from time to time. (Hume 56)

Emmanuel Kant was one of the philosophers who combined both towards the theories of rationalism and empiricism to provide his ideas about the concept of ‘self’. In his seminal text, *Critique of Pure Reason* he stated that the existence of the domain of reason is almost impossible without the experiences around it (Hume 33). However, he considered the human mind as an active participant who is aware about its own surroundings and also took part in arranging and structuring the experiences around it. This assumption of Kant is completely different from that of the rationalists who considered the mind to be a blank and a passive observer.

The coming of Romanticism saw a different trend emerging in the debate of ‘self’ theory. The ‘self’ of the Romantics was concerned with feelings and emotions of an individual. They were completely against the rationalists who stressed more on the subject of reason and intellect. They were more subjective in their approach as compared to the rationalists. They believed that the self was the source of all which was true and noble and could easily transcend reason and intellect. Jean Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract* stressed on the fact that when the human soul was around nature it was able to achieve its purity. However, when it got the touch of the

corrupt society, the self got broken apart and that helped in the formation of the 'other' which was not pure (Rousseau 45). Alphonse- Marie – Louis - de Lamartine (*Meditations* 229) also combined memory with meditation through which he was looking for internal experience, whereas Victor Hugo (*Contemplations* 240) combined memory with contemplation because the memory of his dead daughter is at the centre of the book. For these Romantics, subjective experiences of the individual allow the mind to be free from the din and bustle of the society and also seek room for the memorable events to surface. This leads to the formation of a 'self' which is free from the pressures of the materialistic world.

The Neo-classicists such as John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, and Alexander Pope who preceded the Romantics exercised their memories less on their own pasts than on recalling and preserving the great cultural traditions of the past in an objective way, especially the Greeks and Romans. Dryden in *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* and *The Apology for Heroic Poetry* advocated a close study of the ancient models and asks the audience not to blindly follow those models. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* repeats Aristotle's rules laid down for the critics to follow. Dr. Johnson's "*On a Daffodil, the first Flower the Author had Seen that Year*" shows that he is a typical neo-classical writer who approved the use of regular metre and the heroic couplet for his poetry. These neo-classicists felt that the past could never be separated from the present since it is only by looking back at the past that one could strengthen their present position. They did not let the past events to break down their 'self'. Instead they attempted to strengthen their 'self' through the strong traditions of the past. In this respect the Neo-classicists and the Romantics negotiate with each other partially. The Romantics, under the impact of the French Revolution, tended to erase the memories of the church, and the state. The great Romantic writers of the period such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Rousseau developed a new mode of memory as they

recalled the moments of their past and made their past memories more personal. In doing so, they found a more genuine mode of writing. The Romantics trained and disciplined their memories afresh on the delights and traumas of childhood, the pleasures and excesses of youth, and the relation of memory to imagination in order to translate individual recollections into lasting literature.

William Blake used memory in his works to draw a distinction between memory and imagination. Alfred Kazin in *The Portable William Blake* suggested that “his theme is always the defense of the integral human personality” (Kazin 33). He further added that “Blake’s fight is against secrecy, unnatural restraint, the fear of life- the distortions of the personality that follow from deception and resignation to it”. In this context, it can be said that the speaker of Blake’s poem “Memory, hither come,” (1-16) implores “memory” to transport him to some imaginary river where he may withdraw from the realities of the world and be inspired to write poetry. In the end, both the “stream” and his imagination fail to respond to his requests thereby leaving him to “walk along the darkened alley” at night in a state of “silent melancholy.” Here, Blake appears to be mocking the speaker for seeking poetry in his ‘memory’ rather than his ‘imagination’. To Blake, memory is a passive voice, whereas imagination is an active one. The poet clings to a daytime memory instead of creating from within his own artistic ability to shape nature with alternative images and symbols and this only leads him to a self-centered state of pity and night-time brooding. Memory also symbolizes the inability to be productive at all in the face of procrastination; the speaker here chooses to commit his experiences to memory so that he can transform them to poetry at a later time. There is an egotistical, selfish urge in the speaker. Rather than going to his inspirational source, he beckons memory to come to him. As a result, everything becomes stifled and stale which makes him possess a state of mind with absolutely no

patience. By suggesting that memory holds the speaker's thoughts, he escapes the duty to actively live, therefore missing the point of inspiration and articulation altogether.

Hegel's seminal passage of Master-Slave dialectics found in *Phenomenology of Spirit* is one of the noteworthy passages where the concepts of 'self' and 'other' find a significant place. (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* 69) Here, the concepts of 'self' and 'other' are more concerned to the political and historical dimension than the psychological aspect. He mentioned that while self-consciousness clashes with the 'other', 'self-consciousness notices the other as both self and not self. (Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* 156) He considered memory and imagination as complementary faculties rather than competing ones. He considered the mind to be a storehouse of memories, whereby imagination allows us to recollect and reflect on those memories in the present time.

Late Nineteenth century French psychologists such as Henry Bergson and Pierre Janet also tended to put a lot of emphasis on the literary exploitation of memory. They contested the viewpoints of Theodule Ribot whose pathology of memory in *Les Maladies de la mémoire* categorically stated that memory is essentially an organic biological event. (Ribot 7) Ribot reduced memory to its simple and most primary state of automatic repetition. He studied memory with emphasis on the power of conservation, reproduction and localization in the past which is otherwise called 'reconnaissance' or conscious recognition. This conscious recognition time and again leads to the formation of the identity of the 'self'. The automatic repetition of the events of the past does not let a person to constitute a stable 'self'. This instability may often lead to the formation of an 'other' which continuously clashes with the 'self'. Localization is the psychological element of memory which, according to Ribot, is dispensable. Bergson and Janet in their later works *Matière et mémoire* (1896) and *L'Evolution de la mémoire* (1928), tended to

address the controversial topic of consciousness. In course of his probing into memory processes, Bergson distinguishes between what he called the memory of habit ('la mémoire-habitude') acquired by acts of repetition in the brain, and pure spontaneous memory ('la mémoire pure'), which truly recalls and 'sees again' ('revoir'). The memory involved in learning the lessons by heart ('la souvenir de la leçon'), is acquired voluntarily by efforts of repetition and is inscribed on the brain ('cerveau') to become a part of the present. The memory of having read the lesson, ('le souvenir de la lecture'), returns involuntarily and belongs uniquely to a specific date and place in the past. While opposing the mechanism of the habit-formed memory to the spontaneity of what he considered to be the higher form of memory, ('la mémoire par excellence'), Bergson was locating his version of involuntary memory which was tied to his notion of duration and of the order of the mind ('esprit'). Moreover, he mentioned that this spontaneous memory possesses a dream like quality. For Bergson, the phenomenon of 'reconnaissance' involves the transition of such pure memory to acts of conscious perception (225-248).

Sigmund Freud's concept of unconscious as discussed in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* is also a significant terminology in the "self" and "other" debate. (Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* 87) According to Freud, the dwelling place of the unconscious in the mind of an individual was below the level of consciousness. It stayed away from the outer reality as much as it can. It is always in quest for pleasure from the outer reality. It contained the significant memories, infantile experiences and traumas from the past. Memory signifies both 'personal' and 'cultural' identity. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, memory is "[t]he faculty by which things are remembered; the capacity for retaining, perpetuating or reviving the thought of things past". (78) Both personal and collective memories have a close relationship with each other. Collective memory signifies a shared pool of



information which is held in the memories of two or more members of a group, whereas personal memory is confined to an individual self.

Freud's theory of *Nachtraglichkeit* which signified 'deferred action' or 'afterwardness' has been a major source for the development of trauma theories in the 1990's. According to Freud, this concept signifies the ways in which certain experiences, impressions and memory traces are revised at a later date in order to correspond with fresh experiences or with the attainment of a new stage of development (166-167). This concept was a major development since earlier memory was believed to be temporary. The effect of the traumatic incident was not fully recognized at that particular moment of time of occurrence but its value was only recognized at a later period of time when it became an emotional crisis. Freud mentioned that memory is used as a container in which we restore our thought, knowledge and experience. (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 25) It is often used for receiving fresh excitations. These fresh excitations received time and again do not allow the 'self' to move in a continuous journey. It halts its progress time and again making it reconsider about the constitution of an 'other which will be distanced from the individual's 'self'. Nicola King in *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* stated about Freud's model of archaeological excavation where memories were considered to be existing 'somewhere' and waiting to be rediscovered by the remembering subject and uncontaminated by subsequent experience and time's. (King 4)

Anima' and 'animus' were two significant terminologies coined by Jung in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* to identify the masculine and feminine characteristics contained within a female and male respectively. (Jung 58) According to Jung, a woman contains some of the masculine characteristics which help her in thinking rationally. These masculine characteristics that are present within a female are known as 'animus'. On the

other hand, a man contains some feminine characteristics which help him in governing his irrational thinking. These feminine functions present within a male are known as 'anima'. The opposite characteristics present within both the male and female helps them in relating themselves as whole human beings to the world. The anima/animus is a major determiner of how we consider ourselves in the innermost chamber of our heart. The anima/animus within an individual helps one in constituting their 'self'. If the balance between the 'self' and 'other' is not equally proportionate within an individual the 'self' of an individual begins to break down which leads to the formation of an 'other'. Since, the anima/animus has the image making capacity, an individual's 'self' also depends upon it.

Cathy Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* developed Freud's concept of *Nachtraglichkeit* in formulating her own theory of memory and an individual's 'self'. (Caruth 52) Her interest lies in the collapse of understanding which is situated at the heart of trauma. Her conceptualization of trauma problematizes the relation between experience and event. She believed that trauma is not in the hold of the individual. It cannot be recounted at will, but it continues its dominance over the individual as a haunting process. Its effect is experienced more profoundly at a later stage through its repetition. Therefore, the 'self' cannot withstand the attacks of trauma received from the past experiences. It requires the forgetting of past events to acquire a coherent self which will be strong enough to face any attack.

Donald Winnicott in the year 1960 divided 'self' into two categories and they were 'true self' and 'false self'. In his work "*Ego distortion in terms of true and false 'self'*", mentioned that 'true self' was constructed based on the real experiences gathered by an individual which makes him realize that an individual was alive. (Winnicott 5-7) On the other hand, 'false self' often leaves a person with the feeling of being dead an empty. Winnicott expanded this definition by

bringing in references of an infant. If an infant is allowed to utter words according to its own wish, with occasional guidance from the parent, then it can be termed as 'true self'. But if the parent wants to mould the infant according to their way and forces them to learn as they have directed them, then it is an example of 'false self'.

In the twentieth century literature, emphasis was laid on memory and writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and William Faulkner developed the theory of stream of consciousness technique in their novels and tended to situate their views of memory within an associationist context. William James (*Principles of Psychology* 13) led the path for associationist memory in the early twentieth century and Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and William Faulkner were all affected by some of the memory events of the past and they incorporated these experiences of the past into the framework of their novels. While reading their novels, the readers locate that memory occupies a dominant place in the characters of Lily Briscoe in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Mrs. Dalloway in the novel under the same title; Gabriel Conroy in James Joyce's 'The Dead' (1914) and Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). In these novels, it can be noticed that the individual's could not form their individual 'self' properly due to the continuous hampering of the past events in their lives. Often in these novels it is seen that their 'self' gets broken apart and leads to the formation of an 'other'.

The psychoanalytic notion of displacement which was originally conceived by Freud as a principle of unconscious formation has proven to be an important means for understanding the ways in which diasporic subjects and communities deal with traumatic experiences. Freudian psychoanalytic theory of displacement (*New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* 21 -22) holds that displacement takes place when a person shifts his/her impulses from an unacceptable

target to a more acceptable or less threatening target. Correspondingly, displacement as an element of diasporic experience might be seen as an impulse to (re)produce and (re)create the loss but, simultaneously, to reinvest something else somewhere else in the present and in the future. Diasporic cultures existed by producing and discovering new places to speak, new territories to remember and to forget. Diasporic movement caused the location and dislocation of cultures and individuals which harp upon memories. Therefore, in the diasporic studies too it was seen that when the 'self' feels safe and secure in a place it tried to settle down and the dislocation of the 'other' occurred at the next instance. In the new place they began to forget about their traumatic past and looked for a better future. Therefore, it can be said that through migration there is a great danger of losing one's identity. They received a tag of being an immigrant in an alien land. This kind of tag cannot be removed so easily and along with this tag, that individual faces nostalgia for their own land. Oscar Handlin in *The Uprooted* (1973) opined that:

The history of immigration is the history of alienation and its consequences ...

For every freedom won, a tradition lost. For every second generation assimilated, a first generation in one way or another spurned. For the gains of goods and services, an identity lost, and uncertainty found. (Handlin 5)

The term historiographic metafiction was coined by Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) to describe fiction that engages history. Historiographic metafiction is also a particularly used label in terms of postcolonial studies. It responded to eurocentric forms of knowledge based on ethnocentric cultural assumptions. The histories of the "Other" were written mostly after the traumatic process of excavation and retrieval. For this reason some of the fictions were historiographic since they rewrite forgotten pasts. Examples of neo-Victorian fictions that explored the emergent technology of photography include: Lynne Truss's

*Tennyson's Gift* (1996), Robert Solés *La Mamelouka* (1996), translated as *The Photographer's Wife* (1999), Ross Gilfillan's *The Edge of the Crowd* (2001), Katie Roiphe's *Still She Haunts Me* (2001), Fiona Shaw's *The Sweetest Thing* (2003), and Susan Barrett's *Fixing Shadows* (2005). In these novels, memory, history and fiction come together in the trope of the photograph.

Processes where past memories were excavated in fictional writing create a new era of knowledge where it subverted the traditional Western hegemony over historical accounts. This subversion was significant in another aspect as through the insertion of smaller histories into History, the area of the remembered past broadens and also brings to limelight various histories which previously remained disregarded. By this process, the "othering" also gets neglected because the readers come to know about the disregarded facts in history. By emphasizing the plight of the downtrodden, the postcolonial text highlighted the effects of the dominance of the West. Historiographic metafiction therefore has a political agenda. Therefore, the 'othering' which was done by the West has been diminished by genres of writing such as historiographic metafiction. The 'self' found recognition of identity in the historiographic metafiction. The downtrodden people were able to climb the ladder of hegemony through the introspection of history done by the historiographic metafiction texts.

The postmodern writers have also started questioning the construction of a text which involved linear narratives. According to Hutcheon, continuous and linear narrative was believed to pose a single and essentialized history and such a narrative is challenged by postmodern works. (Hutcheon 90) The problem inherent in taking a single and essentialized history as mentioned by Hutcheon is that only a certain event is selected for the narrative. This is done because the continuous narrative must be highly selective while constructing a narrative. But in this case the problem is that this kind of narrative does not take into consideration the needs of

individuals who want to individualize their past. The individuals through this do not get the opportunity to position their past in a larger social context. Steve Knapp (“*Collective Memory and the Actual Past*” 24) mentioned that the groups who are in charge of creating narrative will only recall the past to satisfy their purposes. According to him, while reinstating instances from the past there is a great chance that the history may be distorted not only by the historians but also by the politicians. In his *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*, Nicola King supported the claim of Knapp and further added that manipulation of history is possible while writing nationalistic movements. (King 5) The historians or the authority are interested to include only those incidents which satisfy their needs.

Knapp also mentioned that a connection of identity from the past, present and the future is necessary while examining the question of punishment. According to him, punishment makes the agent to identify with his past act so as to avoid committing the same crime in future.

Through this we come to the assumption that a coherent narrative is important for establishing one’s coherent identity. A randomly selected narrative cannot justify the ‘self’ of an individual. It only creates division between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. However, according to Nicola King, due to traumatic events and repressed memories of past events, there may be a split in identity. This may lead to fragmented identity. This fragmented identity helps in the establishment of an ‘other’ which is completely different from the human ‘self’.

The ideology of ‘self’ has always remained as a topic of attraction since time immemorial. It can be considered to be one of the most basic and most difficult human problems. Due to this reason philosopher, anthropologists and psychologists from Plato onwards have dealt with this issue. Walter Hamilton in the introduction to Plato’s *Phaedrus* stated that “truth is to be attained by a partnership of two like-minded people”. (Plato 2) Through this statement he wanted

to comment on the essential human self and the physical world which later on transformed into the mind/body split. The existence of this human self was different from the physical world. This belief that the 'self' was a different entity which was different from the physical world has become a popular notion in Western culture.

Personal memory too leads to the formation of an individual self. Memory may signify both personal and cultural identity. Both personal and collective memories have a close relationship with each other. Collective memory signifies a shared pool of information which is held in the memories of two or more members of a group, whereas personal memory is confined to an individual self.

The main concern related to identity in colonial and postcolonial discourse is the confrontation between individual and collective memory which can be felt in the cultures of the native people and the colonizers. The colonial people tried to impose the ways of remembrance on natives' minds and consciousness. In this connection, *On Collective Memory* Halbwachs mentioned that "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories" and that "it is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories". (Halbwachs 38) What Halbwachs tended to emphasize is that in a society there are different groups of people who feel alienated from other groups due to the effect of remembrance. The indigenous people are forced to remember and recollect their past life in a colonial rule through the lens of the colonizers. This forced remembrance often creates a distance between the 'self' and 'other'. The 'other' starts revolting against the ideologies of the 'self'. In novels like *Heart of Darkness* and *Clear Light of Day*, the novelists used complex narrative strategies, multiple voices and personae to show the confrontation between indigenous and colonial ways of remembrance. The novel *Heart of Darkness* recollected the memory of ancient Africa through Eurocentric perspective. On the

other hand, *Clear Light of Day* recollected memory of the decolonized India through the postcolonial Indian perspective.

Stephanie Wossner in *Collective memory and identity in Japanese American literature* mentioned that “cultural memory [...] does not recall everything concerning the past but of certain crucial events”. (Wossner 40) In this context, it can be said that colonization is a significant event and that the process of imperialization was reconstructed and given a different shape in colonial and post colonial discourse. Iain S. MacLean in *Reconciliations, nations and churches in America* was also of the view that “the ethics of postcolonial memory were designed to respond to the challenges of remembering.” (MacLean 31) However, the remembering of the Empire often contradicted the remembering of the colonized or the decolonized. They often tried to show that the indigenous people do not possess their own past, culture and tradition. This continuous evoking of the sentiment of the ‘self’ led to the creation of the ‘other’ who no longer was willing to take the criticism from the colonizers.

William James in *Principles of Psychology*, had mentioned that an individual may possess different forms of ‘self’ till people go on reacting to that person. This group of people who go on reacting may be called ‘others’. (James 35) In this case, both society and ‘self’ can be considered as multifaceted and also organized. In this type of situation, where society and self need to communicate on a regular basis, the individual adopts role choice to overcome this difficulty. Self and society were linked with each other, since role choice was done mainly in order to make the ‘self’ noticeable before the society. ‘Self’ was organized in the sense that it was a composition of identities organized in a salience hierarchy. Identity was salience since on different situations different identities of an individual will come into the forefront.



‘Self’ was considered to be a composition of different identities or role choices. They changed their roles based on what kind of different situations they participated within a society. Gregory Stone in *Appearance and the Self* asserted that the ‘self’ desired to be considered as social objects. (Stone 54) In this process, the ‘self’ hoped that the others provide them with a positional designation and also the individuals within the society accept that designation. In this case, social identity theories have been developed from the early twentieth century onwards in order to reestablish a connection between the social psychology of the ‘self’ and social groups. William G. Sumner had therefore mentioned in his influential work *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* that:

Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders. Each group thinks its own folkways the only right ones, and if it observes that other groups have other folkways, these excite its scorn. (Sumner 24)

Nostalgia had also been an important concept which played a significant part in formation of one’s identity. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, nostalgia is a “sentimental longing for or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual’s own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past.” (95) Nostalgia has its roots in the concept of Indian postcolonial society too. It can be said so because it is concerned with the reality of travel, of displacement and of distance from one’s own tradition, culture and social norms. Since Indian postcolonial society was concerned with displacement and distance, there will certainly be physical and emotional separation from one another which will ultimately lead to remembering their past and also a sense of alienation from one another. Nostalgia often contained with it an internal pain. The past often became repressed and needed the medium of

rediscovery to bring back the memories which were almost at a stage of loss. This alienation led to the formation of an “other” in a postcolonial society. These alienated individual tried to stabilize themselves from the clutches of colonialism. They possessed a “self” which was tattered, fragmented and had no particular direction to move forward in their life. Nostalgia was also considered as a burden which hampered an individual or a community’s progress.

Nostalgia of an individual or a group of people had led them to live a life of sub-standard in the hierarchy of life. They cannot move forward due to the minimal amount of resources or scope that they receive. Another terminology that further elaborated the concept of power and oppression was the concept of ‘subaltern’ which was first coined by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* written between 1929 and 1935. According to Gramsci, subalterns are a subjugated social category and people of ‘inferior rank’, who are marginalized in the hegemonic power structure of the colonial set up (*Prison Notebooks* 168). The term can be applied aptly to those groups of people who cannot climb the ladder of hierarchy in a proper manner due to the lacking of resources. Gramsci considered the people who were outside of the hegemonic structure as subaltern groups. The subalterns possessed a dilapidated ‘self’ due to the continuous haunting of their nostalgic moments which they had received from the people belonging from the upper class. Their ‘self’ was in a continuous oppression due to the suppression received from the upper strata of people who continuously tried to demean their ‘self’ by othering them from the social process. By referring to the subaltern people, Gramsci not only ascribed to the people belonging from the proletariat group but also included people who hailed from the non-elite class. Gramsci’s concept of ‘subaltern’ can be said to be different from Marx’s concept of proletariat in the sense that Marx’s definition of proletariat was solely based on economic determinism. On the other hand, Gramsci’s definition of subaltern was done based on the cultural

and ideological dimensions of hegemony and subordination throughout history. So, it can be stated that Gramsci was more interested in the subjugation of the 'self' throughout history based on cultural and ideological dimensions of hegemony and subordination. His theory of 'subaltern' was based on domination of one group by another group. He stated that:

The subaltern classes by definition are not united and cannot unite until they are able to become a 'state'..... the history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly exists a tendency to (at least provisional stage of) unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups... in reality, even when they appear triumphant, the subaltern groups are merely anxious to defend themselves.... (Gramsci 54-55)

Gramsci's "subaltern" terminology was given a new direction in the 1980's by a group of Marxist historians who hailed from India. They analyzed Gramsci's work and found that though Gramsci had covered almost all the aspects in his description of 'subaltern' studies but he remained untouched on the peasant group of people who were affected most in colonialist India. They got into the limelight by publishing articles through Oxford University Press in India. This group of people who worked on the subalterns of India was known as the Subaltern Studies collective. Through their work, they wanted to focus on bringing back the past of India which was somewhat forgotten by the people. They devoted their work mainly on the peasants who were excluded from the capitalist system. This group of people was inspired by the writings of Ranajit Guha who was instrumental in broadening Gramsci's concept of 'subaltern'. Ranajit Guha was one of the members of the Subaltern Studies Group who in "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" from his book *Selected Subaltern Studies* defined the

subalterns as the entity which constitutes “the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the ‘elite’”. (Guha 44) The Subaltern Studies group was also inspired by Guha’s monograph *The Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*.

In his work, Guha had stated that:

Elitist historiography should be resolutely fought by developing an alternative discourse based on the rejection of the spurious and un-historical monism characteristic of its view of Indian nationalism and on the recognition of the co-existence and interaction of the elite and subaltern domains of politics. (11)

Though the Subaltern Studies group had leftist tendency but they were at the same time also critical of the narrative of the Marxist towards Indian history. They were critical towards the fact that the narrative of the Marxist asserted that the elites during the colonial period were highly instrumental in inspiring the masses to fight for their rights. They considered the people who were non-elites as major subject of discussion and stated that these groups of people had the capability for social change if they were aware of their individual rights. Some of the people who were associated with this group were Ranajit Guha, Eric Stokes, David Arnold, David Hardiman, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and others.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak was one of the prominent names associated with this group of study. Her work “*Scattered speculations on the Subaltern and the popular*” ( 2005), provided us with a more modified definition of “ subaltern “ where she mentioned that to be a subaltern meant to be removed from all lines of social mobility. Spivak in her work mentioned about how often the story given by the elite group was considered as the real story by the general population. In this context, Spivak wanted to prove that the subaltern did not have a voice, and

cannot mobilize. However, she broadened her terminology of 'subaltern' by covering women as also one of the subaltern group who were subjugated since time immemorial. So, in a sense it can be also stated that Spivak wanted to assert that the subalterns have a weakened form of 'self' which continuously denied them protesting against the injustice inflicted upon them by the elite class of people. Therefore, the dilemma of the 'self' and the 'other' can be seen mostly within the subalterns, since their desire to move up in the ladder of social hierarchy has always been crushed down by the people in power.

Along with Gayatri Spivak, two other critics have also been very instrumental in the study of 'self' and 'other' studies. These two personalities are Edward Said and Homi K. Bhaba. Robert Young had termed Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said and Homi K. Bhaba as the "Holy Trinity" of postcolonial critics. Edward Said's monumental work *Orientalism* has proved itself to be one of the sacred books of postcolonial studies. In this work, Said coined two terminologies 'Orient' and 'Occident' to discuss the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. Said in *Orientalism* brought the dichotomy of Orient and Occident to establish the power relationship. He stated that "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 18). Said mentioned that Orientalism works as an oppressive power on the Eastern part of the world which is often considered as an outsider. The 'Orient' signified the land which is to the east of Europe. It mainly covered the land which was now known as Middle East and Indian sub-continent. On the other hand, 'Occident' referred to the people residing in the Europe. The 'Orient' and the 'Occident' together referred to a conceptual binary which encompassed various texts such as Rudyard Kipling's *The Ballad of East and West*

and also texts of Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster and George Orwell. In this work, Kipling not only referred to the East and West as a geographical space but also asserted to it certain cultural values. It is in this regard, he asserted that “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” The East was often referred as barbaric, uneducated and irrational by the West. It was also believed in the West that the East does not possess their own history and everything they have was provided to them by the West. They believed that it is the duty of the West to educate the East and rationalize them. With the motive of rationalizing the East, they began to conquer their lands. The colonizing of the lands led to the brutal subjugation of the native people. They were deprived of their rights and forced to work under them. This dominant tendency was explained by Edward Said through another two terminologies which were ‘self’ and ‘other’. Another writer who wrote through the viewpoint of the colonizers was George Orwell. While Orwell served in Burma as a police in colonial era, he began to torture the native Burmese and often kicked, bullied and hanged poor innocent Burmese. Later on, he realized his guilt and to escape from his guilt, he began writing works such as “Shooting an Elephant” and *Burmese Days*.

*Burmese Days* is an appropriate novel which deals with the ‘self’ and ‘other’ dichotomy. Here, in the novel Orwell has tried to portray the lives of both the colonizers and the colonized. In various situations of the novel, the binaries also began to change moving from us/them, West/East, whites/non-white, civilized/uncivilized to European/Asian. The novel is also depicted through the viewpoint of a Westerner. Due to this angle of narration, the culture, lifestyle, traditions of the Burmese are neglected. Moreover, most of the barbaric inflictions upon the Burmese are also omitted. This marginalized notion of the novelist towards the Burmese are noticed when he uses some rude words towards them such as swines, ticks, black coolies,

cowardly hounds, damned and smelly natives , evil and unclean Orientals, little pot-bellied dirty niggers etc.

Said mentioned that the knowledge possessed by the Orient has led to the formation of power structures. Ania Loomba in (*Colonialism and Postcolonialism* mentioned that knowledge is “not innocent but profoundly connected with the operations of power”. (Loomba 43) Said realized on looking at the relationship between the Orient and the Occident since the eighteenth century that the creation of the Orient as an ‘other’ was done mainly for cultural dominance. He further mentioned that the Orient was often judged on the basis of values possessed by the Occident and in this context they were considered as Occident’s ‘other’. It was assumed that the natives have a tattered ‘self’ which needs to be remodeled by the Occidents based on their own values. The Orients will be considered as an ‘other’ by the Occidents if they were unable to redefine themselves based on those models.

Orientalism can be said to be closely associated with the ‘self’ and ‘other’ dichotomy. It was so because it differentiates between the Occident, i.e. ‘self’ and the Orient, which was the ‘other’. By keeping in mind this ‘self’ and ‘other’ dichotomy; post colonialism was being analyzed by a lot of people. Elleke Boehme in *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial* stated that “Postcolonial theories swivel the conventional axis of interaction between the colonizer and colonized or the self and the other”. (Boehme 12) Similarly, Bill Ashcroft in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* asserted that in Orientalism, the East was viewed as an ‘other’ by the West. (Ashcroft 50) Therefore, the primary motive of Said was to decipher the ‘other’ that the West had categorized and placed it within the realm of rationality. In this sort of binary, one of the groups was given privilege over the other group. This kind of division has now broadened into other areas of study too. For, example Peter Childs and Roger Fowler in *The Routledge*

*Dictionary of Literary Terms* had mentioned that everything associated with positivity such as male, White, East is termed as 'self'. On the other hand, 'other' was related with negativity such as female, black, West etc. (Childs and Fowler 165) However, Loomba does not hesitate in terming the 'self' as colonizer and the 'other' as colonized.

The 'self' and 'other' binary can be expanded to various terminologies based on its context such as East/West, Occident/Orient, us/them, center/margin, vocal/silent. The 'other' is considered to be an alter ego of the 'self'. It makes its presence felt when the 'self' feels neglected from its surroundings. The process of 'othering' also involves dehumanization of an individual. The colonizers too, through the process of 'othering' began to delineate the natives as barbaric, irrational human beings. It only considers the 'self' appropriate to be considered as 'human'. However, orientalism is concerned in depicting the derogatory lives of the 'other'. By representing the 'other', it can help similar individuals reclaim their lost past and also their identity. By doing so, they can take preventive measures against the Orient as "a sort of surrogate and even underground self (Said 3).

Homi K. Bhaba was another pioneer in the study of postcolonial studies. His theories of 'mimicry', 'sly civility' and 'hybridity' were instrumental in the understanding of 'self' and 'other' dichotomy". His essays "Of Mimicry and Man" and "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817" provide the background for postcolonial ideas. These terms coined by Bhaba also prove significant in forwarding the 'self' and 'other' discussion. According to Bhaba, mimicry signifies the tendency of the colonized people to imitate the language, dress, politics or cultural attitude of the colonizers. This is done so mainly in order to gain equivalent status in power to that of those who are in power. In other words, it can be stated that the 'self' faces an identity crisis with its present



existence. To overcome this identity crisis and also to stop itself from becoming an 'other' it starts mimicking those who are in power. In the process of mimicking other person, their individual cultural identity remains subjugated. This act of mimicking is not considered as praiseworthy by the members of their class.

Bhaba opined that mimicry should not be considered completely as a bad habit. It is so because in the process of mimicking someone, an individual also indirectly exposes the ill habits of that group who are in power. One becomes aware that whatever they are doing is not praiseworthy in the eyes of others. This act of consciousness stops an individual's 'self' in getting transformed to an 'other'. He mentioned that the act of mimicking showers light on the artificiality of their habits which is done purposefully in order that they always remain in power. In fact, it can be said that the notion of nationalism which has gained prominence in Asia and Africa in the recent decades is also a copy from the western canon of nationalism. Therefore, Partha Chatterjee in "Transferring a Political Theory, Early Nationalism Thought in India" aptly opined that the emergence of Indian nationalism is a "derivative discourse". (Chatterjee 31) It means that Indian nationalism has been borrowed from western nationalism.

Just as mimicry, 'reverse mimicry' can also be seen among the colonizers. Reverse mimicry can be termed as an attempt to copy the lifestyle of the colonized people. It was done mainly in order to get closer to the natives. For example, during the time of colonization, the colonizers often dressed as kings or local people. The greatest example of reverse mimicry can be noticed in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, where a white child enjoys his life in the wilderness. He stays away from the British society. So, it can be stated that he finds the fulfillment of his 'self' in the wilderness amongst the Indians.

Hybridity was another term developed by Homi K. Bhaba to counteract the Western notion of nation and racism. He developed the theory of hybridity in his text *The Location of Culture* (1994). Hybridity states that the cultures of a colonized group are generally represented through iteration by the colonizers. Through this process of iteration, the represented groups are considered as an 'other' by the colonizers. They are not able to move in the ladder of hierarchy. In colonialist discourse, it was observed that the colonizers used derogatory terms such as 'Negritude' to degrade the colonized people. Therefore, Homi K. Bhaba used this term as a response to bring forward the hypocrisies of the Westerners towards the colonized people. Though this term was first used within colonial context but its usage has now broadened towards multiculturalism and diaspora studies too. It has now moved beyond normal boundaries to cover the zone known as "Third Space". He mentions that all cultural statements and systems are presented in a space which he refers to as the 'Third Space of enunciation'. In other words, hybridity refers to the in-space where one possesses the burden and meaning of culture. The cultural hybridity which is seen in full swing in the present day world often results in acculturation. Acculturation can be defined as the change that occurs when two or more cultures intermingle. The next phase of acculturation can be said to be assimilation which can be stated as the abandoning of one's own ethnic identity and accepting the identity of the dominant group. Ihsan Al-Issa in "*Ethnicity, Immigration, and Psychopathology*" mentioned that the American melting pot concept can be also said to be a form of 'assimilation', which was absorbing the good facets of other culture while keeping intact one's own culture. (Al-Issa 45) So, one must be aware of the fact that while following another culture, their 'self' must not get influenced towards the other culture and let it transform itself into an 'other'.

“Sly civility” was another term coined by Homi K Bhaba. This term was coined by Bhaba to notice how the colonized tried to counteract the colonizers attempt to degrade them. Through the means of counteraction, the colonized tried to overthrow the authority of the colonizers. This counteraction is done in such a manner that the colonizers cannot figure out that the colonized have deceived them in this process (Bhaba 99). Anne Fuchs in her book *A Space of Anxiety* had mentioned that “sly civility” can be considered as “a form of civil disobedience masquerading under the disguise of civility”. (Fuchs 152) “Sly civility” stands for something positive where it stresses on the ability of the colonized to put resistance on the evil motives of the colonizers. So, it can be said that possession of “sly civility” was significant for a colonized to reclaim their lost ‘self’ and stop itself from behaving like an ‘other’. In the process of reclaiming their lost ‘self’, they however, tried to maintain their civility in order to keep their motives secret.

Albert Memmi’s concept of “anonymous collectivity” coined in his work *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1990) is also of significant importance in postcolonial literature. He mentioned that the colonized started to disprove the policies of the colonizers. The colonizers went to such an extent that they began to repudiate the good habits of the colonized. In this process, the colonized faced identity crisis and began to feel that their ‘self’ is in extreme danger of getting crushed. This process of dehumanization of individuals was termed by Memmi as “anonymous collectivity”. Moreover, he stated that:

“Another sign of the depersonalization of the colonized is what one might call the mark of the plural. The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity (‘They are this.’ ‘They are all the same.’) (Memmi 129)

Memmi stated that the use of plural pronouns such as “they” by the colonizers was an attempt to negate the cultural heritage of the colonized. They completely ignored the singular pronouns such as “he” and “she”. This technique of using plural pronouns was an attempt to control the colonized mindset. Moreover, the use of plural pronouns helped the colonizers in controlling the masses. If someone from the colonizers committed any fault, the colonizers use of plural pronouns helped in making the whole group responsible for it. They were punished severely for their act of defiance and this act of punishment inflicted fear within the mindset of the entire groups. Through “anonymous collectivity”, the colonizer aimed to stress on the fact that for the fault of a particular individual, the entire group had to take responsibility for the act. However, Ahad Mehrvand expanded Memmi’s concept of “anonymous collectivity” to some selected literary works. He cited the examples of Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* where the colonizers punished the entire group if someone from their group disobeyed them. He also analyzed Richard Wright’s *Native Son* through the concept of “anonymous collectivity. The novel which had racism as its major theme analyzed how the black Americans were tortured by the Whites in the name of racism. Though this had a devastating effect on the entire group but only the novel’s antihero Bigger Thomas decided to take action against it. It ultimately led to the first murder committed by Bigger Thomas (52).

Elleke Boehmer too in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* developed another concept which can be said to be similar to that of Albert Memmi’s concept of “anonymous collectivity”. (Boehmer 95) His concept of “crowd imagery” can be considered to be a process of “othering”. Whenever a colonized person started disobeying to the commands of the colonizer, they were depicted as “unruly, inscrutable, or malign” and it was believed that they had lost their ‘self’. The term “crowd imagery” was employed by the Europeans to portray the

“lack of character and individual will” within a colonized. They were considered as an “other” who was far away from being included into their civilized society.

Thomas F. Pettigrew in *A Profile of the Negro American* identified three different responses in terms of victimization and discrimination. They are: (a) Moving towards the oppressor by seeking acceptance through integration. (2) Moving against the oppressor by fighting back and (3) Moving away from the oppressor through withdrawal, flight or avoidance. (Pettigrew 34)

Leela Gandhi was another critique who had opined on the subaltern’s position since time immemorial. In her work *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* she stated that:

By subaltern study it meant the oppressive subject, the members of Gramsci subaltern classes or more generally those of inferior rank and her question followed individuals now known as Subaltern Studies group. The stated objective of this group was to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian. Further they described their project as an attempt to study the general attribute of subordination in South Asian Society whether this is expressed in term of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way. (12)

However, Subaltern studies have not been limited to the relationship between elite and the working class alone. This group which was formed to get an idea on the contrasting relation between these two groups has now encompassed any relation based on power. Gyan Prakash in his essay “*The Impossibility of Subaltern history*” mentioned that in today’s world subalterns

cannot be said to only include South Asian Studies. It covers any relation based on power.

(Prakash 21)

In India, one of the Subaltern groups who have been in the headlines for being getting oppressed from the upper class society are the “dalits”. The “Dalits” are always considered as inferior as compared to the elite class. They are also considered as untouchables, and it was believed that if someone maintained contact with them, they would become impure in the society. However, before the coining of the term ‘dalit’, they were known by names such as jatis, chandal, antyaj, shudra, avarna, asprishya, pancham, harijan. All these terms were used to remind the dalits of their position in the society. The jatis have now rejected all these terms and started adopting the term “dalit” to represent their identity. They feel proud to use this word because it represents their consciousness. Ramachandra in *“The conceptualization of Hindi dalit discourse”* stated that:

... the word “dalit” along with denoting pride also carries the awareness of oppression and victimization. The revolutionary sentiment of being continually reminded of the acts of the oppressor class is also embedded in this word. It also has an echo of consciousness. The word ‘dalit’ makes one aware of a sense of responsibility, and not one of sympathy. It can then be said that along with communicating the meanings of the word ‘dalit’, the dalit discourse is also geared towards social change and transmission of a ‘dalit consciousness’ (179).

Since, time immemorial discrimination based on caste has been going on in India. Texts such as Manuadi made the lower castes get suppressed a lot and also deprived them from their basic rights. However, within the passage of time, the dalits have started to realize about their

basic rights and worked on in recovering their lost 'self' which was in the process of converting into an 'other'. Prominent figures such as Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar have helped the dalits in recognizing their identity and also encouraged them to fight for their own rights. However, dalit movement in India can be said to gain prominence only after the advent of the British in India. It was so because, after the advent of the British they got the opportunity to educate themselves. This led them to become aware regarding how long they have been subjugated and suppressed by the upper class.

Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule were the prominent figures who led the dalit movement with a grand spirit. Both of them together in the year 1848 started a school for women. On the other hand, Jyotiba Phule formed an organization named Gulamgiri, which made the dalits aware regarding the level of oppression met upon them. Narayan Guru championed the slogan of "One Caste, One Religion, One God" which struck like a thorn in the bodies of the upper class people. The starting of dalit movement which was initiated by Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule was given a new direction by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He was so much depressed with Hinduism which only knew to oppress the lower strata of people that he converted himself to Buddhism which had equality, independence and rational thought as its basic ideology.

Race has also played a significant role in analyzing the discourse of "otherness". Though division based on race has been going on since time immemorial but it was only during the European colonialism that it became more intense. Naomi Zack in *Bachelors of Science: Seventeenth Century Identity, Then and Now* stated that "modern concepts of race derive from eighteenth and nineteenth century pseudoscience that rationalized European colonialism and chattel slavery." (Zack 67) The Europeans advocated racism in order to keep intact the system of slavery and also to conceal their hidden motives. The Whites through their writings too tried to

crush the colonized to a humiliating state. In this regard, Henry Louis Gates Jr. in *Black Literature and Literary Theory* stated that “for these slaves, was not an activity of mind; rather it was a commodity which they were forced to trade for their humanity. (Gates 9) The Writers who were against racism, feared that if racism continues on without any protest, then our identities will merge with the “other”. Through the merging of identity, the individuals will all forget their individual cultures.

In the backdrop of the ongoing discussion it would be profitable to analyze the selected plays of Badal Sircar in the upcoming chapters. The plays taken for discussion in the upcoming chapters attempt to show how in Indian society “self” and “other” are explored in the context of caste, economic and social status. The characters in the plays raises question about the power politics existing in the Indian society which alienates the “Self” from the “Other”. In these plays, Sircar depicts human existence in its unadorned nakedness. Existentialism is a philosophy which centers on the individual which can be termed as the “Self” and his or her alienating effect with the universe or God which can be considered as the “Other”. Lack of communication between individuals has created a group of people to be considered as “Other” within the society. The people are only running for materialistic pursuits and have forgotten their real goals in their lives and also have forgotten their own identity.



## Chapter – II

### Exploring “Self” and “Other” Dichotomy in *Evam Indrajit*, *Procession* and *Bhoma*

The present chapter is devoted to Badal Sircar’s treatment of the concepts of “self” and “other” with special emphasis on Third Theatre, power politics, subaltern, Orient and Occident dichotomy, memory and imagination, identity crisis as discussed by Badal Sircar, Wilhelm Friedrich Georg Hegel, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Edward Said, Descartes, John Locke, Emmanuel Kant and others as discussed in the introductory chapter. The plays that are taken for discussion in this chapter are *Evam Indrajit*, *Procession* and *Bhoma*.

To begin with, “self” and “other” dichotomies are intertwined in the colonial and post-colonial world of India. This division has captured the mindset of the Indians in such a way that it has continuously led to communal clash and economic subjugation of the lower strata of people. To remove the evils of communal clash and economic subjugation after Independence, the concept of a composite Indian culture had taken birth. This led the Indians to compete with the West in each and every arena. Moreover, there was a continuous craving from the Indians to get rid of the hegemony of the West. It was really a matter of shame for the Indians that they were giving so much superiority to the West even after gaining Independence.

In terms of drama too, the concept of a composite Indian culture arose after Independence. The dramatists from India who were earlier following the Western model of dramatic creation started looking at things around them. This concept also inspired Indian artists to compete with the best around them. There was a platitudinous slogan of seeking one’s roots in terms of drama. This led to a self-belief within the dramatists that they can imbibe raw materials

from their own culture which also possesses a glorious past. Therefore, the “self” and “other” concepts which were dwelling in Indian society started entering Indian theatre. The recognition for a strong individual “self” within the plays started playing into the mindsets of the Indian dramatists. The hammering of the “other” which the West started has also gradually begun from this period onwards.

## I

While dealing with the concepts of “self” and “other” in Indian drama, Badal Sircar’s plays *Evam Indrajit*, *Procession* and *Bhoma* are significant. Though the content and theme of each of these plays are different, the main focus of each of these plays is to portray a strong “self” which will be in constant opposition to the “other”. While *Evam Indrajit* is an absurdist play set during the Naxalite movement in the 1960s, *Procession* and *Bhoma* are third theatre based plays which portrays the plight of the subalterns of Calcutta (now Kolkata). The continuous communal clash, secret killings and economic subjugation of the poor people residing in Calcutta by the upper class people even after India’s independence projected them as “other” whose individual “self” was continuously crushed by the ruling class.

After the production of *Evam Indrajit* in September 1965, the Indians became aware about the talent possessed by Badal Sircar. Through the play, Sircar wanted to portray the frustrations and anger developing within the minds of the educated youth belonging from the middle class residing in Calcutta. The middle class people considered themselves to be the epitome of the nation’s development. The middle class has been continuously attacked by the people possessing Marxist dogmas. It is so because the middle class have always preferred for a culture, national identity and stability. The middle class residing in Bengal have been able to

resolve this conflict by aligning themselves with the leftist front. However, in other parts of the country the middle class have taken a different standpoint by opting for armed forces or the administrative forces. To portray this feeling of alienation and loss of individual identity of the middle class people which ultimately led to the creation of an “other”, Sircar produced *Evam Indrajit*.

*Evam Indrajit* narrates the story of a playwright who struggles hard to write a play but is unable to do so. The playwright says that he cannot write a play because as an assiduous and honest person he feels that the modern life is too unstable which makes it very difficult for a writer to combine the elements existing within it. The writer is very delighted when he encounters the rebel Indrajit and strongly believes that it will help him in the construction of the play. However, later on he realizes that it is not Indrajit who is present, instead of him Nirmal is present which makes him utterly disappointed. Satyadev Dubey, in the introduction to *Evam Indrajit: Three Modern Indian plays*, states, “*Evam Indrajit* is in some ways about the residue; the residue consists of those who have failed to adjust, align and ceased to aspire, and also those who are enmeshed in the day-to-day struggle for survival.” These individuals as stated by Satyadev Dubey, are the “other” who are sidelined from the mainstream of society by the upper class people. As stated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* states that ‘self’ is recognized by an individual as that which is solely controlled by them both at cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. The ‘other’ on the other hand is uncontrolled by these factors. The complexity increases when the ‘self’ comes in contact with more than multiple ‘others’. (8) In this position the self tends to exert a force which causes the self to identify with or behave as an ‘other’. In the same work he also mentions that the consciousness of an ‘other’ is the very condition for the emergence of an individual self. Similarly, we can link *Evam Indrajit*

to Hegel's 'self' and 'other' phenomenon. Here, the 'self' of the urban educated middle class people comes in direct contact with the oppression and suppression inflicted upon them by the upper class people. The force exerted by the 'self' is the force of rebellion which the middle class people apply on the upper class people. This often leads to the creation of an 'other' who continuously fights to diminish the tagline of being an 'other'.

Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit* mentions that 'self-consciousness' is a movement whereby consciousness steps out of it (10). In this process of movement of 'self-consciousness', 'self' and 'other' are both moments of it and also are dependent upon it. The self/other binary makes a person recognize that an individual is separate physically and mentally. At that moment one understands that the separate person is not the "self", instead the individual is an "other" which is separate and cannot be controlled or comprehended physically or mentally. The same case happens with Indrajit and Nirmal within *Evam Indrajit*. The writer after realizing that the individual whom he was assuming to be Indrajit was not actually Indrajit, instead it was Nirmal, he starts considering Nirmal as an 'other'. He begins to understand that Nirmal is separate from Indrajit both physically and mentally.

When the Writer begins to construct his play, he becomes perplexed at times to find out that he is not able to pave out a proper direction for his play. In his frustration, he begins to tear up his manuscripts. His inspiration for the play is a woman whom he names as Manasi. Manasi means creation of the 'mind' and can be considered equivalent to Jung's concept of 'anima'. 'Anima' and 'animus' were two significant terminologies coined by Jung in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* to identify the masculine and feminine characteristics contained within a female and male respectively (58). According to Jung, a woman contains some of the masculine characteristics which help her in thinking rationally. These masculine characteristics

that are present within a female are known as 'animus'. On the other hand, a man contains some feminine characteristics which help him in governing his irrational thinking. These feminine functions present within a male are known as 'anima'. The opposite characteristics present within both the male and female helps them in relating themselves as whole human beings to the world. The anima/animus is a major determiner of how we consider ourselves in the innermost chamber of our heart. The anima/animus within an individual helps one in constituting their 'self'. If the balance between the 'self' and 'other' is not equally proportionate within an individual the 'self' of an individual begins to break down which leads to the formation of an 'other'. Since, the anima/animus has the image making capacity, an individual's 'self' also depends upon it. Therefore, the creation of the imaginary character of Manasi by the Writer also indicates the feminine characteristics contained within the Writer. The character of Manasi created from the core of the mind of the Writer indicates that he desires to think rationally. This rational thinking is necessary for him if he wants to give his play a right direction. He needs to put aside all the frustration he has developed from the environment around him.

The reason for the frustration growing within the Writer is due to the lack of experience within him. He is unable to gather experience from his surroundings. He does not know about his own society and also about his own people. He can be termed as anti-social. Therefore, his source of material must be the people sitting in the auditorium. Generally, during the 1960s the middle class people were frequent visitors to theatre. Therefore, the Writer must take the middle class people as his source for the play. In doing so he misses in covering the important facts about his own society. However, the Writer finds the middle class people present in the auditorium not suitable as audience. The Auntie's continuous presence within the play reminds the Writer that he must not forget about his significant daily functions such as eating and

sleeping. Sircar at the beginning of the play mentions to the reader that the auntie may also be called ‘mother’, ‘elder sister’ or anything else. She continuously goes on rebuking the Writer because she cannot understand why he needs to write a play by forgetting his daily necessities. Her continuous homilies remind the Writer that there is no need of writing a play if one forgets about his own necessities and his own people. Her homilies which remind the Writer about his basic needs are:

AUNTIE : I just can’t understand you!

[No response from the Writer.]

I’m asking you.... Are you coming in to eat or aren’t you? You are the limit! I can’t put up with this any longer.... (1-3)

The words of the auntie continuously remind the Writer that he needs to remember about his own ‘self’. One can only write a good play if one is alert about his own surroundings. The ‘self’ feels secure only if it is aware about the society in which it is living. If one is not conscious about his own basic needs than how can that individual remains alert about the needs of the society. When the play progresses it can be noticed that the Auntie and Manasi begin to counterpoint each other.

Badal Sircar was a master who knew how to illuminate the conditions of the society in front of the audience. He wanted to do so in order to make the people free from the evils residing within the society. He believed that theatre is a social commitment and not a means of entertainment. It is in this context that Sircar in an interview with Avik Ghosh stated, “Social relevance, I believe is automatic with every writer, I mean if he is sincere. Everyman, not only a writer feels he belongs to a society, whatever that society is. And his relations with and

responsibilities to that society automatically come out in his writings.” (Ghosh 2) Keeping these facts in mind, *Evam Indrajit* was written as an existential play not as a means of entertainment but with a will to reform the society.

*Evam Indrajit* is concerned with existential related issues found in the society and in this regard it is considered as an existential play. One significant aspect which the proponents of Theatre of Absurd want to assert is the cause and effect of lack of communication between human beings. Sircar, through his characters in the play, wants to assert that due to the lack of communication between individuals there has been a barrier created among the people in the society. Families have broken apart, the friendship bond has been weakened, and also men have become greedy to look for the hidden things concealed within the earth. Sircar decided to deal with absurd themes in his plays when he saw the socio-economic condition of Bengal in the 1960s and 1970s which was rather depressing and dark. The time period after the World War II was rather dark for Bengal because various evil practices existed in the state such as black marketing, famine, communal riots, infiltration of refugees, post independence economic crisis and also division between the upper and the lower class which resulted in heated revolution. E Renuka and Shampa Bhattacharjee in *Urban Bias as a Postcolonial Distortion: A Note on Badal Sircar's Third Theatre* described the socio-political condition of Bengal during the time of Sircar in these words:

Sircar, through his plays, could expose some of the postcolonial problems that haunt the city- the unemployed, the frustrated and angry youth, pestering beggars, black marketers, soaring prices, selfish political leaders, cutthroat religious fanatics, status-quoist administrators and domineering magnets- all

living in a market place – like society ridden with fake encounter deaths, human degradation and so on. (151)

So, from the above statement it can be said that Sircar through the characters of his play hopes to achieve a synthesis of absurdist philosophy and that of the Indian reality prevailing in the post and pre-independence Indian society. The characters in Sircar's plays feel that they have failed to communicate their feelings. Sircar's play *Evam Indrajit* exposes the dilemma of the Indians by bringing a synthesis of existentialism and Indian reality. It is a play which was first staged in the year 1965 and is about the prevalent attitudes, vague feelings and frustrations which are starting to grip the Indians slowly and steadily. The play ends with both the characters Indrajit and the 'Writer' looking for their aim in life when they do not find anything significant in writing and living. The prevalent attitudes, vague feelings and frustrations which have increased in the minds of the Indians have led to a broken 'self'. This broken 'self' has led to the crushing of individual identity. This identity crisis has ultimately helped in the formation of an 'other' which is different from the 'self'. This 'other' is formed from the synthesis of existentialism and Indian reality.

However, Badal Sircar has often denied the fact that *Evam Indrajit* is an existential play. He said that he knew nothing about the philosophies of existentialism. Moreover, he mentioned that he never considered the play as a political play. Natesan Sharda Iyer in *Musings on Indian Writing in English: Drama* (Volume 3) states:

Badal Sircar is against the theatre being a commodity for sale to the audience resulting in the detachment between the player and the spectator. He has always argued in favour of spectators being an integral part of the theatre. (34)



In *Evam Indrajit*, we can notice how the emptiness of modern life is depicted through the characters within the play. The repetition of the same activities day by day created a sense of boredom in the minds of the characters. They became frustrated and desired to escape to another world where they can find calmness of mind and spirit. Existentialist philosophy believed in the ideology that we repeat the same activities day by day to pass through the time period in which we exist. However, the ultimate aim of repeating such daily activities is to reach to our final destination which is death. Though unaware of the existentialist philosophy, Sircar through *Evam Indrajit* wanted to portray the alienation of the individual 'self' from the 'other'. This alienation is developed through the repetition of the same activities in our day to day life. As mentioned in the first chapter in the context of Jacques Lacan's theory of 'self' that 'self' is the centre point through which an individual's existence can be felt, similarly Sircar through *Evam Indrajit* wants to address the same proposition that if the individual in the modern world does not know how to acknowledge the 'self' then the existence will also be in a state of jeopardy.

Herodotus and Socrates were two great philosophers from the ancient period. However, both of them varied in some regards in their opinion regarding the existence of 'self'. Herodotus in *The Histories* gave the opinion that the constitution of the 'self' was only possible if there was a free dwelling between Nature and Spirit. On the other hand, Socrates believed that the 'self' could be constituted through a dialogue between the self and the soul. Sircar can be said to be a believer in the ideologies of both Herodotus and Socrates. He never wanted individuals to be bound by the pangs of society. He believed that 'self' must be able to dwell freely with Nature. If one is not able to communicate properly with the soul, that individual will not be able to demonstrate his strong 'self' before the 'other'. Since the four

protagonists of *Evam Indrajit*, Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit are not able to dwell freely with Nature, their 'self' too starts to shatter. All the four protagonists are confined to the monotony of their existence. However, everyone started to sympathize with Indrajit, it is so because through Indrajit one can relate their own lives. They can start analyzing the position of their own 'self'.

*Evam Indrajit* focuses on the urban middle class people who have been striving for stability and a national identity. They are not allowed to get hold of their desires by the ruling class. Instead of it, they are made to struggle for their existence within the society. This struggle for existence has led to the formation of angst, frustration and depression within the mindset of the middle class youth. They wanted to climb the ladder of social mobility but the ruling class never allowed them to do so. The characters in *Evam Indrajit* too face same sorts of problem. They are made to struggle within themselves which has led them to possess a broken 'self'.

Identity crisis is one of the significant themes in the modern world and Sircar through his characters wanted to highlight the same aspect in his play. The Writer who is an important character from the play strived hard to construct a plot for his play but failed to do so again and again. He failed in doing so because he had not experienced reality from its core. He was only willing to focus on the middle class society from which he belonged in his play. He did not realize that without knowing his people and his society properly it was impossible to portray the society properly. Therefore, he tore the pages again and again because he was unable to construct the plot of the play. He was not able to recognize the significance of his individual 'self' which ultimately led him in a mind full of disarray. This disarray within him did not allow him to decipher the situation and people around him.

Through his existential play, Sircar also wanted to focus on the fact that in an existential world, one's identity is not fixed. It has no stability and it changed based on the situation. The Writer who was busy in constructing his play, mentioned to the four youths that the female character of his play will be named Manashi. He also referred that she had a good relationship with Indrajit and questioned him about his relationship with her. However, as soon as Indrajit started speaking it was found that the name of the girl was not Manashi. So, at once the identity of the girl changed as the narrator changed. Indrajit mentioned that both he and the girl are cousins and also good friends and often shared their feelings with each other. At this moment, a conversation between Indrajit and the girl at a public park is mentioned where Indrajit states that he is eager to break the shackles of the rules and regulations laid down by the society. However, the girl states that only the women folk are required to follow the rules of the society. The male folk are never confined in those rules. In reply to this statement, Indrajit mentions that he is a representative from the modern youth, so he will not hesitate to break the unnecessary shackles of society.

Indrajit: Is there a rule that one has to abide by rules?

Manasi: What else can one do?

Indrajit: One can hate rules. Why should they be there at all?

Manasi: What would be the point of hating them?

Indrajit: What's the point of worshipping the rope that binds you?

Manasi: I'm not asking you to worship it.

Indrajit: But you are! If the rope is a rule and you accept it happily that is worshipping it.

Manasi: What else would you do with it?

Indrajit: Perhaps – tear it into shreds. Bring down all these walls which surround us. (215)

Indrajit's defiance of rules occurred only due to the reason that he had acquired enough knowledge and knew how to differentiate between right and wrong. He knew which rules were justifiable and which were not. Moreover, it can be said that he had been able to locate his own 'self' within the 'other'. Through the process of education he had been able to mould his 'self'. He knew that the rules laid down by a particular society will only hamper the progress of his 'self'. In this context, Descartes' most famous statement 'I think, therefore I am' can be linked with the ideology of Indrajit. Descartes always believed that our self is in a continuous process of discovery. While in this process of discovery, it receives jolts from its surroundings due to the rules laid down by the society. If it can sustain those jolts then only it can constitute its 'self' properly. Indrajit can also be said to be a staunch follower of Descartes' statement 'I think, therefore I am'. It is in this context he wanted to show that he has his own power of reasoning by mentioning to Manasi, "If I hadn't tasted the fruit of knowledge I could have gone on living in this paradise of your blessed society of rules. Now I can only batter my head against the wall." (216) Through this statement, Indrajit's power of thinking and reasoning can be witnessed. He will not hesitate to revolt against the ill forces residing within the society. He is an epitome of modern youth, who has enough courage and confidence to face any situation arising before him.

The frustration of the modern youth towards the set up of the society can be noticed continuously in the voice of Indrajit. He voiced his angst often before Manashi. He was so much frustrated with the pressure put over by the society that he often made up his mind to run away from this world to abroad. He believed that if he moved abroad he will get proper value for his educational qualification and also his caliber. However, Manashi often tried to persuade him to stay in this world and believe in his inner self. She can be said to continuously put within him a sense of positivity, through which he can put aside the barriers arising before him. Though Indrajit never moved away from his own world but he also possessed his voice of anger again and again before Manashi. He can be said to possess a tone of arrogance within him. The following conversation supports this notion:

Manasi:        Would you settle down if we got married?

Indrajit:      I don't know. I can't decide anything now. I could once.

Manasi:        Do you often feel angry with me?

Indrajit:      Not any more. Who knows what marriage would do to us.  
Perhaps even our friendship would die.

Manasi:        Perhaps there will be another type of friendship – something  
deeper, more meaningful ...

Indrajit:      I don't know, Manasi, I don't know anything. I've thought a lot.  
Argued a lot. But I can't find an answer. I'm tired now.... I just  
feel tired – exhausted. I just do what I feel like doing at the  
moment. (237)

The above statement from the play reveals how unsure Indrajit feels from his life and surroundings. He was not only unsure about his career but also he was not sure what to do about his relationship with Manashi. The turmoil within his inner self led him to believe that if he marries her their friendship would be in a state of jeopardy. On the other hand, Manashi seemed to be too much determined in her relationship with Indrajit. She is the one who not only provided him moral boosting support but also was willing to go ahead with him in their relationship and give it a more meaningful name. Therefore, in this context, Carl Jung's two notable concepts of 'anima' and 'animus' can be applied to the characters Indrajit and Manashi. These two concepts were coined by Jung to identify the masculine and feminine characteristics contained within a female and male respectively. According to Jung, a woman contained some of the masculine characteristics which helped her in thinking rationally. These masculine characteristics that were present within a female were known as 'animus'. On the other hand, a man contained some feminine characteristics which helped him in governing his irrational thinking. These feminine functions present within a male are known as 'anima'. The opposite characteristics present within both the male and female helps them in relating themselves as whole human beings to the world. In the play, it can be seen that Indrajit who was an educated youth representing modern era was emotional. He broke down often at his failures and could not stabilize himself from his constant breakdowns. It can be said that he could not give a stabilized position to his 'self'. So, Indrajit possessed 'anima' which governed his irrational thinking. On the other hand, Manashi who was a lady did not break down so often. Instead she stood as a pillar to support the weak Indrajit. She was the one who continuously guided Indrajit when he diverted from his right direction. It can be said that she possessed a strong 'self' and also was an ideal representation of how a modern individual must be in order to withstand the attacks of trauma, dissatisfaction and

alienation. She possessed 'animus' which helped her in thinking rationally during the time of individual crisis. So, it is seen that both Indrajit and Manashi complemented each other very well due to the opposite qualities that they possessed within themselves.

The Writer too often questioned Indrajit about his relationship with Manashi and also regarding the status of his job. He was very much keen to look at the lives of young educated people like Indrajit because it provided him with a good source for his play. Indrajit informed him that his relationship with Manashi was just bound in professional terms. It was not as serious as others would imagine it to be. Moreover, the job in which he was engaged was also not a stable one, it was transferrable and therefore he had to travel to different places like Bombay, Jullundur, Meerut and Udaipur.

The post World War II was full of disillusionment, broken self and alienation developing within the mindset of the people. In West Bengal too this sort of dissatisfaction arose angst within the mindset of the post war people who were in the process of stabilizing themselves. All in all, it can be said that the 1960s was a period of gloomy days for the modern youth who were affected by the traumatic (re)-memories of the world war and the freedom struggle movement that ended in 1947. Charles Darwin's notion of 'survival of the fittest' can therefore be aptly applied to the struggling individuals of this era. The people were struggling for the establishment of their own identities in this turmoil era. They have forgotten their strong past and began to live in a present day situation which was not at all susceptible for them. The future was also bleak for them because they did not have their own individuality. Instead they were living in a society whose ingredients were borrowed from other societies. They did not have anything to call their own.

The people in modern world communicated in a language which left no trace mark upon the mindset of other individuals. Therefore, Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* can be aptly denoted as an absurd play because it depicted the existential crisis prevailing within a modern society. Moreover, the inability of language to communicate properly also lends this play an absurd touch. In the play, the theme of absurdity was taken to a new height by the twelve poems and one full song. These poems cannot be separated from the central theme of the poem. Though, the main motive of the writer was to create an individual who was able to display his strong 'self' by standing outside of the mundane lifestyle of society, but in actuality he was a failure in doing so. His main character Indrajit who often revealed that his name is Nirmal too, cannot move beyond the periphery of routine daily life. He often found disturbances from other people around him who continuously stood in opposition to his progression of 'self'. Critics have also noticed the inherent question arose by Badal Sircar within his plays. In the essay, "Disillusionment and Social Change: A Re-reading of Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*", Moutushi Chakravartee has mentioned about the monotonous life experienced by the modern individuals. Moreover, she has also tried to pluck out the inherent theme of meek surrender to this lifestyle by the 'self'. She believed that by doing so, we are putting our self in harm's way. She wrote:

Our life is a ritual of gyration, whose significance eludes us and most of us do not even bother to question why we do what we do. Perhaps, one tries to follow the path of the least resistance (Chakravartee 65).

Chakravartee through this statement wanted to stress on the fact that by not putting resistance to the absorption of daily routine lives into one's life, one was allowing mundaneness into their life. This mundane life will ultimately hamper the progression of the 'self'. It will not be eager to move towards a new direction by breaking the shackles of tradition, customs which



has already engulfed the mindset of the individuals. The mundane and absurd life that the individuals of the post-war world have been encompassed within finds expression in the song in the play:

One-two-three-two-one-two-three

One-two-three-two-one-two-three

Four-five-six

Four-five-six-five-four-five-six

Four-five-six-five-four-five-six

Seven-eight-nine

Seven-eight-nine-eight-seven-eight-nine

Seven-eight-nine-eight-seven-eight-nine

Nine-eight-seven-six-five-four-three-two-one (Act I, p. 205)

This song depicts the repetition of the same numbers again and again. Therefore, the song is unable to bring forward any emotions out of any individual. Similarly, in our lives too, we repeat the same actions and activities again and again. This repetition of activities made us lose the charm for the work that we do. The same nihilistic activities took place in the lives of the characters within the play such as Amal-Vimal-Kamal. The lack of anything new in their lives has made their life shatter into broken pieces. These broken pieces can only be joined by some eventful happenings which need to stand apart from the activities taking place in our daily life.

The writer summarizes the song through this comment where he states that it is completely undramatic to create a play through the characters residing in this modern world.

The writer analyzes the song and acknowledges the fact that it begins with the numeral 'one' and ends similarly with another numeral 'nine'. This point towards the fact that our life moves around in circular motion and we are engulfed in the process of repeating the same activities again and again. In Act II we get a glimpse of the suffocating feeling within the minds of the individual through the statement expressed by the writer:

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.

My quests are tired and still is unknown the last analysis of the world.

My efforts limp while the heavy earth lies immobile and numb.

Hope, waiting hope, waiting on the banks of death is tired too.

Go, take your questions, logic arguments with you.

Let me be....

In the dark womb of shadows let me sleep....

I am very tired. (Act II, p. 238)

This feeling of happening nothing within the gyre of the soul progresses along with the development of the play. This Weltschmerz finds place within the deepest core of the soul of Indrajit too. He repeats the same sentiments across

the play:

Keeping afloat

Clutching at a piece of straw,

Life resting on a wretched faith

Of a believer.

The land is blurred

In a grey mist of sighs,

The bright realms beyond the clouds

Are lost in lies

In this love sojourn.

Of false consolations!

Take away the blindfold of faith

From the eyes!

Get drowned!

Go under and see

How far is the bottom

How deep!

Man moves;

Man is the strangest of creatures!

He builds his house on the rocks

In the depths of the seas. (Act I, pp. 241-242)

Through this song, it can be noticed that an educated youth like Indrajit too suffered from the clutches of depression due to the lack of anything new in his life. He had taken education

with the hope of achieving something which will be different from his surroundings. This 'something' will help him in satisfying the demands of his 'self'. The 'self' always tended to possess something which is different from the 'other'. It did not want to remain engulfed in the dynamics of 'other'. This clash between 'self' and 'other' made a person unhappy with its surroundings. The 'self' did not want its life to be bound in a circular motion where all the middle class ritualistic life cycles are repeated again and again. In this cyclical nature of life, the past and the future seemed to be similar to each other.

The play was set in the post-colonial era where othering of a group of people was done to establish control over them. Similarly, in the play too, we find that opinions of modern educated youth like Amal-Vimal-Kamal and Indrajit are not considered important by the government. It is so because their opinions vary from the opinions of those who are in power. Therefore, even though they remain in a democratic society, they are deprived of their basic rights. Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* stressed on the fact that power is created artificially and exercised by the source which is generally the institution. (95, 102) He also mentioned that power is employed in a "net like organization" and individuals "circulated between its threads". So, in the post-colonial Indian society the net like organization is the government and the bureaucrats' working in its order. However, individuals like Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit had to circulate their lives based on the orders given by the government. This led them to possess a revolutionary attitude at times because there is no one who could listen to their sentiments.

## II

Another play of Sircar which made him famous as a writer is *Procession*. Sircar was well aware about the situation prevailing in post-war Calcutta (now Kolkata). There was complete disarray in the society of that period as the people could not stabilize themselves properly due to different sort of problems arising around them. To depict those sorts of problems and different demonstrations coming out in the streets to get rid of those problems, he decided to write *Procession*. His third theatre concept proved to be a magic for him during the enactment of the play. Since, in a third theatre, it was necessary for the audience to take part as actors in the enactment of the play, Sircar could easily make the audience part of the procession of the play. This play was first performed by the group Satabdi on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1974 under the title *Michhil*. The performance took place at a village named Ramchandrapur in West Bengal.

The play can be considered as satirical in the sense that it portrayed the evil practices of the city of Calcutta. In the postcolonial world, Calcutta was considered as a city where different sort of procession were taken out time and again in order to protest against the authority. However, though the play was set in Calcutta, it contained a universal appeal. The problems residing in Calcutta was not only about the problems faced by the people residing in the city, but also about the world population who have remained subaltern all throughout their lives. In this regard the term ‘subaltern’ which was introduced by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (1973) can be applied to the lower strata of people residing in Calcutta. Gramsci considered the people who are outside of the hegemonic structure as subaltern groups. Gayatri Spivak in *Scattered speculations on the Subaltern and the popular* ( 2005 ), provided us with a more modified definition of ‘subaltern’ where she mentioned that to be a subaltern meant to be removed from all lines of social mobility. Spivak in her work mentioned how often the

story given by the elite group was considered as the real story by the general population. In this context Spivak wanted to prove that the subaltern did not have a voice, and cannot mobilize. This definition of subalternity can be aptly applied to the characters of *Procession*. These characters were involved in different sort of processions because they were placed outside the hegemonic structure. They were also removed from all lines of social mobility.

The opening scene of the play introduces five young men who are One, Two, Three, Four and Five. Along with them a woman named Six is also seen. While they are busy among themselves, suddenly a power cut occurs and they are left in a state of disarray pondering what may have caused the power cut. While they are providing different reasons behind the power-cut, a sudden scream is heard indicating that someone might have been murdered.

ONE:           What's happened? Why did the lights go out?

TWO:           Is it a fuse?

THREE:       Load shedding! What a bother, everyday ....

FOUR:         No, it's sabotage. Someone must have cut the wire ....

FIVE:         Careful! It's perfect for pickpockets and thieves...

SIX:           Can't see a thing. What'll happen?

ONE:           What's that? What's that?

TWO:           Who screamed?

THREE:       Murder! There's been a murder.

FOUR: No, no, someone must have fallen in a hole.

FIVE: Someone's been stabbed! Watch out! (14)

At this crucial juncture the involvement of the audience as active participants is required. The audiences are asked to lighten up the surrounding by lighting the matchstick. The entire audience who were sitting in a passive way enjoying the play starts lighting the premises through their matchstick and begins looking for the source of the scream. They fail to find the corpse but Five is sure that a murder took place a little while ago. While the audience and the characters are searching for the corpse, a police officer arrives and enquires about the reason for the gathering at that spot. When he is being informed that a murder took place a while ago but they are unable to find the corpse, he mentions that these are all rumors and no such incidence took place. He scolds them for spreading false rumours and says, "Nonsense. False rumours. Go home, all of you" (16) Khoka who was listening to all those discussions now begins to attempt to draw attention of the people present and also the audience present there to put forward his insignificant identity before them. He begins uttering:

KHOKA: I was killed. I. Me. Here I am. I've been killed. I. I. Here - here I am. They killed me. I'm dead. I was killed just now. I was killed today. I was killed yesterday. I was killed the day before yesterday. The day before the day before. Last week. Last month. Last year. I am killed every day. Every day, killed, every day, dead, every day. I'll be killed tomorrow. Day after tomorrow. Day after, the day after that, next week. Next month. Next year. I, me. Why can't you see me? Why can't you hear me? I. Here I am

– I was killed – I am dead – I am killed everyday – everyday  
 everyday killed every day dead every day (17).

Khoka's screams go in vain as no one was willing to help him and he finally felt in a heap and his voice was submerged. The police officer though aware of the fact that there was something wrong going on there, crosses the places silently. In this context, people like Khoka can be termed as 'subaltern' whose 'self' continually has to face humiliation in this society. Their identities are no longer valued by the dominant group of people. In this case the 'other' which was the alter ego of the 'self', appeared in case of Khoka. He felt neglected from his surroundings and in this case evoked his 'other' to challenge his surroundings. Just as in *Orientalism*, where it depicted the derogatory life of the 'other', Sircar too through the character of Khoka brought forward all the individuals who were considered as 'other'. Through the character of Khoka and through his absurd and whimsical words, Sircar wanted to bring awareness into the minds of other individuals who were in a similar dehumanized condition. If they wanted to improve their condition, they had to learn to make their 'self' stronger. Just like Edward Said who through his work wanted to decipher the 'other' that the West had categorized and place it within the realm of rationality, similarly, Sircar through the presentation of Khoka wanted to bring Indian individual who were 'otherized' by society within the realm of rationality. He wanted them not to possess a broken 'self, instead he wanted them to stand toe to toe with their suppressors by revolting against them.

Ania Loomba in *Colonialism and Postcolonialism* asserted that knowledge is "not innocent but profoundly connected with the operations of power". (Loomba 43) So, the upper class society which boasts of possessing the highest form of education did not apply it on something which is fruitful for the society, instead they used knowledge to gain power over the



lower strata of society. In the play too, it can be seen that the police officer who has been entrusted with the job of keeping law and order intact, uses it in the reverse way. He used law and order to fulfill his own demands. From the reaction that he gave when the people who heard the scream of Khoka asking for help, went near him in order that he might bring the situation under control, it can be judged that he is not concerned in helping the poor people. He only wanted to work for the people who will help him in gaining easy money. The murder of Khoka which is being mentioned again and again in the play is however symbolic. This murder instead of signifying the death of a person may signify the death of the 'self' of individuals like Khoka. They are the subalterns as described by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*. According to Gramsci, subalterns are a subjugated social category and people of 'inferior rank', who are marginalized in the hegemonic power structure of the colonial set up. (Gramsci 68) Individuals like Khoka are marginalized in the hegemonic power structure. They are deprived of their basic rights and made to lead a miserable life by the people who are in power. In this manner, they die daily in the humdrum of materialistic society. The paragraph where Khoka mentioned that he dies daily and in every moment is therefore significant since it symbolized the death of the 'self' within him. The groups who were in power never let them to unite and by the act of ignoring one individual who was in desperate condition of getting his 'self' crushed, they tried to inflict fear in the minds of the other group members too.

Along with Khoka, another character who possessed a tattered 'self' is the Old Man. He entered the scene when the people singing Chorus in kirtan style took Khoka's stiff body on their shoulder. He wore a clown's cap and invited the people who have missed the play, to watch the play along with him. His speech was significant in the context of the play because in his speech he mentioned various forms of procession going on in the society.

OLD MAN: Chha Ra Ra Ra Ra Ra Ra Ra Ya Hu-u-u. Michhil! Michhil! Funeral processions, demonstrations, parades, walks, auspicious journeys, inauspicious journeys, non-journeys. Come along, come along, the Michhil's on the move.... It's the Michhil, Michhil, Michhils for food and clothes, Michhils for salvation, Michhils for the revolution, military Michhils, Michhils of refugees, Michhils for flood relief, mourning Michhils, protest Michhils, festive Michhils, star-studded Michhils. (18)

The various sort of processions mentioned by the Old Man brought forward the status of people who were considered as 'other' by the society. They did not get anything so easily; they had to protest for the injustice meted upon them either in a peaceful manner in the form of procession or hunger strike or they had to adopt violent means to get what is theirs by birth. In this context, Maurice Halbwachs' comment in *On Collective Memory*: "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories" and that "it is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" is significant. (Halbwachs 38) Through his comment, he wanted to lay stress on the matter that in a society there are different groups of people who felt alienated from other groups due to the effect of remembrance. The indigenous people were forced to remember and recollect their past life in a colonial rule through the lens of the colonizers. This forced remembrance often created a distance between the 'self' and 'other'. The 'other' started revolting against the ideologies of the 'self'. So, the people who were part of various kinds of procession continuously felt neglected from the dominant class in the society. This remembrance of feeling of being neglected again and again created a distance between their 'self' and the 'other'. They felt that they were made 'other' by the dominant group by depriving them from

basic rights. It is for this reason that the subalterns came together in order to stage protest against the ruling class.

John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* identified memory as an ‘anchor’ for identity, coherence and continuity. (Locke 12) To him, memories did not really exist as ‘things’; these are rather impressions of perception that can be revived and recoloured each and every time we recall the past. He also mentioned that pain and pleasure are mostly remembered because they have a lasting impression. The pain and pleasures from the past are mostly responsible for creating one’s self. It may be either a united self or a broken self. The Old Man after noticing the procession recollected his days as a young child. He remembered how much he was happy during his childhood days. He recollected how one day he went for an outing along with his father. On that day, he saw processions on the road and stared at them amusingly. However, he was most excited to notice the bending of each road. Along with it, he was also interested in the way how each road after disappearing produced a new road in return. The excitement of noticing the creation of a new road at every bending made him get lost from his father. The purpose of watching each and every procession after this incident was in hope that one of the processions will help him in getting close towards his family. The search for an appropriate procession to reach his desired aim may also symbolize the vagueness of the processions going around in the streets of Calcutta. Though the people united in the processions to get their basic rights, but they could not stick to their motives till the end. Since they already had a tattered ‘self’, their ‘self’ could not withstand more disappointments and failures in their revolution. It desired to get glimpse of success from the very onset of their processions.

The busy humdrum lifestyle in Calcutta did not allow the ‘self’ of individuals like Khoka and the Old Man to get closer to their real procession in life. They were continuously disturbed

by various sorts of news, events, and people around them. In this regard, Emmanuel Kant who combined both the theories of rationalism and empiricism to provide his ideas about the concept of 'self' is significant. In his seminal text *Critique of Pure Reason*, he stated that the existence of the domain of reason was almost impossible without the experiences around it. (Kant 34)

However, he considered the human mind as an active participant who was aware about its own surroundings and also took part in arranging and structuring the experiences around it. Though the minds of Khoka and the Old Man were both disturbed due to their troubled surroundings, however this did not make them stay away from the domain of reason. The experiences around them made them more of a reasonable thinker. The various sort of news circulated around them helped them in reforming their 'self'. Through the characters of Khoka and the Old Man, Sircar wanted to display the difference in thinking between the older generation and the new generation. The old generation possessed a stronger 'self' as they were quite determined in their aims. On the other hand, the new generation was more emotional and less practical. Therefore, Veena Noble Dass in *Modern Indian Drama in English Translation* mentioned that "the past and the present, youth and age coalesce as the Old Man and the Boy discover that they are part of the same continuum, and share a similar dilemma". (Dass 1) Though the older generation had a stronger 'self' in comparison to the younger generation, there was no denial in the fact that they were disturbed too by the outside environment. They were disturbed by news such as:

ONE: Paper! Paper! Ananda Bazar, Amritabazar, Jugantar, Statesman, Times,

Hindu – Paper! Paper

TWO: Fresh conflict in the Middle East.

THREE: Oil crisis all over the world.

FOUR: Another hydrogen bomb explosion in the Pacific.

FIVE: Another experiment with the artificial heart.

ONE: Earthquake in Peru.

TWO: Cyclone in Bangladesh.

THREE: Uprising in Chile. (22)

So, it can be seen through the discussion of the characters that negativity surrounds all around individuals like Khoka and the Old Man. In such a situation, their 'self' which were already broken apart, cannot get into a stable condition. Besides this negative news, other things that disturbed the individual is the sounds in railway station created by vendors, salesmen and beggars. Along with the railway station, the people were also busy fighting in overcrowded buses for a bit of space to keep their feet. So, it can be stated that the 'self' of the modern individuals were completely different from those living in the Romantic period. The 'self' of the Romantics was concerned with feelings and emotions of an individual. They were completely against the rationalists who stressed more on the subject of reason and intellect. They were more subjective in their approach as compared to the rationalists. They believed that the self was the source of all which was true and noble and could easily transcend reason and intellect. Jean Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract* stressed on the fact that when the human soul was around nature it was able to achieve its purity. However, when it got the touch of the corrupt society, the self got broken apart and that helped in the formation of the 'other' which was not pure. Similarly, in the play, the characters are within a corrupt society where they have no time and opportunity to get in touch with nature. This has led to the fact that the 'self' is no longer a source of things which is true and noble. In this regard, it cannot transcend reason and intellect, which in turn has made the 'self' break down into pieces and create an 'other' which was not at all pure.

The uncertainties in the lives of both Old Man and Khoka have created a sense of dilemma in their minds. For this reason, after a while they re-enter the scene and begin crying to gain sympathy from the audience. They are lost in the processions of life and want to escape the vague processions. They are in search of a path to re-discover their lost 'self'.

OLD MAN: Michhil Michhil I've lost my way. I seek a road through road  
after road Michhil Michhil the road home. Not the old home,  
another home, true home, truly true home Michhil Michhil

KHOKA: Michhil Michhil on the highways on the footpaths Michhil  
Michhil. Every day on the highways on the footpaths the Michhils  
grind me to dust crush me underfoot kill me Michhil Michhil....

(27)

*Procession* can be termed as one of the significant plays of Badal Sircar since through it, he brings forward different cultures and traditions of India. The play mentions the various types of processions taken out during festivals of different religions such as Rathyatra, Muharram, Christmas, Durga, Lakshmi and Kali Puja. After the mentioning of different processions, the play introduces us to the greatest procession taken out in India and that is about the processions taken out during the Indian freedom movement. During this procession, various inspirational slogans were given in order to inspire the masses:

TWO: Quit India.

THREE: Do or Die.

FOUR: Karenge ya marenge.

FIVE: British Imperialists, leave India!

ONE: Ladke lenge Pakistan. We'll win Pakistan by force. (30)

Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit* used a significant terminology which is 'self-consciousness'. He stated that 'self-consciousness' is a movement whereby consciousness steps out of it. In this process of movement of 'self-consciousness', 'self' and 'other' are both moments of it and also are dependent upon it. Consciousness can only recognize its self-consciousness aspect by putting an 'other' in front of it. In this context, Hegel mentioned that 'self-consciousness' was nothing more than the return from otherness. The 'self' at a moment was defined negatively, by what it was not and in the process returned to the object that it must once again overcome. During the Independence movement, the Indians who were being treated as others by the British were made to forget about their identity. They were humiliated in their own country and they were made to bear all those assaults without any protest. After bearing all those assaults, a time arrived when they became 'self-conscious' regarding the injustice meted upon them. The time had finally arrived where they needed to decide whether they wanted to protect their 'self' or allow themselves to get converted into an 'other'. The 'self-conscious' moment wherein they decided to return from the state of otherness was a stepping stone for India's freedom movement. The various slogans used in the freedom movement which was mentioned above are indicative that the Indian masses wanted to bring back their 'self' of being an Indian. The Indians could only recognize their 'self' at the cost of being converted into a subaltern in their own land. Their subaltern status could be attributed as the conversion of them

to an 'other'. By putting this state of 'other' before them, their consciousness crept them into the freedom movement and finally they were able to achieve independence from the colonizers.

The voice of the Master who appeared later on in the play can be said to be the conscience of the Indians whose 'self' had been marred through the slavery of the British. He is the hidden conscience which needs to trigger at the right moment to awaken the 'self'. Through his speech, he reminded the audience about the great personalities of India and their contributions towards this land. He asks the people not to forget the contributions of the eminent personalities. He also asked the people to do their duties as a citizen of India.

THE MASTER: Remember our national heritage. Remember the numberless martyrs in our struggle for freedom. Remember the revolutionary heroes of our fiery days. Remember – India is the country of Manu, Parashar, Kalidas, Bhababhuti, Sita, Savitri, Sri Chaitanya and Gandhiji. Remember the invincible strength of the principle of Non-violence. Remember that it is our responsibility to give spiritual leadership to the world. Remember the greatness of democracy in India. Remember the fundamental rights of the constitution ..... (31-32)

After the interaction of the Master with the audience, the Old Man and Khoka appeared again in the scene. The Old Man tried to console Khoka who believed that he has been killed by someone. The Old Man invited Khoka to his home which was towards the North direction and while they were on their way to the home of the Old Man, they came across different sorts of processions. These colourful processions made their 'self' stammer. They could not decide



which procession will lead them to their 'real home'. This 'real home' may indicate the happiness and contentment of their life which was found within a home and amongst the family members living in it. The Old Man referred to the various processions as:

OLD MAN: Such colours of the processions, such forms. So many words in the processions, so many sounds. I'm lost in the colours of their banners, lost in the sounds of marching feet, lost and straying, lost and straying, lost and no returning. Lost as I walk the roads and crossroads. Roam the byways and highways, still lost – which way is home? The way home is lost to me. To my real home, my really truly only home. Where's the procession that'll show me my way home? The really truly only Michhil? There - again!  
Again a procession, more processions, there, coming - there! (46)

The frustration of the Old Man and Khoka increased gradually after watching various sorts of processions. They were not sure regarding which procession they must join in order to find their desired happiness in their life. They wanted to give their 'self', a direction by joining the right procession.

OLD MAN: Processions. Processions. They come. They will come. They will come one day. They really truly only procession. When will it come? When will it? When? When? (47)

On the other hand, Khoka who was listening to all kinds of frustration expressed by the Old Man, expressed his angst in front of the audience. He mentioned that all the processions that one has witnessed were nothing more than a procession leading to death. According to him, these

processions are death processions because it was not able to fulfill the demand of any individual. Though the people were engaged in joining different sorts of processions, but instead of it in every six second people were dying due to lack of food. He blames the audience too for the misfortunes to individuals like them because in spite of them having a voice, they just stared at the processions and led the helpless individuals like them starve to death. He mentioned that they were just like puppets who were busy enjoying live murders of people like them. In the process of enjoying other's suffering, they could not realize the fact that one day they might too have to suffer like them and in that case there will be no one to help them.

KHOKA: ... Yes, you kill, you have killed. I'm killing, you are killing –  
 we are killers, all. We all kill, we all get killed. We kill by sitting  
 quietly and doing nothing at all, we get killed. Our silent  
 watching our sitting all this kills. Stop it! Stop it! (48)

The breaking down of 'self' of both Khoka and the Old Man can be noticed in the next scenes. The frustrated Khoka is later on summoned by a police officer along with five other men. They get hold of him and later on murder him in different manners such as beheading him and hanging him. The murder of Khoka is however symbolic since it signifies the crushing of his 'self' due to his continuous failure in his life. The play brings to limelight this scene in a very charming manner. First of all, during the scene of Khoka's murder, the lights are dimmed to suggest the intensity of this scene. Later on, when the lights appear Khoka's dead body can be seen lying on the floor. The Old Man who had been accompanying Khoka, is utterly shocked by the course of events. He exclaims to the audience that Khoka has not been murdered, instead he finds himself with a lost 'self'. He possessed a lost 'self' since he has been distanced by his own society. Since he has been treated as an 'other' by the society, he often believed that he has lost

his existence in this world and is almost like a dead person. He has lost his belief in his fellow human beings. The Old Man mentioned that just like Khoka, he is also lost in this world. Since he has lost the way to his real home, he decided to follow Khoka. Khoka rebukes him for it and asks him to find his own way. However, the Old Man mentioned that he has also been transformed into an 'other' through the continuous alienation that he has received from the society.

The vague journey of Khoka and Old Man can be seen when they get lost again and again in search of their real home. They reach the same place from where they had started their journey. The Old Man who is busy inspiring Khoka to find the actual path, gets rebuked by him. After overcoming his frustration, he enquired the Old Man the actual reason for not going back to his home. To this query, the Old Man mentioned the actual reason.

OLD MAN: Lost and lost and lost again ....

KHOKA: But never gone back?

OLD MAN: But never gone back. There's no going back, once you're lost you can't go back ....

KHOKA: Why didn't you die?

OLD MAN: One can't die, one can't search once one is dead.

KHOKA: Why do you search?

OLD MAN: So that I may find, one can't find if one is dead ...

KHOKA: I had searched. For days. Following you ....

OLD MAN: I didn't find. I am still searching. Now. Following you. (50 – 51

The conversation between Khoka and the Old Man reveal a lot of information regarding their present state of mind. Though they are physically present in this world, but they have both lost their 'self' a long time ago. Therefore, the Old Man tells Khoka that one can't die again if one has already been dead. The use of words such as 'dead', 'lost' signifies the negative thought process prevailing within the mindset of frustrated individuals like Old Man and Khoka. In this context, Descartes' statement 'I think, therefore I am' can be aptly applied. According to him, an individual's self is always in the process of discovery. Descartes here stresses about the fact that an individual's self is said to exist due to his consciousness about his own being. Since, in the case of both Khoka and the Old Man, they have considered themselves as dead individuals in this world, they have lost complete hold over their own being. Their 'self' can be said to be non-existent in this world as they are left as wandering soul by the people around them.

The combined narrative of failure that encompassed both Khoka and the Old Man makes them realize at a certain juncture that they have both lost their 'self' in the process of searching for the right procession all throughout their lives. They ultimately decide to move forward together in order to find the real procession. While they are walking together, they discover that both of them possessed a similar 'self' and they are the same individuals possessing a similar name.

KHOKA: What's your name?

OLD MAN: Khoka. It was. Yours?

KHOKA: Khoka. It is.

OLD MAN: Was. Is. Was. Is.

KHOKA: Is. Was. Is. Was. (51)

The play approaches the conclusion by providing the two Khokas a ray of hope by giving them a glimpse of a real procession. This procession can be termed as a real procession since it is completely a procession for the common masses. The music along with the Chorus which is accompanying the real procession provides them with a positive vibration. It leads them to believe that the problems they have been facing for so long will finally receive a solution. Their 'self' which was transformed into an 'other' through the satirical tone of the society, finally finds a way to rediscover their lost soul. Towards the end of the play, it is seen that the Old Man joins the real procession by holding the hands of Khoka.

The final outcome of the play reveals that the play along with being an absurdist one also depicts the realistic angles prevailing within a contemporary Indian society. It can be termed as absurdist in the sense that the audiences are left with a puzzled state of mind while going through the play. The repetition of the same events, such as the processions again and again also provides it with an existentialist viewpoint. Though the play was written based on the post-independence Indian society, its contents can be said to be relevant still today in the society. The vague processions are still going on in the society and the failures of those processions have led individuals to go through a phase of broken 'self'. All individuals are in search of a real procession which will not only solve all their problems but also provide them with a stabilized 'self'. Individuals like Khoka and the Old Man still exist in the society who considers themselves non-existent in the society due to the limited amount of importance they receive from those who are in power. The subaltern classes are those people belonging to the category of Khoka and the

Old Man who have been suppressed and oppressed through the dynamics of power. The dominant classes always keep an eye upon them so that they cannot climb the ladders of hierarchy and match toe to toe with them.

### III

*Bhoma* is another significant play of Badal Sircar where he describes how an individual's 'self' may be crushed by his fellow people in the society. The story of the play has been taken from the forests of Sundarban to create a clear picture amongst the audience regarding the lifestyle of the city bred people and the rural people. In the preface to *Bhoma, Three Plays* Sircar states, "I was introduced to the Sunderbans by Tushar Kanjilal, headmaster of the Rangabelia Village School. I had heard Bhoma's story from him." However, while writing the play, Sircar had purposefully omitted the story of Bhoma and introduced the characters with numerals such as One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six. Through the use of numbers as characters, Sircar vehemently wanted to bring into the limelight, various problems prevailing in a modern society. The various incidents mentioned in the play ultimately lead us towards the story of Bhoma. The first performance of Bhoma took place on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1976 at the village Rangabelia. The play was performed by the Satabdi group with the help of ten actors.

The character Bhoma not only represents a single individual, it also represents the entire peasant class of Sundarban whose life has remained same even after the granting of independence to India by the British. In her introduction to *Three Plays*, Ella Dutta mentioned that:

Bhoma gradually became more and more important in the play, to the extent of lending it his name, but he did not appear as a character in the play, nor did his

life story figure in it. The play speaks not of Bhoma but of the Bhoma who constitute a phenomenon, a social reality. In the collection of loose and detached scenes dealing with subjects as diverse as the problem of ground water, the hazards of nuclear tests, the criminal Metro Rail project of Calcutta, dollar aid and so on, the connecting link is a city man in search of Bhoma, the only person who is capable of clearing the jungle of poison trees that our society has become, to make it habitable. (6)

The preference of urban metropolitan cities like Calcutta over rural areas like Sundarban by the government has made life miserable for the peasant class. The peasant classes are the subalterns whose 'self' is totally ignored by the people who are in power. To portray the plight of the peasant community of Sundarban, Sircar used the medium of third theatre. In third theatre, props are ignored in a play. Instead of using props in a stage, the characters try to communicate with the audience through the means of various body gestures. In the play it is seen that the characters One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six try to explain the troublesome life of the peasants of Sundarban through body gestures. The characters portray the various stages through which a plant has to pass on to become a full fledged tree and it is shown by the characters through the medium of different body gestures. The process of deforestation is shown by two characters that convert themselves into woodcutters and explain the violent process through their gestures. The utterance of the name 'Bhoma' which is a common name in the households of Calcutta, while the machines are at work reveals the dismal life of the peasants of Sunderban. The discussion between the characters reveals that Bhoma not only represents a single person, it represents the entire peasant community of Sunderban. The characters are not sure regarding the existence of Bhoma. He mentioned that he has only heard about him from somewhere.

ONE: I don't fully know who he is. I've never seen him ... I've only heard of him.

FOUR: Only heard of him?

ONE: Yes. Only heard of him ..... I've come to know that Bhoma exists. Earlier, I didn't even know that.

OTHERS: Shut up. Don't talk rot. (60)

Topu, who was one of the senior most members of Satabdi mentioned in an interview that the idea of portraying Bhoma as a character was not entirely Badal Sircar's concept. Most of the members from the group collected news items and wanted to portray Bhoma as a middle class person who was similar to most of the audience viewing the play. He also mentions that they had to encounter questions regarding the identity of Bhoma mostly throughout the enactment of the play. To this Sircar made it clear:

Bhoma is the jungle. Bhoma is the cornfield. Bhoma is the village. Three quarters of India's population live in villages. Millions and millions of Bhomas. In the cities we live on the blood of Bhomas .... If the Bhomas had rice, we would not have anything left to eat. Bhoma's blood, red blood, blossoms into white jasmines of rice on our plates. (9)

So, from the discussions it can be stated that Bhoma was the sustaining 'self' present within the rural population who have to strive a lot to produce the necessary items from the urban population. This 'self' of the rural population which in turn also helps in maintaining the 'self' of the urban population are never valued throughout their lives. Their 'self' are crushed by



the people in power through the mode of dejection, oppression and economic deprivations. Moreover, along with being the 'self' of the rural population who are engaged in a mode of survival, Bhoma also represents the conscience of the urban population who are troubled by the problems arising in their day to day life. Rustom Bharucha in *Rehearsals of Revolution* considers Bhoma to be an engaging and powerful political play. He mentioned:

Bhoma confronts the dichotomy between urban and rural life in India ..... When Sircar came in contact with the villagers of the Sunderbans, he was shocked by the dehumanized conditions of their life. But more than shocked, he was enraged by the fact that the urban community of West Bengal (despite its own problems of transportation, generation of electricity, distribution of food) could be so totally indifferent to the impoverishment of the villagers in the Sunderbans. Anger is the driving force of Bhoma – a relentless, though rigorously controlled anger directed against the well-fed, easy – going bourgeoisie of Calcutta. It is this anger that makes the play more than a lament for Bhoma himself as an individual or for the thousands of Bhomas who continue to survive from day to day in Bengal. (Bharucha 12)

Bharucha was so much awestruck with the story of the play that he did not hesitate to state that the character of the 'oppressed peasant' has become equally significant as that of the Maharaja or the politician. He further added on by mentioning, "I can think of no other play in the Bengali theater that makes an audience question its relation to the oppressed people with such emotional power and clarity." (15)

*Bhoma* along with being a political play brings forward the reality of Indian situation through some absurd discussion between the characters. The characters discuss regarding the nature of blood of fish, human beings and dinosaurs. Two states that fish possesses a cold blood as compared to other species. However, One counteracts it and mentions that human beings have a more colder blood than fish. Three does not agree to the viewpoint of One and to this One brings forward Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution to support his argument. In support of his statement, One mentions the example of dinosaurs who became extinct due to possessing a hot nature of blood.

ONE:            Theory of Evolution. Darwin. Had man's blood not grown cold,  
                      he wouldn't have survived. .... Died. Become extinct, like the  
                      dinosaurs. (60)

Though the discussion between the characters apparently looks absurd, but when we delve into the deeper layers it can be seen that their discussion has meanings related to existential crisis faced by the 'self' of human beings. The 'self' of human beings have become so much troubled that they are not happy with their own possessions; they want more and by this process delve into the territory of their fellow human beings and species. Their humanitarian values degrade and they turn into greedy creatures and make the existence of other fellow beings troublesome. While they are engaged in the nature of blood of different creatures, Two diverts from the topic and mentions about different problems he has been encountering in his day to day life such as problems related to job, his personal life and others. The mentioning of problems of Two brings forward to the different difficulties faced by a common middle class person. Their 'self' is too marred by the day to day life hazards around them.

Badal Sircar was a master of shifting debates from one topic to the other. He also knew to read the minds of his audience. When he noticed that the audience was getting bored through the serious debatable topics in his plays, he knew how to add some comic touch in it. After the serious topics discussed up to this point, he decided to insert some comic angles through Three's mentioning about his love life.

THREE:        You know, I fell in love with a girl ... No, no, a girl fell in love  
                       with me – I mean .... a love fell in me – a girl – I her – that is that  
                       girl – my love – I love a girl .... (61)

Through the comic version of love as presented by Three, Sircar wanted to present the fact that amidst all the tensions that a modern common people have to encounter in their life, there are certain farcical elements too in their life which help them in rejuvenating their deteriorated 'self' for a while.

The next part of the play makes a comparison of the lifestyle of the city people and the rural people. He mentioned the name of various metropolitan cities in India such as Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and stated that among them Calcutta has seen the maximum amount of progress since Independence. He mentioned the different sorts of progress witnessed in Calcutta such as the use of maruti cars, television, metro rail, Hooghly Bridge and others. Though the other characters are busy applauding the developments in Calcutta after independence, One brings into limelight the fact that compared to Calcutta, the rural areas have suffered the most in terms of development. The urban people have always used the rural people and when it is their turn to help them, they always ignore them. At this, One suddenly utters the name of Bhoma and mentions that Bhoma is not a single individual, he is the blood and sweat of the common people

found in the various forms of work performed by them. Bhoma is the 'self' sustaining them to do their daily works. He is the consciousness within them which gives them the realization that they are losing their grip in the society and becoming subalterns day by day.

Bhoma resides in the paddy fields, the jungles and in the villagers. This comparison of Bhoma with the paddy fields, the jungles and the villagers exposes the hypocrisy of the modern individual who possesses a corrupt 'self'. In this context, Herodotus' elaboration of 'self' as found in his *Histories* (440 BC) can be put forward. For Herodotus, a self dwindles freely between Nature and Spirit (Herodotus 112). Herodotus too constituted his self in this particular manner. In the context of the play, *Bhoma* the 'self' of the rural people are not allowed to dwindle freely between Nature and Spirit. They are made to starve for their daily needs by the people who are in power. They toil day and night in the fields and in the forests in order to stay away from a starving stomach. The people who are in power provide them with false promises in order to win their trust. They declare themselves as self proclaimed gods of the subalterns residing in the rural areas. While they believe themselves to be gods or all in all of the poor people, they forget that there is another God who has created this universe. In this regard, Benedict de Spinoza had mentioned in his monumental book *Ethics* (1677) that the mind and the body or in other terms we can also state it as the 'self' and the 'other' are products of one substance which we can call it as "God" or "Nature". For him, God is the world around which each and every particle of this universe revolves. He considered the self as monistic and the self as a manifestation of God. The 'self' which is a manifestation of God is counteracted by another 'self' who is like a protector for the rural people and provides glimpse of hope to the poor starved people. But when these so-called protectors are not able to fulfill their basic needs, the rural people like the people residing in Sunderban consider themselves as 'other'. Their faith in

God or Nature which is the creator of the entire universe also starts diminishing slowly and steadily. This pathetic condition of the poor people residing in Sunderban is perfectly portrayed in the play through the following lines:

TWO:           We need fertilizers give us fertilizers we need seeds give us seeds  
we need water give us water we need seeds ...

FOUR:          There is nothing, nothing nothing ....

ONE:           No water no fertilizer no seeds no land no food no clothes no  
work no water. (65)

The fabrics of power demonstrated by the upper class people can be noticed later on too when an individual named Four visits the bank manager Five for loan. The manager who goes by the looks of Four questions him regarding his identity and the purpose of taking the loan. To this query, Four mentions that he has a diesel pump manufacturing company who manufactures the product Sambird. To further queries by the manager, he mentions that they take orders from Samson and Blackbird Company and delivers the product to the bigger company who after extracting a lot of benefit provides them a meager amount of two thousand and five hundred rupees only. This deal has made them suffer a lot and therefore they need loan from the bank to sustain their company. The manager questions him what security he can provide in exchange of the loan. To this Four replies that he has nothing to provide as security and the manager dismisses his loan application in a flash. While he is in the office, the owner of Samson and Blackbird Company, Mr. Mukherjee calls the manager and asks him for a loan of one lakh thirty thousand rupees. The manager without any query sanctions the loan amount without asking for any security as well. Four becomes disheartened and leaves the place immediately. This shows

that the government institutions are not made for the people who are really in distress. Instead it is made for the rich people so that they can make their lives even better. Therefore, Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* stated that power is created artificially and exercised by the source which is generally the institution. He also mentioned that power is employed in a “net like organization” and individuals “circulate between its threads”. He further stated that power has the ability to control, change and enforces itself. (95, 102) The play supports the statement of Foucault to a great extent by elaborating the fact that government institutions such as the bank which was created mainly to help the poor people in times of distress, instead stands by the side of the people who are already enjoying a luxurious life. This kind of power created artificially extends the distance between ‘self’ and ‘other’ to a higher degree. These examples point to the fact that the poor people are made to toil hard day and night so that the upper class people can lead a luxurious life. In response to it, they receive a meager amount as wages. This minimum amount of wages cannot fulfill their daily needs.

The controversial statement regarding the nature of human blood is again continued by One. He mentioned that human blood is cold, whereas others disagree to this statement. Their argument and counter-arguments leads us to various conditions prevailing in the society of that period.

ONE:           The blood of man is cold.

FIVE:           It’s a lie. In India men’s blood boil, when bloodthirsty Pakistan attacks India.

TWO:           When imperialist China attacks India!

THREE:        When the Indian cricket team loses a test match.

FIVE: In Calcutta men's blood boil ...

SIX: When they keep on promising to telecast but don't – (77)

These arguments put forward by different characters brings forth the fact that how deteriorated the 'self' of the youth have become. They are very much concerned regarding the national issues or an issue related to them but turns a blind eye towards the issues faced by the rural people. Their blood remains cold towards the poverty stricken and exploited life of the poor people.

The deterioration of the 'self' takes a big dip through the corrupted speech and false promises of the political leaders. They are not only making the lives of the rural people worse but also they are leading the youths of this country go astray by providing false promises on some sensitive issues in their life such as employment, development etc. They are making the 'self' of the youths dependent upon them. In the conversation between the youth and political leader, Five adorns the role of a political leader.

FIVE: Of course! (With an oratorical flourish) Give me blood, I'll give you jobs.

ONE: Who are you speaking to?

FIVE: The youth power of the nation (shouting) Give me blood, I'll give you permits.

ONE: Will they come?

FIVE: What do you mean 'will come'? They are coming. They have come! Long hair blowing, side burns bristling .... there they come

like tornado, in youthful ecstasy .... Give me blood, I'll give you  
a kingdom. (78)

The image of blood is used symbolically in the paragraph to depict the degradation of the 'self' through different means such as power and money. The false promises have led the modern individuals to sell their own humanity and engage in different evil deeds such as corruption, murder, exploitation. The 'self' has been converted into an 'other' by the denying of their basic rights by the people who obtain power. Maurice Halbwachs's *On Collective Memory* stated that "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories" and that "it is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories". (38) What Halbwachs tended to emphasize is that in a society there are different groups of people who feel alienated from other groups due to the effect of remembrance. The indigenous people are forced to remember and recollect their past life in a colonial rule through the lens of the colonizers. This forced remembrance often created a distance between the 'self' and 'other'. The 'other' starts revolting against the ideologies of the 'self'. The political leaders created the sense of alienation within the mindset of different sorts of middle class and rural people in the society through continuously neglecting the demands of the people. Once they came to power, they show their true colours by exploiting them in every possible manner. These memories of negligence remain within them and make them lose all hope of a better future. These forced remembrances of bitter memories create a difference of ideology between the 'self' and 'other'. The 'self' starts behaving like an 'other' by breaking the rules and regulations of the society.

Amidst the hustle and bustle surrounding, the 'self' of an individual, it never ceases to dream of a bright future through which it will be able to stabilize itself. In the process of dreaming, it stares at 'other' surrounding in the society. The dream of a common man is best



exemplified through the discussions of the characters. Two adopts the role of a middle class individual and mentions that he earns four hundred and five rupees per month as salary in Samson and Blackbird Company. His son studies in an English medium school and for that he spends sixty rupees per month. When the other characters enquire him the reason behind spending of so much money on his son's education, he mentions that he dreams his son to have a better future. Even if his son does not come back to him later on he will be happy because he has achieved what others could not achieve in their life.

TWO: I'm a stenographer in Samson and Blackbird Company. My salary is 455 rupees, my son's school fees are 60 rupees.

ONE: Why?

TWO: My pay is 455. Had I been to an English-medium school I would have got 1,000 rupees.

ONE: Why?

TWO: Why what? If I could speak good English would I have got stuck here? I would have changed a couple of jobs and become a PA to the big boss of a multinational!

THREE: Yes, yes, educate him, educate him!

TWO: I'll sell my posts and pans, but he'll get his education.

SIX: Educated, he will depart in glory for America.

Bhoma may be considered as the 'self' who resides within all individuals who are toiling hard to make other individuals sustain in the society. The people in the city are able to enjoy a luxurious life only due to the blood and sweat Bhoma has spread across the workplaces. To keep the 'self' of Bhoma alive therefore the city folks must not try to convert the 'self' of Bhoma into an 'other'. Therefore, Three rightly comments that behind the identity crisis of fellow human beings, they are very much responsible for it. They have forgotten the very assets of caring and nourishing which are imbibed within humanity. If they want to stop further destruction in the society, they will have to make amends in the society by looking towards their fellow human beings with a sense of empathy. In such times of crisis, Bhoma is the only individual who is able to procreate.

THREE: I don't understand you. Who is Bhoma?

ONE: ... Bhoma is the village. Three quarters of India's population live in villages. Millions and millions of Bhomas. In the cities we live on the blood of Bhomas.

THREE: Live on the blood?

ONE: Yes, on the blood. If the Bhomas had rice, we would not have anything left to eat. Bhoma's blood, red blood, blossoms into white jasmines of rice on our plates. Twice every day. (94-95)

The revolutionary spirit rising within Bhoma is noticed when One describes the story of Bhoma before the audience. Bhoma along with his father and mother and two younger brothers came to the forests of Sunderban when he was sixteen years old. He was very dynamic and enthusiastic. He had the ability to cut a huge tree within three hours which left everyone

awestruck. After giving his service to the village for many years, he passed away. His family also became non-existent due to the death of the family members. Only one of his brothers still resides within the village of Rangabelia. For Bhoma's death, One holds the man from the city responsible. It is only through their corruption Bhoma had to starve to death.

ONE:           How can you eat, Bhoma? If you eat rice we don't get our  
delicious biryanis. A queer picture for one rupee, a picture for 10  
rupees, pictures for 10, 20, 100 rupees – we've bought up your  
blood with those pictures, Bhoma. We've bought up the rice and  
taken it away from your mouth. (105)

Bhoma who was once a powerful human being has now turned into a helpless victim of the corrupt upper class society. He was once a powerful woodcutter, but now his axe has lost its rust. His 'self' has lost its rust too due to the exploitation of the poor by the upper class society. However, the negligence of the 'self' has led to the formation of an 'other' in the society which has a revolutionary spirit and is willing to cut across all barriers formed in the society. This revolutionary spirit of the 'self' is well portrayed by One when he announces to the audience that Bhoma's consciousness has made him defy all odds and he will now go on destroying corruption in the society. Along with Bhoma, other oppressed individuals will also join forces along with him to overcome their present condition. This condition is beautifully depicted towards the end by One when he picks up an imaginary axe and starts cutting all the poisonous trees around him. While cutting the trees he goes on singing the inspirational hymn 'heave ho...'

ONE:           Strike men – heave ho! Cut down the forests – heave ho! The  
poisonous forests – heave ho! Bhomaa's axe – heave ho! Purge

the poison – heave ho! .... The fire’s there in Bhoma’s eyes –  
 heave ho! Heave ho! The fire burns – heave ho! (110)

The play is a direct attack on the nature of suppression and oppression met out on the subalterns residing in the forests of Sunderban. They have been made to toil hard for their daily needs. The ‘self’ of the rural people of Sunderban has to face a lot of turmoil from its surroundings. The use of third theatre to present the play has proved to be an apt method to directly link up with the audience. Through third theatre, the characters can directly convey the follies of the society in front of the audience. The audience is made to realize that it is time to change their mentality towards the poor people. In case of not changing their mentality, they will have to face a tremendous revolution from the subaltern classes. This revolution will be for the granting of rights of the poor people. Individuals like Bhoma are present in each and every nook and corner of the villages. They do not demand anything luxurious like the city folks, instead they demand a bit of acknowledgement of their labour from the city folks and the people who are in power.

An analysis of the three plays in this chapter helps us to realize the plight of the ‘self’ in the modern society. The people are very much engrossed within them and have completely forgotten what the meanings of relationships in this modern world are. The first play taken for analysis in this chapter *Evam Indrajit* depicts the frustration and angst developing within the mindset of the youth of this generation. This angst is due to the continuous disappointment that the ‘self’ has received from the society around it. They are not able to stabilize their ‘self’ and are in the process of becoming an ‘other’. On the other hand, the second play, *Processions* considers the various revolutionary processions taken out in different streets demanding one’s basic rights. The individuals are not sure which is the real procession and by joining which

procession they will get their rights. Their 'self' are in a dilemma from the instability surrounding it. Finally, the play *Bhoma* depicts the plight of the rural people who are continuously overlooked by the government and the institutions. Bhoma cannot be considered as one individual; instead it is the consciousness residing within each and every individual who feels suppressed and oppressed from the dominating class around them. All in all, the three plays taken for discussion can be said to have a leftist tendency in terms of its reclining tendency towards the suppressed class. Moreover, its anti-government position also makes the point valid of being a leftist play. Along with it, all the three plays can be considered somewhat existentialist in the sense that they portray the existential crisis developing within the mindset of the modern individuals.

## Chapter – III

### Negotiating Power Dichotomy in the Comic Plays *Beyond The Land Of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland*

#### I

Badal Sircar was a gifted playwright who had a touch of Midas in him. The subject matter of his plays encompassed various themes such as existentialism, social reality, identity crisis etc. He also wrote a few children stories keeping in mind the issues prevalent in his society. However, he mentioned that it was very difficult for him to write children play. In an interview with Samik Bandyopadhyay on July 1991, he mentioned that he had never written a play specifically for children because ‘it’s so hard to write for children’. His comic plays *Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland* are basically children plays but the themes contained in it are basically the opposite. Both the plays were adaptations from the work of Premendra Mitra. *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* (1977) was adapted from a novel by Premendra Mitra and Leela Majumdar titled *Hattamalar Deshey*, written for the childrens’ magazine *Sandesh*. On the other hand, *Scandal in Fairyland* (*Roopkathar Kelenkari*) was written in 1974 for Curzon Park where most of his plays were enacted on Saturday afternoons. This play is also a close adaptation of a short story written by Premendra Mitra.

The comic plays of Badal Sircar, *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland* are based on the concept of third theatre. There is little use of props during the enactment of the play. Sircar considered the play as an absurd one; however he admitted that the idea of the play was beyond imagination. However, the basic message Sircar wanted to convey

through both of these plays is the political suppression inflicted upon the common people by the politicians. G.J.V. Prasad in an article entitled “The Third Gaze: The Theatre of Badal Sircar” mentioned:

If there is anything that can be seen as common to Sircar’s plays, or even as one of his major intents, it is to bring his audiences to confront the truths of their lives, to explore the value of human lives and social relationships in a world that is hostile and is constantly fashioned to confound the individual. (1)

The plays *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland* attempt to point out the follies inherent in the society by trying to make the audience realize that the incidents of the plays are just like the incidents occurring in their day to day lives. The plays try to make the audience realize that the ‘self’ of an individual is deteriorating to such an extent that the human relationships are no longer valued anymore.

*Beyond the Land of Hattamala* was first staged on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1977 and its original title was *Hattamalar Oporey*. It was enacted at the Theosophical Society Hall, Calcutta by the group Satabdi. This play has absurdist elements in it which ultimately leads us towards the whimsical ills prevailing in a society. The characters by taking us towards a fairyland show us the various forms of corruption residing in our society. These ill habits have led to the deteriorating condition of our ‘self’. The individuals have forgotten their identities and what is right and wrong. The ‘self’ cannot take anyone for granted as it has already started distancing itself from the rules and regulations laid down by the society around them. They have already started considering themselves as an ‘other’ in the society. Their (re)-memories have continuously hampered the progress of the ‘self’. The torment received by the ‘self’ from its surroundings has

led it to consider itself as an 'other'. The concept of *Nachtraglichkeit* as developed by Cathy Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) is significant in analyzing the 'self' in context with the plot of the play. She believes that trauma is not in the hold of the individual. It cannot be recounted at will, but it continues its dominance over the individual as a haunting process. Its effect is experienced more profoundly at a later stage through its repetition. Therefore, the 'self' cannot withstand the attacks of trauma received from the past experiences. It requires the forgetting of past events to acquire a coherent self which will be strong enough to face any attack.

In Badal Sircar's play *Beyond the Land of Hattamala*, we are introduced to two thieves Kenaram and Becharam who make their earnings through robbing others. However, on a particular night they have to run for their lives because some people are after them. They had decided to join the cruel world of robbing others because they had received trauma from the world around them. They could not find a proper method of sustaining their livelihood. These continuous failures led their 'self' to suffer continuous trauma. They began to doubt about their own existence within the society. It is due to this reason that they began considering themselves as an 'other' in the society. Their 'self' could not withstand the attacks of trauma which it received from the past experiences. Therefore, they decided to take a different route in their life. They decided to loot other people in order to get their daily bread. They became thieves who had eyes on what others were collecting in their houses.

The two thieves while running are not sure where they must run to escape from the group of people who are chasing them. Four people named One, Two, Three and Four chase them in order to get hold of them and give them severe punishment for their act.



ONE: Which way did they go?

TWO: They came this way.

THREE: Are you sure?

FOUR: I think they went that way.

ONE: No, no, this way.

TWO: Don't be silly. I saw them go that way. (3)

After the continuous chasing of the four people, Kena and Becha find no other way of escaping other than jumping into the river and swimming and crossing it. Becha's character is portrayed in such a manner where it is seen continuously that he lacks self-belief and is unable to progress at ease at difficult situations. In this crunch situation too, he is hesitant to jump into the river. However, his stronger counterpart Kena boosts his self-belief by mentioning that they have no other alternative of escaping from the group other than jumping into the river. After this, they both jump into the river and starts escaping from the group.

BECHA: Which way now, Dada?

KENA: That way.

BECHA: But there's only the river that way.

KENA: So we'll jump into the river.

BECHA: Are you mad? We'll drown.

KENA:        There's no way out. We won't fight the current. Just go wherever  
                  it takes us.

BECHA:       But ...

KENA:        Save your breath and stop nattering. Run now. (4)

The people who were after them notice them trying to escape through the river. They acknowledge their courage and also chant 'Hari Bol Hari', believing that they will die very soon. The two thieves strive very hard to swim the river but at one moment they sink to the bottom of the river. After opening their eyes, they are shocked to find that they are in an unknown land. They begin to wander the new land and try hard to guess the name of the unknown place. They saw a glimpse of smoke from a distant place which prompted them to follow that direction. Becha believes that the smoke must have come out from a chimney or a rice-mill. However, Kena believes that it must be from a town and mentions that he is happy that at least they will get to stay away from the unprofitable business in the village and start something profitable here.

After following the direction of the smoke, they come across a large tree with large trunk and both are amazed with this sight. Kena, who never hesitates to show his knowledge before his partner mentions that he knows the name of the tree and he has seen lots of such trees in the past.

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. (8)

Becha who possesses a broken 'self' compared to that of Kena, feels weak after walking for a while and tells Kena that he is feeling thirsty. After joking at his weak physique, both decide to take rest under a tree. At this moment, they hear a noise which terrifies Becha. He fears that someone might have found them and now that person will put them behind the bars. Kena's composure due to his strong 'self' comes into forefront at this crucial juncture once again. He tells that they are in an unknown land and there is no fear of them being caught by others here. If we analyze the difference between the characters of Kena and Becha, we have to bring in the theory of Hegel's 'self' and 'other' which he had formulated in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In this seminal work, Hegel had mentioned that 'self' is recognized by an individual as that which is solely controlled by them both at cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. The 'other' on the other hand is uncontrolled by these factors. The complexity increases when the 'self' comes in contact with more than multiple 'others'. In this position the self tends to exert a force which causes the self to identify with or behave as an 'other'. Hegel mentions in his seminal work that the consciousness of an 'other' is the very condition for the emergence of an individual self. In the case of Kena and Becha too, we can say that Kena's 'self' is controlled by him at cognitive levels. Therefore, he possesses a matured state of mind compared to Becha. Though he faces problems from the outside world he does not fail to get control of his 'self' immediately. On the other hand, Becha cannot control his 'self' at the cognitive level. His 'self' while coming in contact with multiple others which are the outside world cannot control the external pressures and almost tends to become an 'other'. Only due to Kena, he is saved at crucial junctures. The will power of his 'self' fails to control the outside factors. He believes that the society in which he is residing is not for thieves like him and Kena.

The unknown land in which Kena and Becha have reached will provide them a new meaning to their life at a later stage as they will find a proper direction through which they can stabilize their 'self'. They will be able to possess a determined soul because in this land there is no form of corruption. Money which is the root cause of all sorts of corruption does not find an existence in this land. They get the first glimpse of lack of corruption in this land when they are thirsty and are looking for water. At that moment a man named Four appears and informs them that if they are thirsty, they better need to drink coconut water to quench their thirst. After they leave Four, they find a woman named Five who offers them coconut water to drink. Kena who is very happy to get coconut water asks the woman the cost of the coconut. When the woman informs him that it is free of cost, he is surprised to know this. Still he believes that the woman might be joking and asks Becha for the wallet. He tries to prank the woman by trying to make her believe that they had money with them but they forgot the wallet in the shelf at home. However, the woman gives a surprising reaction mentioning that she does not know what money is and has never heard this word before in their land.

KENA:        Never mind. Why should I bargain with you? Becha, give me my wallet?

BECHA:       (rattled) Wallet? What wallet?

KENA:        My wallet. The one I left on the shelf. Idiot! (Winking)

BECHA:       On the shelf! (Understanding at last) Oh! I left it at home.

KENA:        (mocking) Left it at home. Now what? We've drunk the water.

BECHA:       What'll we do? (9)

After bluffing the woman, both of them leave that place assuring the woman that they will pay her at a later date. This is the first incident through which both the thieves get a glimpse of a world which is free from corruption and malice. Their ‘self’ which has become accustomed to the corruption in their own world cannot accept the fact that a corruption free world also has an existence. After this incident, they move on towards the town hoping to get a glimpse of something familiar to their own land. Becha considers the town to be Calcutta. However, Kena mentions that the town cannot be Calcutta as they cannot reach Calcutta so quickly. Moreover, he states that since there is no police in the streets of this new land, it cannot be Calcutta. So, it can be said that the ‘self’ has formed an idea of a modern town as a place where there will be corruption, insecurity and to reduce this corruption there will be cops appointed for this purpose.

BECHA:        God! What huge houses, gardens, fountains, tarred roads! It’s all spanking new. Where are we, Dada, Calcutta?

KENA:        Ass! You think it’s so easy to get a Calcutta? From our village Hatua to the sub-divisional headquarters, then to the district headquarters, and then to Calcutta....

BECHA:        But this is such a big town.

KENA:        Calcutta’s much bigger. Besides there are tramcars in Calcutta. Have you seen any trams here? ..... If this is Calcutta, then where are the policeman? Don’t you know there’s a cop at each street crossing in Calcutta?

BECHA:        That’s true. But even if it’s not Calcutta, do you mean to say there’s not one policeman in such a large town?

KENA: They're all 'sniffers' I think, going around in plain clothes. I guess they're all high class thieves here, and that's why there are only sniffers in the police. (10)

The angst towards the fellow people formed within the minds of Kena and Becha do not allow them to believe in people who are good and also willing to help them. They always look at people in suspicion; it is so because their 'self' has formed a notion that people are generally corrupt and always have a mentality to cheat others for their personal benefits. Their 'self' has distanced themselves from the people in such a manner that when they move into an idealized land where there is no form of corruption and people are happy among themselves; they look at them with suspicion too. To confirm whether they are in their city Calcutta or not, they question two people whom they meet regarding the address of the police station. When the two people reply that they have never heard such a word like 'police station' before, they are awestruck. In this context, Rene Descartes's theory of "I think, therefore I am" found in his seminal book *Discourse on the Method* can be brought into reference. Here, Descartes states that an individual's 'self' is always in the process of discovery. Here, he mentions about the fact that an individual's self is said to exist due to his consciousness about his own being. Similarly, in the play *Land of Hattamala* too, we can notice that the 'self' of Kena and Becha is always in the process of discovery. They are very much conscious about their own being. They do not want to live a life of poverty and deficiency. This is the reason why they chose to enter into the world of robbery because no one will give them easy money to live a well maintained life. They have to strive hard in this world to sustain them in the process of acquiring the necessary means for their livelihood.

When Kena and Becha questioned the two people whom they met regarding the whereabouts of the dungeon, they mistakenly give them the address to the 'luncheon'. Both of them feeling hungry moved towards the direction as mentioned by the two men. When they entered the restaurant, they are impressed by the smell of the rice and curry. They believed it to be the smell of basmati rice, jackfruit curry, green banana curry or rohu fish. After entering the restaurant, they noticed that some people are leaving without paying the bill which makes them doubt that those people might be thieves like them. However, Kena who is the smarter one between them mentions that they are not thieves, instead they might be regular customers who would pay the bill at the end of the month. To clear his doubt Kena enquires One who is at the restaurant regarding the owner of the luncheon. When One replies that there is no owner of the luncheon, everyone owns it, he gets angry on it. His 'self' cannot accept the fact that there also can be a luncheon without any owner. It is adjusted to a society where everything is owned by someone. His 'self' which was on the verge of existential crisis finds something where he can finally rely upon. However, this adjustment cannot come all of a sudden; it needs time to cope with the change of situation. One also becomes interested on two strangers on their lands and enquires them about their whereabouts. To this Kena replies that they are new to this land:

ONE: .... Have you just come to these parts?

KENA: Yes we've just arrived.

ONE: Fine. Join us. There are still, a few places. Give me your names, please. I'll write them down in the ledger.

KENA: Yes, yes, write them down. We'll pay you at the end of month.

ONE: Pay? Pay what?

KENA:            Whatever it costs. Write our names down – Becharam and  
                          Kenaram. Ok, see you in the evening. (14)

After departing from that place, Becha states that he is completely shocked with the behaviour of the people. He mentions that the people residing in this land might be all fools. They even do not know about the basic things that are required for survival such as they do not know what is money. Becha tells Kena that they can easily rob the people of this land because they are fools. Becha only stops his nonsense conversation when Kena orders him to sleep. Through this conversation, it can be noticed that the people with existential crisis often cannot accept the good things around them with a positive heart. An existential crisis may occur due to various past events which occurred in a person's life which had put a scar on his 'self'. The 're-memory' in a person's life may occur at any moment. These types of memories occur when a person faces similar incidents in front of him at a later date. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud mentioned that memory is used as a container in which we restore our thought, knowledge and experience. It is often used for receiving fresh excitations. These fresh excitations received time and again do not allow the 'self' to move in a continuous journey. It halts its progress time and again making it reconsider about the constitution of an 'other' which will be distanced from the individual's 'self'. (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 25) So, in the new land it can be seen that Kena and Becha who have become so much used to doing evil deeds cannot forget the impressions that it had left in their minds. The statement of Freud where he considered memory as a container in which we store our thought, knowledge and experience can be aptly imbibed here. The fresh excitations of past memories of Kena and Becha which mostly consisted of negative effects do not allow the 'self' to progress forward in a continuous journey. It continuously makes their 'self' similar to the 'other' who is mostly money minded people



looking for their own benefits. They have almost become an ‘other’ who are willing to even cheat the good people residing in this land.

The devil inside the mind of Kena and Becha did not stop even in this new found land where there is peace and serenity everywhere. When they wake up the next day, they continue their adventure in this new land. They notice a fruit stall where One is in the form of a supervisor. They think of stealing bananas from this stall but when One appears, they stop and request him for a bunch of bananas which One happily hands over to them. However, when One requests them to deliver a jackfruit at the doctor’s clinic Kena’s dirty mind starts working again. Instead of handing it at the doctor’s clinic Kena decides to have the jackfruit himself.

BECHA:        Here’s the clinic. Aren’t you going to deliver the jackfruit?

KENA:        (pulling him away) You ass. You’ve come to a land of idiots and become one yourself. Such a lovely ripe jackfruit. Is it likely I’ll give it away free? What do you think I am? Come on. (17)

Through this incident, it can be seen that the suppressed memories of doing theft which has become a sort of habit for Kena and Becha is not allowing their ‘self’ to become a good human being even in this new land where there is no sort of corruption, greediness or robbery. After finding the people in this land innocent, both of them decide to take advantage of this situation and decide to steal the stainless steel dishes that they noticed in the restaurant.

It is noticed that our ‘self’ gets molded in that particular direction where our experiences ask it to mold. The experiences stored within our minds are very significant because the sum of those impressions will lead our ‘self’ in that direction. If the impressions within our mind are mostly bad, then our ‘self’ will be directed to follow bad methods. On the other hand, if good

impressions get stored in our minds then our 'self' will always do good things in life. As stated by John Locke in his book *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that our mind is an observer of things around us with great intensity. It tries to follow the manner of things going around us. According to him, the mind of an infant is a blank paper or a tabula rasa on which the experiences are stamped one by one. He stressed that without the experiences the mind would also be deprived of knowledge. (Locke 12) The 'self' is helpless in this world without the assistance of the experiences received by the mind from its surroundings. According to him, the mind derives ideas from two sources and they are mainly "perception" and "reflection". So, from the statement of Locke it can be found that the 'self' is nothing without the experiences around it. So, it would not be wrong if we state that the experiences guide our 'self' in a particular direction.

In the play, *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* it can be noticed that Kena and Becha's mind was a blank state without the experiences around them. The moment they found negligence around them from the society, their 'self' were guided by the bad experiences around them. This in turn led them to adopt such repressive measures against the society which will bring harm to the society. The only way they could find to do so was by looting the expensive things collected by the people. This kind of destructive mentality which was running in their minds never allowed them to possess a stable 'self'. That is the reason why they could not accept the changes around them in their new world. It was so because the impression of bad experiences in their mind was more compared to the good experiences around them. These bad experiences covered their mind in such a manner that they were not allowed to look for the good things around them. These bad experiences guided them to make a hole in the walls of the restaurant and steal the steel dishes from there. They were very much successful in making holes through the poker. The 'self' of

both of them have become so much corrupt that they cannot see the good things people in this new land have been doing for so long for them. They have become so self engrossed that they are looking only for their own profits.

During the time of performing their dirty work, Kena who is more active, asks Becha to notice if someone is entering the room. Becha followed his order and while he moved towards the door, he becomes shocked when he notices that the front door of the room is open. When he informs Kena about the incident, Becha doubts that someone might have trapped them and will now arrest them for their crime. They doubt that the sniffers might have trapped them.

KENA:       What? That means someone's gone out for sure.

BECHA:       I waited for sometime but no one was around. Even peeped  
                  around the door. All quiet. No one.

KENA:       Have they sprung a trap for us.

BECHA:       They might have. You said the policeman here are all sniffers.

KENA:       Come on, let's go and see. Careful now. (18)

The doubt of Kena and Becha regarding someone noticing them doing their criminal work comes true when Two enters the scene. Both of them become terrified since they have been caught red-handed. However, to their utmost surprise Two starts to appreciate their work. He appreciates how perfectly they have created the hole in the wall. The two thieves who were expecting a stern punishment from the people of this land cannot accept such a behavior at this time. After sometime, Two is joined by Three and Four. They also appreciate the work of the thieves. They ask them the reason behind such manual work at this time and also enquire them

about their identities. Kena who is very much angry at such reaction believes that the local people are making fun of them. In anger he reveals that they are thieves. To this response the local people becomes shocked and Two replies that they might come from the land of Hattamala. He mentions to the other people that in his childhood days, his grandmother often used to tell him stories about that land. In the fairytale stories, often a thief enters and does all sorts of criminal works. However, towards the end the thief is caught red-handed. Hattamala was a land narrated in the fairy-tale stories whose location is believed to be in a part of Bengal.

TWO:            Oh, now I get it, you must be coming from Hattamala.

BECHA:        Hattamala? Where's that?

TWO:            How do we know? But we've heard that everything is topsy turvy there.

FOUR:          Ye-e-s. I remember hearing stories from my grandmother. (20)

So, from the reaction of the local people it is noticed that they are surprised by the deteriorated nature of the people of Hattamala. From the differences pointed out in the two societies it can be noticed that Sircar intended to portray before the audience such a society where there is no existence of money and politics. Plato wanted to banish poets from his society because he believed that they would destroy the society through their ideologies. Similarly, Sircar too, through his play, wanted to show that in his ideal society he would like to banish the bourgeois class. His reason for so is that the bourgeois class by giving too much value to money has destroyed the very fabrics of relationship in the society. They have made the people run after money and made them competitive against each other. So, from this we can find the Marxist ideology of Sircar who was always against the bourgeois class. This hatred towards the

bourgeois class was due to the reason that they have made the proletariat class suffer in the most extreme form under them. This sufferance has led to the proletariat class possess an antagonistic attitude towards the bourgeois class. Moreover, the proletariat class has lost trust upon the bourgeois people completely. This loss of trust has meant that they do not believe in an idealistic society anymore. The same case can be said to happen in the case of Kena and Becha. They have lost trust in people around them. They look at everyone around them with a sense of suspense.

The sense of suspense that is prevailing in the minds of Kena and Becha make them doubt people with greater intensity. This doubt is so stronger that even in an idealistic society where they have landed after escaping from their own land, they cannot believe in the goodness of people. The people who are around them in this new land have not allowed anything evil such as corruption or monetary values to enter into their daily lives. Therefore, they possess a 'self' which has remained strong all throughout their lives. They have not allowed people in their land to get converted into an 'other'. This denial of getting converted into an 'other' is due to the fact that they have complete trust upon each other. They maintain the bond of unity among themselves. Therefore, when Kena and Becha doubt them as sniffers, they find it astonishing.

TWO:           Wow, how did you make such a perfect hole in a brick wall? With only that thin stick there? Bravo, what skill! But what sort of a game is this, friends? Making holes in walls at night? Do tell me what you are doing. (19)

The debate surrounding the Romantics regarding the manner of constitution of one's 'self' is apt to bring into reference in this context. The Romantics believed that an individual's 'self' must be judged based on the feelings and emotions that they possess. They were

completely against the rationalists who stressed more on the subject of reason and intellect. They were more subjective in their approach as compared to the rationalists. They believed that the self was the source of all which was true and noble and could easily transcend reason and intellect. Jean Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract* stressed on the fact that when the human soul was around nature it was able to achieve its purity. However, when it got the touch of the corrupt society, the self got broken apart and that helped in the formation of the 'other' which was not pure. Therefore, it can be noticed that Kena and Becha who have long ago withdrawn themselves from a natural environment and started residing in a corrupt society cannot hold on to their 'self'. Therefore, they became an 'other' in the society which was always willing to do evil things such as looting and cheating others. On the other hand, the people in the new found land had belief in their own 'self'. They never allowed their 'self' to wander around the evil society. Instead of it, they loafed around the beauties of nature and allowed its beauty to touch their internal 'self'. They judged their own fellow people on the basis of the emotions and sentiments that they possessed.

Kena and Becha get the first taste of the barter system in this new land when they hear from One that though they are able to steal the steel dishes from the restaurant, no one will buy those dishes from them in the market. It is so because in this new land there is no worth of money. After hearing to the explanation of One, both the thieves become confused regarding the system of existence maintained by the people in this new land. Therefore, One asks them to question them regarding whatever doubt they have in their minds. Kena asks the people present there some questions:

KENA:           Don't people pay for their food?

ONE: Pay?

FOUR: I think all these words were in Grandma's stories.

KENA: Don't people give anything for the food they eat? They just go away after their meals?

ONE: What else should they do? They just come here to eat.

THREE: What should they give?

KENA: Then how do you manage?

ONE: Manage what?

BECHA: How do you live? Eat? Fill your stomachs?

ONE: Oh. I eat here.

KENA: And your family? Your wife and children?

ONE: The children eat at school. My wife works at the library at Shiulitala, so she eats there. At night we all come here to eat.

BECHA: Don't you have to pay any money anywhere?

ONE: Money?

FOUR: Oh, I think they're talking about those ornaments – round, flat discs –made of silver, I think.

THREE: I think there are even some made of paper, with pictures on them.  
(23 – 24)

The entire question and answer round between the characters makes both the parties equally uneasy with each other. The people of this new land who had an organized 'self' so far begin to develop a fear from the uncommon behavior witnessed in Kena at that moment. Kena who was not totally satisfied with the answers to the questions that he had received so far begins to behave in an abnormal manner. The local people call the doctor and get hold of both the thieves due to the fear that they might attack them with their poker. It was probably for the first time that these people experienced fear developing within their minds. So, it can be mentioned that just like how a person becomes corrupt by staying in a corrupt society, similarly trust also breaks down when we start staying with a person who has no trust for others. The local people had also begun to lose trust upon the new intruders in their land. They had tried to adjust as much as possible with the intruders but when they noticed that there was no such response from the opposite party, they gradually began to change their attitude.

The doctor arrived and asked the people not to hurt the thieves. He began the treatment of the thieves and requested the local people to consider the thieves as one of their friends. From his attitude, it can be noticed that the doctor was an individual who believed in solving problems through the process of non-violence. The doctor tries to treat the disorderly behavior of the thieves by considering them as one of their friends. He asks them to teach them how to make holes because he is impressed with their skill of making holes. He mentions that the people of this land do not know the technique of making holes. In the process of praising the good work of the thieves, he wanted to eliminate the bad elements residing in them. He knew that only by removing the bad elements from them he will be able to re-constitute their disorganized 'self'.



Kena and Becha too were very excited with the prospect that someone is keen to learn something from them. Moreover, they also became excited because after many years finally their ‘self’ was getting importance from someone.

KENA: Well, if you’re really keen, you can learn the basics in a few days.

No, you’ve got to hold it like this. Ah, like this, yes. Now turn it this way a bit – now that way. Now like this. Yes, there you are.

This is what you have to do for a brick wall. For a mud wall it’s a different technique.

DOCTOR: Wait. Let me learn this first. I don’t think I’m doing very well, am I?

KENA: You’ll get it. It takes patience. Mustn’t let it slip like that. Speed is very important in this sort of a job. Make each blow a true one.  
Hit straight. (36)

The satisfaction in one’s work comes only when one finds that he is doing something meaningful in his life. The two thieves have always been criticized in their life for their work. However, when the Doctor praises their skills involved in the bad work, they began to believe that they also know something which others cannot learn so easily. It is for this reason that they become intimate with someone for the first time in their life.

The Doctor who is an expert in tackling his job finds the moment perfect to modify the character of the thieves. Therefore, he explained to them that in this land people work harder and finds pleasure in whatever work they are doing. Since everyone works hard no one dares to look

around for others possessions. They are satisfied with whatever they get in lieu of their dedication to their work. Therefore, money has found no importance in their land.

Moreover, the Doctor states to the two thieves that they must not consider their work as something meaningless. They have learnt something which no one in their land can learn so easily. They must know how to value their work. It is only by giving value to their work, their 'self' will find fulfillment. He also informs them that since they are in hold of one skill they can easily get hold of another skill. He informs to them that their 'self' will only find a new direction when they are able to erase the memories of what they were in the past. They need to learn to make the future beautiful. He informs them in their land they can use their skills in various works. Kena and Becha are touched by the words of the doctor and inform him that they will take their work seriously from now onwards. Becha promises to use his skill in gardening, while Kena states that he will use his skill as a builder and repair walls which he had carelessly destroyed throughout his entire life.

The Chorus towards the end of the play is meaningful as it sums up the theme of the entire play. It has been very skillfully incorporated by Badal Sircar to create awareness amongst the audience present there.

CHORUS: (singing) 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 everything we have together.  
Come let's share everything we have together.  
Whatever we need in this world, whatever,

We'll make it all if we work together.

Why go on shopping rampages?

Why do we slave for mere wages?

We'll share what we have together.

Come, let's share everything together. (38)

The play brings into limelight the scenario of the Indian society during the post-colonial period. During this period, a group of Indians became so much engrossed in their own benefits that they forgot for the welfare of the other people in the same society. The 'self' of the people began to deteriorate to an extreme point where they needed the guiding hands of people like the Doctor in the play. The people of the post-colonial world and the modern world have been made to forget blood relationships and made competitive approach against each other. Through the play, Sircar wants also to demonstrate the political web which has surrounded every one and made them forget the basic tenets of humanity such as simplicity, compassionate attitude and fear for God. Just like the two thieves in the play who are not able to identify their own hidden talents, the people of this generation are running for easy money instead of doing something based on their talent. Through the motivational words of the doctor both of them decide to leave their present profession and work on something which will give them a sense of self-satisfaction.

## II

Another play by Sircar which is quite similar to that of *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* in terms of sending a genuine message through the medium of comedy is *Scandal in Fairyland*. The original title of the play was Roopkathar Kelenkari which was written in the year 1974. The play was enacted by Satabdi group at Curzon Park in the year 1975. Sircar who is very apt in delivering a message through his plays, chose the theme of the degradation of media in India

through this play. He was well aware of the fact that media which is considered as the fourth pillar of democracy was facing serious debacle due to the publishing of fake news for publicity. Therefore, he found the play as an appropriate platform where he could tackle this problem in a sarcastic manner. He believed that the media must work for constructive purpose and not for destructive one. When all sorts of corruptions were going around in India, the media must learn to stand strong and work as a cohesive unit in order to voice against those sorts of corruptions.

The plays of Sircar, though often dealing with serious concepts, are able to engage the audience as they find similarity of their own lives with the characters of these plays. In the play, though an imaginary place called Fairyland has been portrayed by Sircar, but by the descriptions provided about that place, the place seems to be Calcutta during the 1950s and 1960s. Just as in the streets of Calcutta where paperboys sell the newspapers in the streets, similarly in Fairyland too, a paperboy who uses funny English accent sells his newspaper by shouting the important headlines in order to attract the people. His newspaper contains news regarding the various victories achieved by the prince Thunderbolt. Prince Thunderbolt had turned himself into a national hero through the various victories he had achieved against various gigantic opponents. People were keen to learn about his latest achievement, which is the reason why they bought the newspapers.

Four characters named One, Two, Three and Four bought the newspaper in order to get update regarding the latest achievements of this national hero. At a time when such heroes were rarely to be found, the people such as the above mentioned four characters found a security within their 'selves' by learning about such a hero. They believed that when such a hero is around them their 'self' will always find someone around whom they can find solace and a sense of significance.

- ONE: End of the Nightmare.
- TWO: Copperland Free of Terror.
- THREE: Prince Thunderbolt's Seventh Success.
- FOUR: Special correspondent of The Daily Fairy Green.
- ONE: Goldlandis.
- TWO: Silver State.
- THREE: Pearl Kingdom.
- FOUR: Diamond Isle.
- ONE: Emeraldia.
- TWO: Land of Gems.
- THREE: One after the other, the terrible doom –
- FOUR: threatening these six kingdoms –
- ONE: In the form of six terrible man eating ogres
- TWO: has been averted –
- THREE: by the brave Prince Thunderbolt (41)

From the details provided in the newspaper it can be deciphered that Prince Thunderbolt had become a savior for the land of Copperland. He had been able to impress the King of Copperland and the common people equally with his heroic deeds. By killing many ogres he had

been able to restore the lost 'self' of the people of Copperland. The people of Copperland were under threat from the malicious attacks of the ogre, which denied their 'self' to become a cohesive unit. The four characters buy papers from the paper boy the next day too in order to learn about the latest achievements of Prince Thunderbolt. They were shocked when they learnt that instead of asking the princess of Copperland as his wife, he again accepted the offer of another half of the kingdom of Copperland.

The Paperboy can be said to be the compere of the play, who through his act of selling newspapers also introduces the characters of the play. Through his continuous talking with the audience regarding the facts so far developed in the play, he kept the audience updated with the actual viewpoints in the play. He tells the audience to hold their sense of belief for a while because they have been going through a fairytale so far not a real story. The fairytale had been given an attractive angle by the writer through the use of fanciful words. He mentioned to the audience that he has been also involved in the process of diverting facts because he had diverted his readers from the real news in the newspaper by mentioning the fanciful stories as special editions. He also asked the audience to have a close look at the facts mentioned so far in the story of Prince Thunderbolt so far because he has been commissioned by the editor of the Daily Green newspaper to give the story a grand look.

PAPERBOY: .... From time to time these ogres, giants, dragons, what have you  
 – well, these monsters, they come wandering into Fairyland and  
 they say they want a plump' n juicy human to eat everyday or else  
 they'll gobble up the whole kingdom. So then, you see, the King  
 proclaims – that whoever kills the beast and saves the country  
 will get half the kingdom and the hand of the princess in marriage

... And then come the real hero – the prince who does it. And  
 that's it, folks – the ogre's done for, the kingdom rejoices, and  
 there's a wedding in the palace. Music, fireworks, feasts,  
 banquets, happy ever after – the whole works – you all know how  
 a fairytale ends. (44)

After completing the story of the victory lap of Prince Thunderbolt in Copperland, the editor of the Daily Green newspaper published another issue where the land of Ironia also wanted the help of Prince Thunderbolt to slay ogres. However, the ministers were worried regarding the fact that if the Prince asks for half of the kingdom as his prize then what they will do. To this the King asks them not to worry because he is quite confident that once the Prince sets his eyes on the princess Rose he will definitely wish to marry her instead of asking half of the kingdom as his gift. At that moment, the messenger appeared with the news of the victory of the Prince. After hearing to this news the King became very happy and wished to give a golden necklace to the messenger as his gift. However, the minister stopped the king from doing so and asked him to concentrate on the future. If the king had to give half the kingdom as gift to the Prince, then in the future the necklace will help him in sustaining his livelihood.

MINISTER: What are you doing, Sire? If you give away half your kingdom,  
 this necklace will double in price. Then, when you give away the  
 gold it will treble in value. (48)

Everyone expected that Prince Thunderbolt will again wish to possess a portion of the kingdom as a gift instead of setting his eyes on the princess, but to the shock of everyone the prince selected to marry the daughter of the king and rejected the offer of material possessions.

However, when the other characters were quite happy with the news of the marriage, the Paperboy who can be considered as the 'self-consciousness' who guides an individual or a community during times of crisis is very critical with the fact that the Prince has begun to look for his own comforts instead of keeping an eye on the problems of the nation. In this context, the definition of 'self' and 'other' put forward by William James in his seminal work *Principles of Psychology* (1890) can be brought into context. Here, he stated that an individual may possess different forms of 'self' till people go on reacting to that person. This group of people who go on reacting may be called 'others'. In this case, both society and 'self' can be considered as multifaceted and also organized. In this type of situation, where society and self need to communicate on a regular basis, the individual adopts role choice to overcome this difficulty. Self and society are linked with each other, since role choice is done mainly in order to make the 'self' noticeable before the society. 'Self' is organized in the sense that it is a composition of identities organized in a salience hierarchy. Identity is salience since on different situations different identities of an individual will come into the forefront. So, the salient feature of identity can be noticed within the character of Prince Thunderbolt. He was limited to the task of serving the nation and abandoning his personal desires till the point he could achieve the name and fame in the society. Once he was able to do so he began adopting his real role of being a person who like other individuals also carved for his own personal desires. So, the noticeable character change within the character of Prince Thunderbolt proved that people possess different identities. The different forms of identities possessed by an individual come into the forefront based on the different sorts of needs in the society. The 'self' adopts different forms of identity to make it recognizable before the society.



The dialogue of the Paperboy where he scolded the readers for diverting themselves from different sorts of significant issues prevailing in the society is significant as it reminds the readers of the mentality that the modern individuals possessed.

PAPER BOY: .... 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. I may make living selling newspapers, but before I take to the streets, I must read the editorial .... Stupid fools! Instead of reading this the idiots run amok like women the moment they hear of wedding. Go on, dunderheads, line up along his route with conch shells! (49)

Through the above dialogue of the Paperboy, the hypocritical attitude of the modern individual can be noticed to a great extent. This dialogue brings forward the fact that the 'self' of the modern individual has declined to a great extent. Instead of looking at the editorial where they may find the real happenings going around them, they look for spicy news in the newspaper. Through this act, the 'self' of the modern individual is turning into an 'other'. It is so because they have begun to forget their real identities and began to show a different side of them before the society. The so-called middle class educated people are beginning to show their vague education before the common public. Instead the people belonging from the lower class such as the Paperboy possess within them the real values of education. As indicated by him, though he does not possess enough wealth to educate himself, he never allows his 'self' to get bored by reading the editorials where the real value of education remains. The people of Ironia are the caricatures of the hypocritical people living in the modern world.

The act of accepting the hand of the princess of Ironia has led to the downfall of Prince

Thunderbolt. The popularity that he had been enjoying so far suddenly begins to decline and people begin to doubt his bravery. The next circulated newspaper by the Paperboy points to the above fact. Just like the previous scenes where the Paperboy distributes the newspaper, in this scene too the act of distribution of papers is accompanied by the Chorus. The chorus forecasts the events which is likely to occur in the play. This time the four characters that are depicted as reading the newspaper are shocked to learn about the different sorts of allegations arising on Prince Thunderbolt.

Badal Sircar's Third Theatre was an attempt to make the people learn the values of human community which was declining at a fast pace in the modern world. For this purpose, he created plays such as *Scandal in Fairyland* to demonstrate the power of human bonding which really needed to be valued in order to maintain the existence of the 'self'. If human bonding would remain strong in a society then the fake institutions which disturb the existence of the 'self' would not get any scope to break the 'self' into an 'other'. The people in the land of Ironia were quickly subdued by different sorts of fake news circulating around them. If someone made them believe any sort of false news, their 'self' quickly came under the control of that 'other'. It began to trust the 'other' who has provided them that spicy news. This sort of trust is dangerous for the 'self' because it has lost its faith upon others residing in its community.

The King and the Minister held a discussion about the sudden unrest developing in their kingdom. They stated that the Prince must not be suspected for his bravery because he has fought for the betterment of their kingdom without thinking about his life. They became worried about the fact that the Daily Green newspaper has spread so much of fake news among the people for their own publicity that it is beginning to harm the peaceful environment of Ironia. The chorus appears again and begins to voice the sentiment of the general public of Ironia.

CHORUS: Give us proof!

Give us proof!

We want to see the ogre's corpse!

The ogre's corpse!

The ogre's corpse!

Let Prince Thunderbolt prove

The killing of the ogre!

We want proof, Thunderbolt!

We want proof, Thunderbolt! (51 – 52)

Prince Thunderbolt who had suddenly turned himself into a villain from a hero learns about all the gossip that has been circulating about him and the ogres that he had killed so far. He wanted to prove himself innocent in front of the people of Ironia and therefore becomes determined to bring forward the main culprits who are to be blamed for all the dirty games. The 'self' after receiving ignorance and blame from the society begins to form a scar within its inner 'self' which makes it distance itself from other individuals in the society. It tries its best to remove that scar from its 'self' by proving itself as innocent in front of the society. The same thing can be said to happen with Prince Thunderbolt who is disturbed by the gossips surrounding him regarding doubting his acts of bravery. The following dialogue indicates this fact:

THUNDERBOLT: My trial. I've heard charges of fraud about my slaying the ogres. I want justice. I want a trial in court.

MINISTER: Oh nonsense, your Highness. Why pay any heed to all that? If you haven't slain the ogre then who has? But –

THUNDERBOLT: Precisely. I want a trial because of that 'but'. Please arrange for a trial – a public trial before all the citizens of Ironia.

(54)

The general public was also asked to attend the trial of Prince Thunderbolt and the entire charges levied on Prince Thunderbolt were narrated before the court by the Minister. Prince Thunderbolt after hearing the allegations that were put upon him provided his own explanation. He mentioned that before making any excuses before the crowd, he would like to make the entire case clear by providing two witnesses. He brings before the crowd his first witness who is an illiterate ogre. The illiterate ogre has been a part of the entire plotting revolving around Prince Thunderbolt. The Daily Green newspaper took advantage of the illiteracy of the ogre and made him a part of their spicy fanciful story. When the court enquired the ogre about who had engaged him in such a plotting, he mentioned that he has never seen that person but he can smell him and detect his position. To this he begins to smell in the court and stops near the editor of the Daily Green newspaper. Prince Thunderbolt brings the editor in front of everyone and asks him the reason of spreading such negativity in the city. They also asked him the reason of coming to Fairyland. The editor mentioned that his clerk is engaged in the act of creating such fanciful story and he only pays him for this job. He also gives his introduction before the court and mentions the reason behind his coming to Fairyland.

MINISTER: Your name?

THE MAN: Midas Speculatorotti

MINISTER: Speculatorroti? That's not a Fairytale name. How did you come to Fairyland?

THE MAN: Why? Is there any ban on our coming into the fairytale? We're all over the world making the 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 them! Why shouldn't I come to Fairyland? (56)

The speech of the editor of the Daily Green newspaper presents before us the reality of modern world. He conveys to the court how much power the media contains within itself. This power can be either used in a positive way or in a negative way. It depends upon the mentality of those who are running the newspapers. If their 'self' is so much deteriorated that they begin to think only about their own monetary benefit and neglect the benefit of others, it is certainly going to have a mentality where they will want to control the 'self' of others. They will have a dominating tendency and want to convert the other individuals into 'other'. These groups of newly transformed 'other' will need to re-constitute their 'self-consciousness in order to recover their lost 'self'. In this context, the ideology of Hegel put forwarded in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* is significant. He stated that 'self-consciousness' is a movement whereby consciousness steps out of it. In this process of movement of 'self-consciousness', 'self' and 'other' are both moments of it and also are dependent upon it. Consciousness can only recognize its self-consciousness aspect by putting an 'other' in front of it. In this context, Hegel mentions that 'self-consciousness is nothing more than the return from otherness. The 'self' at a moment is

defined negatively, by what it is not and in the process returns to the object that it must once again overcome. The same instance can be said to occur with the people of Fairyland in the play. They were turned into human beings with negative mentality by the spicy stories of the newspaper. They were made to keep their 'self-consciousness' at bay by the writings of the newspaper. At that moment, Prince Thunderbolt arose as their 'self-consciousness' who brought forward the real face of the media before the people. The acceptance of the editor regarding his crooked plot before the people brought back the 'self-consciousness' of the common people. They realized that they were being turned into a puppet by the editor and his newspaper through their fake stories. At that moment they decided to go back to their origins and bring back their original 'self'. They decided to never trust the spicy stories from the newspaper. This can be noticed towards the end of the play when they are no more interested in the spicy stories which are being announced in the streets of Fairyland by the Paperboy.

PAPERBOY: Ironia News! Ironia News – Yes sir, the Daily Fairy Green has folded up. 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)

The trial in the court ends with the confession of the crime by the editor and the punishment of exile from Fairyland that he had received. However, the editor is not at all worried with the punishment because he believes that since the people have become 'self-conscious' with the materials of his newspaper, there is no use for him in staying in this land. Therefore, he decides to go to Bengal where he is certain that his business will flourish better than this place. The reference of Bengal is significant since it was the hub of all sorts of activities

in post-independence India. All sorts of protests and revolutions were going around on the streets of Bengal to get rid of such problems.

Once the accusation was put upon Midas, the editor of Daily Fairy Green newspaper, regarding the various allegations put upon him, he mentioned all his plotting before the court. He mentioned that his media had made people like the ogre and Prince Thunderbolt rich. He has turned them from nothing to people with significant existence in Ironia.

MIDAS:       What d'you think would've happened to that stupid ogre if I hadn't helped? Finished, that's what. Kaput! Killed by some fancy prince's sword. He wouldn't be coming here to the royal court dressed to kill. And that Prince Thunderbolt – what would've happened to him? He'd have been swallowed whole by some ogre who had a craving for princess and tried to make ends meet. And now? Think how he must be enjoying his huge estate seven halves make three and a half kingdoms! And all that gold? How d'you think he's got such power and wealth? Who gave him the idea of making a deal with that ogre? Yours truly, Midas Speculatorroti. And what did Midas take in return? Only a thirty-five percent commission. And today, through his own foolishness, he loses a fine business. (56-57)

This statement made by Midas reveals before the audience that Prince Thunderbolt, the ogre and the editor of the newspaper all were involved in the process of plotting and controlling the 'self' of the citizens of Fairyland. Their control over the common people can be compared to

be equivalent to those who enjoy political power in an autocratic government system. Just like in autocratic government system where the group of people who are in power make the common people force to believe their ideology, similarly the structure of media control in Fairyland can be said to be equivalent to that in an autocratic government. They try to get hold of the ‘self’ of the common citizens and try to make them sensitive prone to the issues. They do so by repeating the same incidents again and again before the audience in order to capture their mental periphery. In this context, Homi K. Bhaba’s concept of “sly civility” can be brought into reference. Bhaba stated that the colonized tried to counteract the colonizers attempt to degrade them. Through the means of counteraction, the colonized tried to overthrow the authority of the colonizers. This counteraction is done in such a manner that the colonizers cannot figure out that the colonized have deceived them in this process. (Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* 99) Anne Fuchs in her book *A Space of Anxiety* had mentioned that “sly civility” can be considered as “a form of civil disobedience masquerading under the disguise of civility”. (Fuchs 152) “Sly civility” stands for something positive where it stresses on the ability of the colonized to put resistance on the evil motives of the colonizers. So, it can be said that possession of “sly civility” is significant for a colonized to reclaim their lost ‘self’ and stop itself from behaving like an ‘other’. In the process of reclaiming their lost ‘self’, they however, try to maintain their civility in order to keep their motives secret.

Bhaba’s concept of “sly civility” can be linked up with the incidents in *Scandal in Fairyland*. The overthrow of the dominance of media power in the land of Fairyland was done by the citizens in a very slow and steady manner. The gossip around the fake publicity of Prince Thunderbolt was done to such an extensive manner that the prince himself could not tolerate the buzz created around him. He could not tolerate the news spreading around him and he pleaded



for setting up a trial in the court in order to clear out the entire incident before the court. The citizens' collective effort of unveiling the masquerading persons who were behind the plotting can be said to be an example of "sly civility". Just like the colonized people who put a resistance to the evil motives of the colonizers, the people of Fairyland were able to resist the evil motives of people like the editor of the Daily Fairy Green newspaper. In the process of reclaiming their lost 'self' and dignity, they however did not allow their civility to lose ground. They maintained decency and counteracted the influence of the media on the people of Ironia. Through the adoption of sly civility, the people were able to resist themselves from getting converted into an 'other' and reclaim their lost 'self'.

To conclude it can be said that in the play *Scandal in Fairyland*, Sircar has presented before the audience one of the burning topics prevailing even in the modern world and that is about the effect of media on the 'self' of the individuals. Media has a very dominating effect in the modern individual because through the pattern of information that it provides a society may either be constructed or it may be also destructed. The 'self' of the people has a tendency to get converted into an 'other' through different sorts of spicy and sensational news that it provides. The people who are affected by that sort of news get converted into an 'other' and often at times create communal violence in their own society. The people of Fairyland in the play are also affected by that sort of sensational news provided by the Daily Green newspaper. They are so much affected by that kind of news that their 'self' denies to look for something positive around them. Their 'self' is in a declining state where they only look for sensational news around them and ignore the burning issues in their own society. This ignorance of issues in their society has led them to adopt a passive stance when the society wants them to express themselves regarding the development of their community. The Paperboy in the play can be said to be one of the few

persons of Fairyland who is aware about the current situation prevailing in his society. He is one of the few persons who remain updated with the prevailing issues of his society because he reads the editorial column regularly. He is like a Stage Manager who often through his speech warns the people regarding where they are lacking and what they ought to do in order to bring back their lost 'self'. K. Ayyapa Panikar has stated about the Paperboy in his article "Integrating Present and Past": "In *Scandal in Fairyland*, for instance, the newspaper boy is like a sutradhara, linking the scenes, marking the transition between and commenting on the fairy tale of the play (2). The irony of the fact is that though he is one of the persons who sell the newspaper, but his mentality and behavior make us believe that he possesses a more sensible and matured 'self' compared to the others in his society.

Therefore, finally it can be said that Sircar through his two comic fantasy based plays has successfully depicted the 'self' and 'other' dichotomy. In *Beyond the Land of Hattamala*, Kena and Becha face degradation of their 'self' because they are considered as an 'other' by their own people. They find solace and are able to restore their deteriorated 'self' only when they land in the land of fantasy known as Hattamala. They change slowly when they learn that they have nothing to worry in this corruption free world. They decide to abandon their path of crime and adopt a noble profession after they know that there is nothing to worry for survival in Hattamala. On the other hand, *Scandal in Fairyland* provides us the impactful solution that media should be used in a constructive manner because the people have become too much reliant on whatever data the media provides. The negative impact of media can affect the 'self' of an individual to a great extent. This can be noticed in the play too since the spicy news about Prince Thunderbolt made the people forget about the real issues that were been discussed in the newspaper. They did not consider the problems existing in their own society as something which they need to keep an

eye upon. It was only when they became aware about the publicity tactics of the newspaper; they began recognizing that they have been suffering a degradation of their 'self' so far. They vowed not to get inspired by the fanciful stories created by the media in the near future. So, it can be noticed that though he has dealt with two comic plays, but he never hesitates to focus on the real problems existing in the society. Just like he has focused on the theme of degradation of 'self' and how it has been converted into an 'other' by the society in this play, he successfully carries forward this theme to his other plays too.

## Chapter – IV

### Exploration of the Life of the Subalterns in *An Indian History Made Easy, Life of Bagala and Stale News*

Sircar's another category of plays which concentrate merely on the subalterns are *An Indian History Made Easy, Life of Bagala and Stale News*. These plays have been included in this section to show how during the colonial and the postcolonial period the lives of the poor Indians have remained the same. They have constantly been made to realize that they are oppressed and suppressed and also they do not know how to protest against these injustices. They are constantly projected as "Other" by the dominant group. The themes of these plays are mostly concerned in depicting the subaltern status of the individuals or the groups. The subalterns are one of the marginalized sections of society. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term 'marginalize' means 'to make somebody feel as if they are not important and cannot influence decisions or events; or to put somebody in a powerless position.' (94) In postcolonial studies, the level of marginalization or subaltern status of a person is determined through factors such as class, caste and gender. In Indian condition, all the three factors class, caste and gender play a significant role in the hierarchy of position of an individual. It is through keeping in mind the subaltern status of an individual or group that the 'self' and 'other' dichotomy comes into play. If the individual is suppressed for too long by the dominant class and is denied from their basic rights that they deserve, their 'self' gets transformed into an 'other'. It is because they cannot consider themselves as a part of the society. They feel alienated due to the discrimination met upon them.

## I

*Indian History Made Easy* is one such significant political plays of Badal Sircar where he portrays the black period of British colonization of India of three hundred years back. The original title of the play was *Sukhapathya Bharater Itihas* and was written in Bengali. It was published in 1976. Colonialism can be termed as that phase where a territory was dominated politically, socially, economically and culturally by a foreign power for an extended period of time. The search for new resources in unknown lands increased the pace of British colonialism. British colonialism was also justified by a group of writers by using terms such as “white man’s burden”, through which the colonizers wanted to stress on the fact that native people were not smart enough to rule their own land and therefore needed the white British colonialists to govern them. Therefore, Elleke Boehmer’s concept of “crowd imagery” as discussed in the first chapter can be aptly applied here. According to him, as discussed in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, “crowd imagery” can be considered to be a process of “othering”. (95) Whenever a colonized person started disobeying the commands of the colonizer, they were depicted as “unruly, inscrutable, or malign” and it was believed that they had lost their ‘self’. The term “crowd imagery” was employed by the Europeans to portray the “lack of character and individual will” within a colonized. They were considered as an “other” who was far away from being included into their civilized society. So, these types of mentality were inserted into the mindset of the colonized people so that their rule can be justified across the world. Such a critical period of India’s dark history has been aptly presented by Badal Sircar through *Indian History Made Easy*. To present his play, he uses the method of classroom teaching. In the introduction of the play, Sircar gives a hint of what is contained within the play:

*Sukhapathya Bharater Itihas (Indian History Made Easy)* lays bare one of the most crucial periods in the history of India – British colonialism. What is even significant about the play is the relation between form and content. To match the content, Sircar uses the form of classroom teaching. Therefore, with the Teachers instructing the students, he could easily cover more than three hundred years of British rule without developing a ‘story’. Teachers, Students and the Master take up different roles making the entire period come alive before the audience. (xxxix)

The actors from Shatabdi group adopt the role of different characters in the play who are - Teacher, Master, Students, Britannia and Mother India. The colonial exploitation is portrayed in front of the audience in a very lucid and simple style by the history teacher. For this purpose he divided the three hundred years of colonial rule into different phases. The first phase contained the village community of India, the cottage industry and business by foreign merchants. The second phase had history of British India and supply of Indian goods to England; third phase had the change of industrial capital to financial capital, the Sepoy mutiny, the rule of Britain’s queen in England. Fourth period covered the British Imperialism, Quit India movement and Independence from British regime. The fifth period had freedom, prosperity and progress.

The British entered India with the motive of trading in the country. For that purpose they tried to catch the attention of the Moghul Empire Jahangir by defeating the Portuguese in the ‘Battle of Swally’ in 1612. Slowly and steadily, the British were able to get hold of each Indian region through their trading policies. Through the play, we are not only introduced to the history of India from the British regime, but it also gives us glimpse of Indian history from ancient time onwards. It can be deciphered that the motive of Badal Sircar to present different periods of

history in front of the audience was to make them realize that how strong the ‘self’ of each individual was in the ancient times and how deteriorated it became after attaining a subaltern status during the British colonial period. The ‘self’ of each Indian became marginalized during the colonial period due to the continuous suppression and oppression they had to receive in the hands of the colonizers. Therefore, this period is also termed as one of the darkest periods in Indian history. The tattered ‘self’ of the subalterns needed something dramatic to stop itself from becoming an ‘other’ in their own land.

The beginning of the play introduces us to a scene where the Master directs three teachers how they need to teach the students about India’s glorious history. After receiving directions from the Master, the three teachers move to their classroom and begin the class as usual. The role of the students is played by the members of the Shatabdi group. After singing their daily prayers, the teachers take the attendance of the students. After that they engage in a discussion regarding the various groups of people who had ruled India.

TEACHERS: Samrajya. Empire. Indian empire. Aryan. Sak. Hun. Pathan.

Mogul. Arsakhunpathangul. Say –

STUDENTS: Arsakhunpathangul.

TEACHERS: Mongol. Mogul. Mogul empire. Clear?

STUDENTS: Yes sir. (5)

The introduction scene where the teachers and students engage in different sorts of discussion regarding the glorious history of India is a significant part of the play. It is so due to the fact that by mentioning about the glorious past of India, the teachers want to bring stability to

the 'self' of each and every Indian. Indians have forgotten the roots of their 'self' and engrossed themselves in habits of the 'other' who are mostly the western group of people. The teachers through the classroom teaching of the students wants each and every audience present there to not forget that they too had a glorious past.

The master enters the classroom discussion and presents his viewpoint on the strong roots of the 'self' of each and every Indian. He states that the roots of each and every Indian lie in the agricultural lands. He states that though there were different groups of people who ruled India but it was the village community engaged in farming who were the real rulers of India. They brought out the best from the lands of India through their dedication and hard work. Though the village community led a carefree life at one point of time, but during the tenure of the invading groups, they had to face different sorts of economic and psychological problems. Their 'self' lost the stabilized possession that it had been enjoying for such a long period of time. They were made subalterns in their own lands. They were left out from the entire decision making process and made to realize that they are nothing without the help of the invading groups. They were made 'other' in their own lands through the level of suppression and oppression that they received from the ruling classes.

MASTER: The owner of the farming land is the village community – not the individual. The cottage industries thrive in the villages. Weaver, blacksmith, potter, carpenter, brazier, goldsmith etc. Food and everything else for the village – produced in the village itself. (5)

The master goes on to mention about the different sorts of difficulties faced by the village folks under the rule of the kings and the emperors. He mentions:



MASTER: The village community stays in the same manner all along. The kings fight and the commoners expire. But the village community doesn't die. If it dies here, shoots up elsewhere. (6)

The master also explains to the students how significant the cottage industry was during the time of British rule. It had a very demanding stature and due to this the Britishers looked to capture the Indian soil.

MASTER: Indian cottage industry is world famous. Indian cotton and silk clothes, metal work – the entire world wants. Especially Europe.”  
(6)

So, it can be assumed that Indian cottage industry was the ‘self’ of the Indians which gave them a sense of significance in front of the people of the other parts of world. When the foreigners started looting their ‘self’, they began to stammer in the journey of sustainability. Their ‘self’ gradually began to adopt a marginalized position with fear of being getting pushed further backward in their life. The business mentality of the foreigners was explained to the students by the master. The students enquired the teachers about the meaning of business. The teacher stated that business is exchanging of goods between two countries keeping in mind that the value of that exchange remains the same. So, it can be stated that this business with different countries as sanctioned during the reign of Moghul emperor Jahangir was not only exchange of goods, it was also offering the ‘self’ of the Indians in the hands of the foreigners. It was offering of ‘self’ of the Indians since the soul or identity of the Indians was contained in the cottage industry.

The Britishers gained upper hand in India through different charters which helped them in establishing various sorts of factories across India. Through the establishment of factories across India, they became the new employers or rulers of India who had the power to appoint or dismiss an Indian from jobs. The Indians 'self' had to lower its spirit in front of the new rulers. They were being marginalized in their land and they had to surrender their 'self', their wealth, their pride in front of their new employers. They were made to work like slaves by the colonizers and in return of that they were given a meager amount which was not sufficient for their survival. The fear of getting dismissed from the job and having to lead a worsened life made them accept everything that the colonizers ordered.

The character of Britannia presented in the play is a caricature of the country of Britain. The characters who were portraying the role of teachers now adopt the role of Englishmen. This is the specialty of Badal Sircar's plays, the same characters adopt different roles without using too much props. The Englishmen approach Britannia for silver so that they can buy the necessary goods from India.

BRITANNIA: Why silver, son?

TEACHER 1: Otherwise how can I buy materials from Hindostan?

BRITANNIA: Won't anything else?

TEACHER 2: They're the ones who produce everything else better.

BRITANNIA: What about wool?

TEACHER 3: Who'd want wool in a humid country?

BRITANNIA: Then what'e we to do?

TEACHERS: No way. Need silver. (9)

From the above discussion between Britannia and the teachers adopting the role of Englishmen it can be seen that India was rich in terms of natural resources. However, the Indians did not recognize the strength of their 'self' and was in awe of the 'other'. This tendency of ignoring their own 'self' and becoming more fantasized towards the 'other' led to the downfall of India. They led the foreigners enter their country and get hold of them and allowed the foreigners become the masters of their natural resources. Through this process, they allowed their 'self' to get crushed by the 'other'. Even the 'other' knew that they were inferior compared to the 'self'. However, they tricked the natives to believe that they had nothing and therefore by allowing them to be the rulers of their land, they will improve a lot. This false hope led the natives to follow the customs of the colonizers and forget their own customs. In this context, Homi K. Bhaba's terminology of 'mimicry' as found in "Of Mimicry and Man" is significant. 'Mimicry' can be said to be the tendency of the colonized people to imitate the language, dress, politics or cultural attitude of the colonizers. This is a tendency of the natives so that they can attain equal power to that of those who are in power. In other words, it can be stated that the 'self' faces an identity crisis with its present existence. To overcome this identity crisis and also to stop itself from becoming an 'other', it starts mimicking those who are in power. In the process of mimicking other person, their individual cultural identity remains subjugated. This act of mimicking is not considered as praiseworthy by the members of their class. In Indian context too, as soon as the natives started abandoning their own rituals and customs and started adopting the customs of the foreign countries, their 'self' began to face an identity crisis. Their 'self' can be said to attain an existential crisis.

The continuous pleading of grant of silver by the Englishmen led Britannia to sanction silver which had value of thirty thousand sterling pounds. This sanction of silver helped the Englishmen to do business at ease in India. They were able to manipulate one kingdom against another in India. This led to one kingdom fighting against each other and finally becoming weak at a stage. Finally, they had to take the help of the Englishmen to overcome their enemies who took advantage of this situation and got hold of that kingdom. This scene is portrayed by the students by creating a warlike scene. They show to the audience how they fight with another kingdom on horseback. Finally, they demonstrate their falling and weakening of kingdom. The advantage taken by the Englishmen of this weakening of kingdom is also wonderfully portrayed by the characters.

The subaltern status of Indians under the British rule is well demonstrated by Sircar through the portrayal of Master as Robert Clive. His stature of standing and keeping one leg on the heap of students demonstrate how degraded the 'self' of Indians have become under the British rule. He orders his fellow Englishmen to not waste silver anymore because the big provinces of India such as Bengal, Bihar and Orissa have all surrendered to East India Company and agreed to give revenue to East India Company as protection money. From the speech of Robert Clive it can be noticed that the prominent Indian provinces have all turned into subalterns under the British rule. Their 'self' have been crushed by representatives of East India Company such as Robert Clive. The resistance movements carried out by the subalterns was also crushed aside by the colonizers since their ideologies differed from the ideologies of the elite class of India. To this Ranajit Guha rightly stated in *Selected Subaltern Studies*: "there was no sense of unity in the nationalist movement as subaltern classes maintained values and beliefs that diverged significantly from the elites and bourgeoisie of their society". (41)

The Master informed to the East India Company that they have been able to capture the land of India. Moreover, he also informs that the Indians are turned into subalterns in their own land.

MASTER: 30 September 1765. Respected Directors. It is expected that your company will be able to extract revenue worth two and half crore of sicca rupees this year on account of the dewani of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. Later it will be increased by twenty to thirty lakh in a year. Government and military expenditures shall not exceed sixty lakh by any means. Allowance for the Nawab has already been reduced to forty two lakh. The Mogul emperor's allowance is twenty-six lakh. Therefore there is a net profit of one crore twenty-two lakh of sicca rupees or sixteen lakh fifty thousand nine hundred sterling pounds. Yours, Robert Clive. (12)

The degradation of the 'self' during the colonial period is noticed in the above letter written by Robert Clive to the East India Company. The motive of Badal Sircar in writing this play was to portray the degraded life of the Indians during the colonial period. Edward Said in his seminal work *Orientalism* had stated that the motive of 'othering' of natives by the colonizers was mainly to project them as barbaric, irrational human beings. (3) Therefore, orientalism is mainly concerned in portraying the derogatory lives of the 'other'. By doing so, they can take preventive measures against the Orient as "a sort of surrogate and even underground self". Therefore, the motive of Sircar to highlight the letter of Robert Clive was to project the delineated 'self' that existed in the colonial period.

Britannia time and again enquired her fellow countrymen residing in India regarding the possessions they have been able to acquire so far in India. To this the Englishmen mentioned that Robert Clive has been able to get hold of a lot of possessions in India and all these possessions will be surrendered to the land of Great Britain in due course of time. Robert Clive with his autocratic rule in India had become a national hero in Britain. The play also portrayed the achievement of Robert Clive through different forms of celebrations. The students depicted a scene where they were carrying Clive on their shoulder. Clive is shown as very arrogant and proud of his achievement and the Indians protected him by carrying an umbrella, a flywhisk and a fan. The scene is accompanied by the tune of trumpet 'God save the king'. Britannia is very proud of Clive's achievement and asks him to sit him on her lap. This is a form of honour bestowed upon Clive. After the comfort received from Britannia, Clive informs her about the possessions that he had acquired from the land of India.

BRITANNIA: What've you brought, sonny?

MASTER: Mom, two an hav clole pounds.

BRITANNIA: My good son. My jewel.

MASTER: Thele's mole, mom. Bought popelty in Hindia.

BRITANNIA: Is it true? How much would I get from that?

MASTER: Twenty – seben thousand pound a yeal, mom. (14 -15)

This conversation indicated that Robert Clive is an obedient child for the motherland Britannia who is always looking to collect more and more possessions from the poor Indians. He knew it very well that it can be only done by hurting the 'self' of the Indians to such an extent

that it leaves a scar in their minds. When the Indians moved forward their past must always look terrifying. Nicola King in *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* asserted that due to traumatic events and repressed memories of past events, there may be a split in identity. This may lead to fragmented identity. (King 5) This fragmented identity helps in the establishment of an 'other' which is completely different from the human 'self'. The Indians under the British rule also suffered from such kind of split identity. The repressed memories of being a subaltern for such a longer period of time made them consider themselves as an 'other'. This 'other' was starting to gather the traumatic events within them in order to provide inner strength to the 'self' so that it can start revolutionizing against the injustice met upon them.

Apart from Robert Clive, the other things that were able to provide wealth to Britain was their scientific inventions such as steam engine, spinning jenny and power loom. It was introduced in such a way that the Indians will start looking at Britain as their big brother and will always be in awe about their achievements. Modernization was another method of breaking the 'self' of the Indians which will make them engross in the fashionable world around them. The introduction of modernization led the individual to forget their roots and adorn the new inventions in order to enjoy a luxurious life. This acceptance of modernization led to the breakdown of relationships. The result of the 'self' forgetting the traditional values associated with society was that it was considered as an 'other' in the society. It became alienated and more frustrated with itself.

The three scientists boast about their achievements in front of Britannia. They feel proud that they have been able to cheat the Indians by making them engross in their new discoveries.

TEACHER 1: I'm James Watt. My invention – steam engine.

TEACHER 2: I'm Hargreaves. My invention – spinning jenny.

TEACHER 3: I'm Arkwright. My invention – power loom.

TEACHER 1: Hey darling of Britannia ...

TEACHER 2: Secretly stealing India's wealth ....

TEACHER 3: Robert Clive!

TEACHERS: Accept our worship worth five and quarter pounds. (15)

Britannia goes on explaining the students why she feels proud of her sons who are bringing a lot of possessions for the country.

BRITANNIA: Now my precious son's bringing gold and silver from Hindia. My banks are swelling, investing money. What's the worry about factories now?

STUDENTS: Understood mom-m-m-m.

BRITANNIA: He'll bring more! There'll be more inventions! More factories will be set up! More industries – London, Manchester, Dandi, Glasgow – my son, my child, my lululululu! (kisses the Master)  
(16)

The different forms of taxes levied on the poor Indians were also discussed in the play. In the beginning of British rule, the tax levied was not so harsh. They had to pay only a share upon their crop as land tax. However, later on the rate of taxes was increased which affected the lives of the poor subalterns. Among the subalterns the most affected were the poor peasants. The



British distributed their goods imported from Britain in Indian market and collected a huge amount from it. This made the Indian goods invalid and the poor traders from India had no other option other than surrendering themselves in front of the British goods. Victor Mukherjee in the essay “*Exploring the Aesthetics of the ‘Third Theatre’: A Study of Badal Sircar’s Indian History Made Easy*” stated that it was the British who put pressure on the Indians to abandon their goods and buy their products. The decline of cottage industry resulted in the end of the first period of Indian history. (Mukherjee 12) The second period stated how the raw materials from India such as jute, cotton, indigo, rice and wheat were produced mainly to satisfy the needs of the British factories. The decline of Indian market was also mainly due to the fixing of high taxes on Indian goods such as cotton and silk materials. The English products easily entered the Indian markets with the help of cargo ships. On the other hand, Indian products could not enter British markets due to higher taxes levied upon them.

TEACHER 1: Due to taxation Indian goods stop selling in Britain.

TEACHER 2: Under the cover of taxation Britain’s factories improve.

TEACHER 3: Competing with factory-made British goods, Indian cottage industries finished! (25)

After dominating the Indian markets, the next target of the British was to get hand of the Indian labourers at a low cost. The Indians who were already turned into subalterns in their own land through the diplomatic policies of the British government had no other option rather than accepting whatever offer the colonizers put forward before them. Through this process the Indians were made to work in British markets.

MASTER: Now friendship's needed for the sake of market! Make friends,  
 sign pacts, reduce the production rate, and increase the price. Fix  
 price by signing pact – high price. A small market will suffice but  
 there'll be more profit. (35)

So, the real motive of the British to offer hands of friendship was slowly and steadily coming forward in front of everyone. They were the 'other' who knew no sympathy for the 'self'. They introduced modes of transport not for the benefit of the Indians; it was introduced so that their goods could easily be transported. Moreover, they could collect a lot of money from the transportation system and invest it in the markets of Britain.

Apart from the character of Britannia, Sircar had presented another contradictory character to represent the plight of the subalterns in India and that is of Mother India or Ma. To portray the plight of Indians, Sircar had made her wear a dress which is dirty and her makeup is also messed up. The scene is presented with all sorts of tortures inflicted upon the Indians due to their inability to pay the taxes on time. The hungry faces of the Indians show how difficult it is for them to survive in this period of exploitation and discrimination. The portrayal of the disgruntled face of the Indians is accompanied by the scream of the vultures in the background. The students portray how tattered the 'self' of the Indians had become due to the traumatic incidents in their lives. They do not get the chance to stabilize their 'self' since their past memories haunt them occasionally to make life more difficult. Mother India is left helpless watching her beloved children in such a troubled manner. The dead bodies of her beloved children fall at her feet each and every moment.

Apart from Robert Clive, another Englishmen who created havoc amongst the Indians was Warren Hastings. Due to his policies the Indians suffered terribly and were more torn apart. He informed the officials in Britain about the revenue he had collected from the Indians. His information shared with the higher authorities revealed how the Indians were turned into one of the marginalized groups in their own land.

MASTER: Warren Hastings reporting! Warren Hastings reporting! In the last year's famine one-third of Bengal's population has died.

TEACHERS: Tcha, tcha, tcha, tcha.

MASTER: One-third of the farming land has turned into forest.

TEACHERS: Tcha, tcha, tcha, tcha.

MASTER: It was apprehended – there would be a cut in the collection of revenue too.

TEACHERS: Tcha, tcha, tcha, tcha.

MASTER: But it is found – revenue has not decreased, instead it is increasing.

TEACHERS: Tcha, tcha, tcha, tcha.

MASTER: The only reason for this – revenue was collected rigorously. (20-21)

Another autocratic representative that has been highlighted in the second period of history by Badal Sircar was the Governor General of India Lord Cornwallis. He also made sure to bind the 'self' of the Indians. He introduced the zamindar system through which he wanted to

crush the 'self' of the Indians by using their own people against them. He appointed zamindars so that the revenues could be collected on time. To inflict fear in the minds of the Indians he inflicted punishment to those who were unable to pay the revenues in time. The colonizers started inflicting punishment on the colonized so that they do not start disapproving their policies. In this regard, Albert Memmi's concept of "anonymous collectivity" coined in his work *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1990) can be brought into context. According to Memmi, the colonized started to disprove the policies of the colonizers. The colonizers went to such an extent that they began to repudiate the good habits of the colonized. In this process, the colonized faced identity crisis and began to feel that their 'self' is in extreme danger of getting crushed. This process of dehumanization of individuals was termed by Memmi as "anonymous collectivity". If someone from the colonizers committed any fault, the colonizers use of plural pronouns helped in making the whole group responsible for it. They were punished severely for their act of defiance and this act of punishment inflicted fear within the mindset of the entire group. Through "anonymous collectivity", the colonizer aimed to stress on the fact that for the fault of a particular individual, the entire group had to take responsibility for the act. The same thing can be said to happen with Lord Cornwallis' introduction of zamindar system. The punishment of one individual due to the inability to pay revenue in time created tremor in the mindset of the entire group. Through this process, the subalterns could never think of protesting against the injustice meted upon them by the colonizers.

BRITANNIA: What scheme?

MASTER: The zamindar.

BRITANNIA: What's that?

MASTER: The owner of the land. He'll distribute the right to cultivate land.  
 He'll pay me after collecting revenue from the peasants. If a  
 peasant fails to pay revenue, he'll snatch away the right from him  
 and pass it on to another. (27)

So, a group of Indians had already sold their 'self' to the British in the hope of extracting wealth for their own benefit from their own countrymen. The subalterns in pre-independent India were engrossed in a cycle where they were exploited from each and every corner. Everyone was looking to oppress them so that their own needs can be fulfilled. This is the reason why Indian revolution in the earlier phases of colonization was not successful.

One of the greatest revolutions of Indian history was the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. It was through this revolution that British ended the control of East India Company in India and started the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Quite contradictory to the character of Britannia was the character of Mother India or Ma. Britannia was prospering with the acquisitions by virtue of conquering other lands and acquiring their wealth. On the other hand, Mother India was falling down due to the degradation meted upon her beloved children by the foreigners. Her beloved children were falling down in her lap one by one due to the inability to survive from the clutches of colonial exploitation. She mentioned to the audience that her children were dying due to the inability to manage their means of production. Once her beloved son the zamindars have also turned their back to their fellow countrymen and looked to satisfy their own urge only.

After getting their 'self' crushed for a long period of time, the colonizers agreed to grant freedom to India. The role of the colonizer is depicted by the Master and Mother India is delighted that finally her children can recover their lost 'self' in this new born land. However,

before leaving the country the British strikes the final nail in the coffin by dividing the country into two parts - Hindustan and Pakistan. This division is based mainly on religion. Ma who was delighted for her children cannot tolerate this division of 'self' anymore. The 'self' of both the Hindus and the Muslims were bound by the same thread before independence but after independence they have converted themselves into 'other'. They have created partition between themselves and started considering themselves as separate entities. After the partition, the class is dismissed and students run towards Ma and ask her to wear new dress. However, Ma is still unhappy because she realizes that though she has received independence; her children have started considering each other as foe. She does not believe that the 'self' of the Indians can be restored so easily because the partition has already created a scar in the minds of Indians which cannot be removed so easily.

STUDENTS: Today's 15 August 1947. Won't you dress up?

MA: Yes I will. Some day. When my son will die no more

TEACHER 1: That day's about to come.

TEACHER 2: Dams across the rivers. Electricity in the villages.

TEACHER 3: New industries.

MA: My son's dying. Famine. Riot. (46)

The play very beautifully highlights through the medium of classroom teaching how the Indians were turned into subalterns in their own land. The level of exploitation that the Indians had to encounter in the hands of the colonizers left them with a tattered 'self'. They could not gather the strength to face the toughest obstacles in their lives. They had to remain confined in

their own country for such a long period of time because they could not take out a united movement against the foreigners. Finally, when they were able to unite their disturbed 'self', they were finally able to achieve independence. The peasants and tradesman who were turned into subalterns in their own land were finally able to breathe a sigh of relief. This play not only addresses the period before independence, it is also a direct attack on the colonial mentality still existing in the mindset of the Indians in the contemporary society. The peasant classes are still suffering as subalterns in the hands of the upper class society. They are deprived of their basic rights by the ruling class just like the colonizers in the pre-independence period.

## II

Badal Sircar has created a buzz in the revolution of Indian drama through his Third theatre movement. His play *Life of Bagala* is notable since it concentrated on how the suppression of the subalterns led to the distancing of the 'self' from the 'other'. In this play he depicted how the subsequent clash between the 'self' with the 'other' has resulted in social turmoil. Through this play, Sircar targeted the youth residing in Kolkata during that era. This play was first enacted in the year 1998 with the title *Bagalacharitmanas*. The youth were facing frustration due to the failure and competition in their life. This failure has led to the creation of a disturbed 'self'. This disturbed 'self' may consider the other people residing in the society as their enemies. It may be due to the fact that the negligence it has received from the outside world has created more inner turmoil within the 'self'. The competitive nature in the outside world never allowed it to settle down properly. The frustration developing within the 'self' often developed a suicidal mentality in the individual. They preferred to end their life rather than facing more negligence from the society. Moreover, they began to consider themselves as an 'other' in the society. Bagala was an epitome of the youth of this generation who portrayed the

trauma faced by them in a very considerable way. Therefore, it can be stated that Sircar created the character of Bagala to give it a realistic dimension.

The character of Bagala was created by Sircar to show the influence of a society on the psychological development of an individual. To show this effect, Sircar had introduced the character of Bagala through his common style of giving the stage managers the chance to come to the forefront. The stage managers searched Bagala among the audience by depicting them blowing trumpets. These trumpets were symbolic since it depicted the busy humdrum life of the modern society. Bagala who was facing a turmoil 'self' since his childhood days cannot tolerate the sounds of the noises anymore. Bagala confesses to the audience that he has been living a bitter life since his childhood days. The start of his bitter life began with his name and surname. Due to this he has been facing lots of humiliation in the society and also he has become a centre of joke for them.

HERO:        Bagalacharan! Parents calling their son by this name .... What to say! Particularly if their surname's Batabyal!

Stage Manager 1 & 2: Bagalacharan Batabyal.

BAGALA:    Bagalacharan Batabyal! Rather than hanging this name round its neck they should've tied a 10 kg stone and thrown the child into the Ganges! ... My parents vanished in a bus accident when I was a child. Else I ... Else I ... Else what would've I done? What could have I done? Those giving me hell since childhood was always there, alive and kicking ... (54)



Bagala's 'self' is haunted at different moments in his life due to different sorts of humiliating incidents that he had to face in his bygone days. One such incident that had remained in his memory is regarding the teasing by his school and college friends that he had to face due to his uncommon name. These incidents never allow his 'self' to settle down properly. He begins to consider himself as an outcast or 'other' in the society.

BOYS:        Baga! Baga! Hey Baga, have you seen a Bog? Seen a Bog, Sri  
                   Bagala? Bagalssaran Batabyal! No. No. Ballbat! Ballbat Batball  
                   Ballbat Batball. O Bogu, are you hurt? How can we resist tripping  
                   up seeing such bog-like legs? Isn't there a district in Bangladesh  
                   called Bagura? Is our Baguya's house in Bagura? (Sing) Baga  
                   cries fallen in a trap! (54)

The humiliation of Bagala from his surrounding society helps us in bringing forward the viewpoints of Theodule Ribot who in *Les Maladies de la memoire* had commented on the memory process of an individual. Ribot stated that memory is essentially an organic biological event. Ribot reduced memory to its simple and most primary state of automatic repetition. He studied memory with emphasis on the power of conservation, reproduction and localization in the past which is otherwise called 'reconnaissance' or conscious recognition. (Ribot 7) This conscious recognition time and again leads to the formation of the identity of the 'self'. The automatic repetition of the events of the past does not let a person to constitute a stable 'self'. This instability may often lead to the formation of an 'other' which continuously clashes with the 'self'. The automatic repetition of incidents as stated by Ribot can be found also in Bagala's life. These repetitions of disturbing memories in his life do not allow Bagala to possess a stable 'self'.

Instead he is slowly and steadily getting converted into an 'other' whose identity continuously clashes with the 'self'.

Bagala does not find disturbance only with his name, he is also disturbed with the relation he has with his family members. Since his parents passed away when he was very young, he had to depend on his maternal uncle. His maternal uncle treated him as a servant and made him do all sorts of household works. He was also not given proper food in the house and they looked for scope to torture him with their harsh remarks.

AUNT:       Bagai! Didn't I tell you to buy fish from the market after the scales have been taken off? Won't you ever remember?

BAGALA:    I did remember, aunt.

AUNT:       Well. If you did, why didn't you tell the fishmonger?

BAGALA:    Told him, aunt. But he refused ... He said .... Taking off scales for fish weighing 250 grams ....

AUNT:       250 grams! Shall I buy 1 kg fish and feed you? How much money did your daddy leave behind? (57)

Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* mentioned that memory is used as a container in which we restore our thought, knowledge and experience. It is often used for receiving fresh excitations. (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 25) These fresh excitations received time and again do not allow the 'self' to move in a continuous journey. It halts its progress time and again making it reconsider the constitution of an 'other which will be distanced from the individual's 'self'. Therefore, based on the play it can be stated that fresh excitations of the harsh memories

gathered in his maternal uncle's house, Bagala cannot do anything to bring his mental status into a normalcy. This disturbance in his mind does not allow his 'self' to move forward in a positive manner. His 'self' is surrounded by all sorts of negativity that makes him ponder often regarding the identity that he possesses.

The description of events through the help of a Stage Manager makes Badal Sircar's play move forward without any halt. The identity crisis that is carried by Bagala with his name does not stop in humiliating him only in his childhood days. Instead, his misfortune with his name continues even after becoming a commerce graduate. He is denied in the interviews due to his odd name. The interviewers reject him stating that his odd name will be the root cause of Bagala not being able to maintain a healthy relation with his clients.

INTERVIEWER 1: Most unsmart.

INTERVIEWER 2: Doesn't utter a single word. Got terrific results. A first class honours degree Yet ....

INTERVIEWER 1: The name's Most unsmart too – Bagalacharan Batabyal.

With that name and that personality, his relationship with the colleagues ... Forget it. Got to call five more before lunch.

(Raises voice) Next! (60)

The incidents encountered so far in the play point to the fact that Bagala has been turned into a subaltern by the society around him. They suppress his progress through all sorts of oppressive measures. They consider him as one of the weaker targets since he cannot protest against all the injustice meted upon him. Just like the other subalterns, his helplessness is also taken advantage by the powerful group of people residing in the society. Nostalgia has been a

significant role player in the formation of a subaltern's identity. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2012), nostalgia is a "sentimental longing for or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual's own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past." Nostalgia often contains with it an internal pain. The past often becomes repressed and needs the medium of rediscovery to bring back the memories which were almost at a stage of loss. This alienation leads to the formation of an "other" in a postcolonial society. These alienated individuals try to stabilize themselves from the clutches of colonialism. They possess a "self" which is tattered, fragmented and have no particular direction to move forward in their life. Nostalgia was also considered as a burden which hampers an individual or a community's progress. Bagala's nostalgia of him being turned into a subaltern by the society around him does not work well with the frustration being developed in him slowly and steadily. He wants to move away from this hellish society and want a society where he will be able to achieve happiness.

Bagala has become such a subaltern in his maternal uncle's house that all his decision making powers are snatched from him. Even he is not allowed to choose his own life-partner. His uncle and aunt select one girl for him keeping in mind their own benefits. Just like the people in power who ignore the needs of the poor people, similarly Bagala's needs are sacrificed in front of their own needs by his uncle and aunt. The powerful group of people can go to any extent to fulfill their needs from the poorer section of people. Similarly, Bagala's aunt also begins to threaten him when he mentions that he is not willing to stay in his father-in-law's house after marriage. She orders him to get ready quickly so that he can be married as soon as possible. Bagala who is terrified all throughout his life cannot withstand more shocking events in

his life. Therefore, he runs away from his maternal uncle's house with the hope of getting something more delightful in his life.

Bagala is in a very complex situation as he does not know what to do in his life. The Stage Managers who have been forecasting the life of Bagala so far mentions that if he would have obeyed his uncle's decision to get married, he would have become a puppet for his uncle and aunt. They supported Bagala's decision to run away from his troubled life. In this context, Thomas F. Pettigrew's statement regarding victimization and discrimination published in *A Profile of the Negro American* can be aptly included. Here, Pettigrew mentioned about the three different responses as: (a) Moving towards the oppressor by seeking acceptance through integration (b) Moving against the oppressor by fighting back and (c) moving away from the oppressor through withdrawal, flight or avoidance. (Pettigrew 2-3) In context of the play it is noticed that Bagala attempted to apply the first two responses in the beginning. First of all being a subaltern in his own house, he wanted to oblige to whatever orders his uncle and aunt gave to him. He did so in order to get acceptance from his oppressors. When he noticed that this response did not give any respite to his troubled 'self', he adopted the second response of protesting against the injustice meted upon him. This can be noticed when he protested against the forced marriage by his uncle and aunt. When he noticed that despite protesting against the injustice, his aunt did not back down, he decided to adopt the third response. He decided to move away from his oppressor by running away from his uncle's house.

After escaping from his uncle's house, he catches a crowded bus and gets down at an unknown place after travelling for a distance. His 'self' is in such a troubled state of mind that he begins to curse everyone around him, including his dead parents. He begins to calculate the prospects of returning back to his previous life and moving away from that deserted life. The

calculation in his mind becomes so intense that his 'self' becomes disturbed a lot. This disturbance in his mind leads him to another ultimate solution and that is of ending his life through suicide. He begins to think of various ways of committing suicide and finally decides that he will commit suicide at the railway track.

BAGALA: .... Hang by a rope? Where's the rope? One can get a thread for one and half-rupees, not a rope to hang by. Potassium cyanide – who's to give it even if I pay? Sulfuric acid – that too can't be had for one and a half rupees .... Jump from a seven or a ten-storeyed building? That's in the centre of the city! All the uncles would be there! Jump into the water – yes that's right. One doesn't need money to drown... jumping would find me in knee –deep water. Which way's the Ganges? That too is full of boats. Someone will definitely fish me out. Then the police, the uncle's place, and from there the father – in – laws's. Where've I come? One and a half rupees isn't even enough for dying! Crematorium on this side, railway tracks on the other – railway tracks? Yes a train's past too. Tracks! Let's go Bagalacharan – forward march! (72)

So, the thought of suicide arising in the mind of Bagala has been given a comic touch by Sircar. He denies various possibilities of suicide due to different reasons as pointed out in his speech. The character of the Old Man has been a vital role player in most of Sircar's plays. In this play too, the character of Old Man appears just at the nick of time when Bagala is contemplating of committing suicide. He will be the ray of hope for Bagala in the later part of the play. He will provide Bagala with the boost needed to sustain his drowning 'self'. During this

appearance of the Old Man it is noticed that he is talking to someone invisible about the philosophy of death. He mentions how the old man's death ratio has increased in recent times compared to the young men. Moreover, the old people always have a fear of death in their minds because death may grab them at any moment of time. He also mentions to the audience about an absolute truth and that is all men are bound to die one day.

The character of the Old Man is that of a contrasting one as compared to that of Bagala. Despite his old age, the Old Man is full of positivity. He has not allowed his 'self' to be surrounded by thoughts of negativity. On the other hand, Bagala is a character whose 'self' is in a declining mode due to the negativity encompassing him. Just when Bagala is attempting to commit suicide by keeping his head on the railway track, the Old Man notices it and orders someone to rescue him. After rescuing Bagala, the Old Man questions Bagala about the reason of taking such a wrong decision at such a young age. Bagala narrates to the Old Man the entire incidents from his childhood days onwards for which frustration has been developing in his mind. The incidents that will occur between Bagala and the Old Man after this will demonstrate before us that how the 'self' can restore its normalcy amidst moments of crisis. The subalterns too like Bagala need a helping hand to make them feel safe. They need someone who can stand for them in the middle of crisis and help them in restoring their lost privileges.

The Old Man invites Bagala for dinner at his home. Bagala who has faced bad people in his entire life cannot believe in the goodness of the Old Man. His 'self' has become completely blind towards the good aspects of life. However, Bagala has not been able to overcome from the shock of getting rescued by an invisible hand. Therefore, he enquires to the Old Man regarding who had rescued him. The Old Man informs him that he is blessed by the trustworthiness of 'Nilpari' who takes care of all his needs. Bagala is amazed by the wonderful dinner he had

consumed in the house of the Old Man. The Old Man replies that all these items were prepared by Nilpari itself. The Old Man wants to bring back the lost ‘self’ of Bagala and in this context he asks him certain questions through which he can learn to protest against it. He knows it very well what defects lies in Bagala and therefore he wants Bagala to realize those defects. He wants Bagala to rise above the standard of being a subaltern. He wants him to fight against the injustice meted on him. He knows it very well that only by overcoming his inner turmoil he will be able to possess a stronger ‘self’.

OLD MAN: In short, you’re extremely honest. And you – what I think - suffer from an inferiority complex. Moreover you’re too reticent. You got a first class degree in B.Com yet couldn’t answer simple questions at the interview. Rather than facing life, you prefer escaping to a hole.

BAGALA: You’re ...

OLD MAN: Yes, right. I’m abusing you. Why don’t you protest? Why aren’t you angry?

BAGALA: No, I mean .... Er .... You

OLD MAN: That’s all! You lower your face! Don’t utter a word! ... (78)

The Old Man wanted to spark the inner conscience of Bagala which has been staying dormant for so long. In this context, the supernatural spirit “Nilpari” proves to be of great help to him. She teaches Bagala the value of work and how dedicated he must remain to his own life. The Old Man teaches Bagala how to call Nila or Nilpari when he faces difficult situation in his



life. First of all, he asks him to request Nilapari to prepare his bed so that he can sleep properly. However, Bagala does not want Nila's help for such simple things. On the other hand, the Old Man mentions to Bagala that though Nila performs the same work day after day, she is not annoyed with her work. Instead she performs her duties as she is performing the job for the first time in her life. This conversation with the Old Man is significant since it gives moral lesson to Bagala that every work must be performed in the manner of doing it for the first time. This pattern of work will only help one in sustaining their 'self'.

Motivation in one's life is very important to give a positive direction to the 'self'. The Old Man is looking to provide Bagala with some sort of motivation which will give confidence to his already declining 'self' which is in the process of getting converted to an 'other' in the society. Therefore, he decides to talk with Bagala about the different types of job advertisement published in the newspaper. He asks Bagala to order Nila to bring the newspapers from the shelf. However, he is hesitant to order Nila to bring the newspapers to which the Old Man becomes angry and in a harsh tone questions him about the subaltern stance taken by him.

OLD MAN: I see. Never ordered anyone in your life. (BAGALA shakes head.) Never made a request as well? (Shakes head again.) Only followed what others ordered. (This time BAGALA nods) That's why you were to marry and stay at father – in – law's following your uncle and aunt's order. (84)

John Locke in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* identified memory as an 'anchor' for identity, coherence and continuity. To him, memories do not really exist as 'things', these are rather impressions of perception that can be revived and recoloured each and every

time we recall the past. He also mentioned that pain and pleasure were mostly remembered because they have a lasting impression. (Locke 12) The pain and pleasures from the past were mostly responsible for creating one's self. It may be either a united self or a broken self. If the broken self is constituted, it may lead to the formation of an "other" that is distanced from the individual's self. He equated sense impressions with ideas. For him, ideas were nothing but "ideas of sense". He considered "ideas of reflection" as the mind's reflection upon its own activity. He also believed that it is the objects which act on the senses (Locke 136). So, Bagala becoming a subaltern in his life is nothing more than the effect of pain received mostly throughout his life through the humiliation from the society around him. Just as Locke had commented on the fact that memories exist mostly as perceptions of impressions rather than things, similarly Bagala's 'self' is also constituted mostly through the impressions of people he had received in his lifetime so far. His "ideas of reflection" do not provide him with a positive reaction towards people. It is due to the fact that due to these people he has become timid, voiceless and more and more he is facing violent identity crisis. This identity crisis in him received from the senses has turned him into an 'other' in the society. Due to this identity crisis he had even decided to end his life by committing suicide in the railway track.

Nila, the supernatural spirit, proved as the solace to the 'self' of Bagala which he has been denied for such a long period of time. The 'self' after getting tortured for such a longer time needs a soothing balm to restore itself to its original state. If someone does not receive this soothing balm in his life, his 'self' is almost certain to get converted into an 'other'. The 'other' may try to end itself at one stage by either thinking of committing suicide or by becoming a revolutionary member of the society. However, in case of Bagala he had received the soothing balm of Nila at the right moment. He has found someone through which he can learn how to

order things or make request to do a job. His 'self' will finally receive a transformation which he has been pleading for so long. The Old Man becomes concerned regarding the status of Bagala's mental health. Therefore, he again asks Bagala to try for jobs after going through the advertisements given in the local newspapers. He asks Bagala to order Nila to bring the day's newspapers so that they can go through the advertisement published in the newspapers. Bagala who was hesitant so far to order anything to Nila does not hesitate this time to order her. Nila immediately follows the orders of her master and brings different newspapers in front of them. After having a look at the advertisements, the Old Man suggests some jobs which will be suitable for him. At that moment, Bagala mentions that he was due to face an interview this Friday. However, he has left his call letter for the interview at his maternal uncle's home. The Old Man asks Bagala to order Nila to bring that call letter from his uncle's house. Bagala without any hesitation orders Nila to bring that letter. This shows that Bagala has regained some confidence by finding someone who he can be trust upon. He gives her some directions regarding where he might find that letter. Nila obliges to the order given by her new master at once.

After making Bagala mentally prepared for the interview, the next task of the Old Man is to remove the inner fear residing within him. Therefore, they decide to take role play. The Old Man becomes the interviewer and Bagala assumes the role of the interviewee. He gives Bagala a lifeline in the form of Nila. He can ask her for help at any moment whenever he feels nervous. The Old Man asks question in a harsh manner regarding his name and job experience so that his inner 'self' arises to counteract those reactions. However, after a certain time Bagala assumed his previous role of being a subaltern who is timid and is unable to protest against the injustice going with him. In this context, Freud's concept of "unconscious" as found in his *Introductory*

*Lectures on Psychoanalysis* can be brought into reference. According to Freud, the dwelling place of the unconscious in the mind of an individual was below the level of consciousness. It stayed away from the outer reality as much as it can. It is always in quest for pleasure from the outer reality. It contained the significant memories, infantile experiences and traumas from the past. (Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* 87) So, in the play also the “unconscious” mind of Bagala brought back the traumatic experiences gathered within it whenever he faces certain difficult situations. These traumatic experiences stored within his unconscious mind broke down the character of his ‘self’. It is no longer able to withstand any further humiliation from the society around it. The ‘self’ considered the humiliating society as ‘other’ and begins to maintain a distance from the ‘other’. This in turn makes it lonelier and begins to gather more frustration in him.

The Old Man who had made up his mind to bring back the suppressed ‘self’ of Bagala becomes helpless noticing the poor response given by Bagala during the interview. He requests Nila to show a way so that Bagala can come out from his present situation and can overthrow his inner fear. Nila who was watching all these incidents so far mentions that the only way Bagala will be able to regain his original ‘self’ is by facing the situations once again from which he has been running away so far. She mentions that Bagala’s greatest fear developed from the suppression he received at his uncle and aunt’s house. He was turned into a subaltern at their house. So, if Bagala wants to regain his inner ‘self’, he must voice against the injustice meted upon him and face his uncle and aunt without fear.

NILA:           ... But I think if he could stand once boldly facing his uncle and  
aunt ...

OLD MAN: Would it be possible? What've you seen just now?

NILA: Don't know. But there's no other way! Without this ... without this we can't keep him alive. Now our only duty's to keep him alive. (93)

After listening to the suggestion given by Nila, the Old Man begins to persuade Bagala to go to his uncle's house and face them bravely. However, Bagala becomes terrified with the thought of facing his uncle again. He has not been able to master his courage to overthrow the tag of being a subaltern. After noticing that Bagala is still in the grasp of fear of his uncle and aunt, the Old Man suggests to him that he can also write a letter to his uncle stating about his feelings in that letter. Bagala finally accepts that suggestion and begins to write the letter mentioning how he has been made to toil hard for years as a servant by his uncle and aunt. Moreover, he also mentions that he had also taught their son for free of cost. Further he goes on adding that he is instead leaving behind ten thousand rupees as homage so that he can free himself from their shackles.

The appearance of the Stage managers in the middle of events gives interesting dimensions to the play. They make the audience aware about the turn of events occurring in the play. This time they appear and inform the audience that slowly and steadily Bagala is beginning to regain his original 'self'. However, if he is able to perform his final task of being able to face his terrifying uncle and aunt, he will be able to establish his own 'self' before the world. Walter Hamilton had stated in his introduction to Plato's *Phaedrus & the Seventh and Eighth Letters* that "truth is to be attained by a partnership of two like-minded people". Through this statement he wants to comment on the essential human self and the physical world which later on

transforms into the mind/body split. The existence of this human self is different from the physical world. This belief that the 'self' is a different entity which is different from the physical world has become a popular notion in Western culture. So, the truth of how suppressed Bagala has remained throughout his entire life comes before him only when he finds a man of similar mentality which is the Old Man alongside him.

Nila accompanied Bagala to his uncle's house so that he can complete the task of handing the letter to his uncle. When they reached the house, they noticed that there are three people arguing with each other. Bagala became stiff after reaching his uncle's house and stood still at one end. When they noticed Bagala, the uncle and aunt stated to the other person who was to be Bagala's father-in-law that Bagala will certainly marry their daughter this time. However, the man is not convinced and leaves the place. Later on his uncle begins abusing him about how much they had invested upon him and in return Bagala has cheated them. Therefore, he cannot defy their order anymore. Nila begins to encourage Bagala to hand over the letter and let the other party know about his frustrations. On the other hand, the newly transformed Bagala cannot take the abuses anymore and tears the letter and shouts at his uncle to shut his mouth as he has heard enough of them. He cannot tolerate their abuses anymore.

UNCLE: Shut up! You bastard! Son of a Bitch!

NILA: Give him the letter. Give him the letter.

BAGALA: No. I won't give the letter. I don't need the letter. Bastard? Son of a Bitch? I ? It must be. Otherwise why'd I suffer smacking and spanking in your hands for all these years? Yes. You're right. I'm a bastard. Son of a bitch. But no more of it. What I've written in

that letter – I’m telling you. Listen. I wrote – Whatever you owe me, I’ve repaid by hard work. If there’s still something left, then ..... take this! There’s ten thousand here. And listen – you bastard uncle! Brother –in – law of my father. If you aren’t a son of a bitch yourself, return five thousand rupees to that gentleman. Let’s go Nila! (105 – 106)

This fierce response of Bagala to his most significant oppressor proves that he has really undergone a tremendous transformation. He is no longer the timid Bagala that we knew. He is the new Bagala who has full of self-belief. He can face any sort of problem in his life very easily. He does not need the help of others to face difficult situations. His ‘self’ has become strong and knows how to voice against the injustice inflicted upon him. This new found self-confident Bagala can be seen when the Old Man questions him regarding if he needs the help of Nila to face the interview this Friday. To this question, he stated that he no longer needs anyone’s help from now onwards. He is going to face the hurdles of his life alone. He is no longer the Bagala that people have known for so long. Moreover, the Old Man urges the younger generation like Bagala to stand on their own feet, instead of becoming too much dependent upon their luck. Bagala agrees to the statement made by the Old Man and mentions that he will urge the younger generation to learn to stand on their own feet.

OLD MAN: Bravo! If all of your age could stand on their own feet, could say they’d go all out, then ....

BAGALA: Then, what?

OLD MAN: Then the world wouldn't have been like this. We haven't learn to stand up, never went to fight. We always think that everything will be changed by magic.

BAGALA: No magic! No magic! Everything's to be done with one's own strength! With one's own hand! I'll tell everyone! (107)

The play *Life of Bagala* portrays that the subaltern needs to find out their inner strength in order to move in the ladder of hierarchy. Their 'self' which is suppressed by the oppressive measures adopted by the dominant group residing in the society needs to bloom out from this suppression by voicing against the injustice meted upon them. Moreover, he also urges the younger generation to identify their own talents and not rely upon extra factors such as magic and luck. They have to know how to grab their own opportunities before those opportunities are grabbed by others. The play is also an indirect attack on the dominant groups who believe that they can misuse their power to hold down the marginalized groups. So, this play can be considered also as a political play since it addresses the power relations in the society. These power relations may exist even within one's family just like in the play; the uncle and aunt of Bagala exerted those powers upon Bagala.

### III

The final play in this chapter taken for discussion is *Stale News*. It is based on the Santhal Revolt which occurred during the British regime around the year 1855 -66. It is also a play based on how the Santhals were turned into subalterns by the British government and were deprived of their basic needs. The play was first staged in the year 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1979 and its title was *Basi Khabar*. The play portrays the brutal humiliation faced by not only the Santhal tribe but also by



the Indian people during the British rule. They were marginalized within their own country and were given severe punishment for their small mistakes. Above all *Stale News* was not only the product of Badal Sircar, it was the result of the effort made by the members of the entire Shatabdi group.

The play is presented by Sircar through a subaltern narrative in order to portray their plights, aura of problems in a considerable manner. The play, through the medium of education, wants to highlight to a child about the various prospects and problems residing in this great country. After performing various rituals on a new born child, his education finally begins starting from learning words to numbers. It also covers topics such as teaching him rhymes, basic history of India, geography of India to moral value lessons. As the child turns into a boy or a girl, his level of toughness increases slowly. He has to be more aware about his surroundings. It is taken for granted that along with age their psychological development has also occurred. This form of education which is based mainly about facts in his earlier life is replaced with more judgmental education in his later part of life. The curriculum designers believe that the mental status of a person has become strong enough to judge true and false facts around them. Their 'self' is considered to be strong enough to face any sort of judgmental questions.

The character One is taken as the individual who is receiving education. His next topic of education is about knowing about the ethnic tribes of India. Indian English literature has started concentrating on various themes. However, one of the most significant issues focused by the writers is about the ethnic roots of the people. Ethnicity is an important factor which influences the complex social and political relations in India. It refers to cultural differences that set one group apart from another. Ethnic identity is an absurd construct, where an individual is viewed by themselves and by other as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group. Ethnic crisis in

India is a byproduct of land alienation owing to demographic change as the people are fighting for natural resources in the same geographical space. The first and foremost identity that this group possesses is that of being an Indian. However, in the recent decades it is seen that most of these groups are trying to assert their identities. For this reason the concept of sub-nationalism is arising. This has led to the ethnic groups residing in this part to consider the indigenous people living in this region as their enemies. The ‘self’ and ‘other’ debate has surrounded between the ethnic people and the outsiders who have captured this land through unfair means. Bengt G. Karlson in “Nature and Nation” in *Unruly Hills: Nature and Nation in India’s Northeast* states that like all other people and nations, one should have the right to govern themselves and thus to exercise control over their traditional land and resources. (Karlson 9) This denying of basic rights to govern themselves caused the uproar in the Santhal community against the British government. They began to view the British government and also the native rulers and the landlords as the ‘other’ who were here to take away all that they had possessed. The identity crisis faced by them in their own land along with being converted to a subaltern in their own land made them go all guns firing against the British government. The Santhals have been residing in the borders of Bihar and West Bengal since a long time. Through their dedication to agriculture, they have converted this land into their own. In fact they arrived in this land, before most of the tribes came to this land.

FIVE:           According to scholars, they were the first in India ...

SIX:             ... to cut down the forests and set up homes ....

SEVEN:         .... And eventually discover agriculture.

EIGHT:         Their agricultural society ....

ONE: .... Uninterrupted, through thousands of years ....

TWO: almost without any change until the eighteenth century. (119)

The revolt of the Santhals were not included in the history of India by British government. However, due to some advocates of subaltern history such as Badal Sircar their history has found limelight once again. In this context, theories by two theorists as already discussed in the first chapter may be brought into consideration. According to Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, continuous and linear narrative is believed to pose a single and essentialized history and such a narrative is challenged by postmodern works. (Hutcheon 90) The problem inherent in taking a single and essentialized history as mentioned by Hutcheon is that only a certain event is selected for the narrative. This is done because the continuous narrative must be highly selective while constructing a narrative. But in this case the problem is that this kind of narrative does not take into consideration the needs of individuals who want to individualize their past. The individuals through this do not get the opportunity to position their past in a larger social context. Steve Knapp in *Collective Memory and the Actual Past* mentioned that the groups who are in charge of creating narrative will only recall the past to satisfy their purposes. (Knapp 24) According to him, while reinstating instances from the past there is a great chance that the history may be distorted not only by the historians but also by the politicians. So, it can be said that Badal Sircar was strongly against the continuous and linear narrative. Instead of it, he preferred narratives which were non-linear since it provided them with the scope to revisit the narratives of the marginalized groups. Moreover, keeping in mind Steve Knapp's claim, Sircar purposefully averted back to the history of the Santhal Revolution which can be termed as the 'self' of Indian history. It is so because it is only through such revolutions that the Indian freedom movement found a new direction. Though the Santhals were one of the earliest

settlers of India, they were made to feel that they were the 'other' in India. They were made to struggle to get their day to day livelihood.

Badal Sircar in his *On Theatre* stated regarding the amount of brutalization the Santhals had to face from the British. Though they were the aboriginals, their tolerance was often tested by pushing them beyond their limits. He mentioned:

One can imagine the extremes to which they were pushed when one finds that 50,000 hungry, half-naked Santhals of the region at the borders of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa took up their primitive arms – spears, axes, bows and arrows – fought against the trained, well – fed troops equipped with guns and cannons, horses and elephants, and liberated district after district. And they did not give up until 25, 000 were killed, not counting the women, children and old folks in the village razed to the ground, until after nine months of heroic struggle that shook the very base of the British imperialist rule in eastern India. (126 – 127)

So, the above statement justified that the Santhals fought against the destroyer of their 'self' till their last breath in order to rise above the level of being tagged themselves as being marginalized. They not only fought for their own rights but also made people from other parts of India aware about the true face that the British possessed. They initiated the foundation for the freedom of the 'self' of other Indians from the clutches of British regime.

The revolt was initiated by two leaders from the Santhal tribe named Sidhu and Kanhu in the year 1855. The level of brutalization that was inflicted by the British was described by One as:

ONE: A tide of indescribable oppression, destruction and annihilation passed over Santhal Paraganas and Birbhum. Thousands of Santhals, young and old, men, women and children lost their lives. Fifty elephants were whipped into a frenzy and let loose on the Santhal villages. Their feet trampled over Santhal men and women, crushed thousands of their huts into dust. The Santhal rebels retreated, still fighting, from Birbhum to Santhal Paraganas. They died fighting. All the leaders, Chanrai, Bhairo, Sidho, Kanho, died one by one. They died, but were not defeated. Not a single Santhal rebel surrendered. (155)

Prior to their revolt against the colonizers, the Santhals had remained as one of the providers of all the necessary items for the British. To find a permanent settlement in India, they even dared to clear the large forest areas and slowly began to harvest in those newly cleared areas. After giving their best efforts in their agricultural lands, they converted it into one of the most noticeable lands of India. The British through their cunning words got control over the Santhals. They were made to believe that by working under them, they will progress a lot in their lives. This hope of progress and development made the Santhals to send large amount of daily needs of the British such as rice, oil, vegetables for them. In this process of making the British happy, they did not receive anything remarkable from them. They understood that they had been tricked by the British. To make things worse, the British found a new ally in the form of the Bengali middle class. The Bengali middle class was a creation of the British itself. That class was created by the British in order to bifurcate the Bengali society so that they can rule over them properly. This Bengali middle class in order to please their masters began to subordinate

the Santhals. They exerted all sorts of punishment and humiliation upon them and took all their possessions. This continuous humiliation received from the British and the Bengali middle class turned the once flourishing Santhals into one of the subaltern communities of India. In this context, Albert Memmi's concept of "anonymous collectivity" can be brought into reference which he had coined in his work *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1990). According to him, the colonized started to disprove the policies of the colonizers. The colonizers went to such an extent that they began to repudiate the good habits of the colonized. In this process, the colonized faced identity crisis and began to feel that their 'self' is in extreme danger of getting crushed. This process of dehumanization of individuals was termed by Memmi as "anonymous collectivity". The same case happened with the Santhals as they faced the worst form of dehumanization in the hands of the British. Their simplicity and innocence were taken advantage by the ruling class and in this regard they began to face identity crisis. This identity crisis was not limited to a certain number of individuals; it was broadened to the entire group. The dehumanization of 'self' for a longer period of time led to the revolt of the Santhals.

The Chorus in Badal Sircar's plays performs a significant role. In this play too, it adds an element of surprise as it forecasts the events which is likely to occur in the play. The Chorus chants Damin – i – ko for most part of the play creating suspense in the minds of the audience regarding what is the meaning of it. Finally, while mentioning about the establishment of the Santhal tribes existence in India we are revealed about what is Damin-i-ko. The Santhals apart from starting their basement in the borders of Bengal and Bihar began spreading to other areas such as Pakur, Dumka, Bhagalpur and Purnea till 1970. This expansion occurred due to the fact that they were invited by the landlords so that they could clear the forest areas through their help.

Most of the Santhals began residing in the Bhagalpur area and were later on known as Damin – i – ko. Later on these were known as the Santhal Paraganas.

The role of the Dead man is also mysterious since he makes a continuous presence in front of the characters. He may be deciphered to be the ‘self’ residing within each individual whose help is required when problem arises in front of an individual. From one’s personal problems to the problems residing in a society, everyone is confronted with varieties of problems in their life. It is our conscience which guides us during those times of crisis. The dead man can be a symbolic representation of our conscience which appears before us in those dire moments. For example, when One reads the brutal incidents occurring with the Harijans in India from his newspaper, the dead man appears in front of him at once. It is as if he is the conscience of One who will direct him in which way to act. The other characters at that moment disappear from the scene which suggests that they are not the persons who are willing to consider the problems in the society as their own. One reads from the newspaper:

ONE:            Last Monday, in Village Chainpur under Tekari Police Station in Bihar, a few former landlords opened fire over a land dispute, killing two Harijans on the spot and wounding six more persons including a woman. It is learnt that the dead were decapitated. Their heads were found in a bush last night. (124 -125)

Ramachandra in *The Conceptualization of Hindi Dalit Discourse* had stated:

The word “dalit” along with denoting pride also carries the awareness of oppression and victimization. The revolutionary sentiment of being continually reminded of the acts of the oppressor class is also embedded in this word. It also

has an echo of consciousness. The word 'dalit' makes one aware of a sense of responsibility, and not one of sympathy. It can then be said that along with communicating the meanings of the word 'dalit', the dalit discourse is also geared towards social change and transmission of a 'dalit consciousness'. (179)

The Harijans were later on known as the dalits. Through the adoption of this terminology, they were reminded often and again about the level of oppression they had received from the colonizers. These memories of the past never allowed them to develop a full-fledged 'self'. They had to keep in mind the fact that along with developing the capacity to sustain in their present scenario, they had to look forward to build a better future.

The Dead man appears to be a companion for the characters in the play. He may be the 'self' residing within each and every individual. The individuals talk to the Dead man regarding various sorts of problems that they have been facing in their lives. The problems that they discuss are the various sorts of issues that a middle class person faces during his life. The Petty officer of the factory discusses before the Dead man how he had to work under P.K. Basu who was the big boss of the factory then. He describes to the Dead man believing it to be his inner conscience regarding how he had plotted against the section officer. He showed Mr. Basu how the section officer had intentionally delayed the work that he had been given to complete. In this manner, the section officer was not considered suitable by the higher officials in this factory and he was shifted to another location. Through this tactic the Petty officer got promoted to the position of Section-in-charge. So, from the communication of the Petty officer with the Dead man it can be noticed that he considers the Dead man to be one of his very close companions with whom he can share his hidden secrets without any fear. This kind of conversation generally takes place with our inner 'self' during moments of crisis. Just like in a monologue a person



communicates with himself and tries to reach a point of resolution, similarly in the case of the Petty officer he might be talking to his inner 'self' regarding the decisions which he has taken in his life are justifiable or not. Since a Dead man loses existence after its death, similarly in the play too the Dead man who is portrayed as a character by Badal Sircar can be considered as non-existent and may be therefore related with our inner 'self'.

The scene shifts towards the conversation between Three who is an actress and the Dead man. Three discusses with the Dead man regarding how much busy she has to remain in her day to day life after joining this profession.

THREE:       Offices are closed on Sundays, half days on Saturdays. But I've to  
                     work every day. No festivals, no special days. It was dawn when I  
                     lit the stove and I've been on my feet ever since. Morning tea,  
                     breakfast, lunch for the office-goer, lunch for the college-goer,  
                     pack lunches for the lot of them, and then those piles of dishes to  
                     wash! Shall I make you a cup of tea? Or a glass of fresh lime-  
                     juice – so much better for a summer afternoon? Nothing at all?  
                     (122)

So, in this manner it is noticed that the actress also considers the Dead man as her ally and shares her each and every happenings occurring in her life. He is like her 'self' who is ready to provide her with significant ideas during times of crisis. She reflects before the Dead man how much problem she has to handle in her day to day life. Her husband too does not care about his own health despite the doctor asking him to take care of his health. Due to various problems all

around her, her strong ‘self’ and will has somehow tattered and is looking for a person who will help her in such moments of crisis.

Just like the Petty officer and the actress, One is shown as another character who is engrossed with his own happenings. He has a girlfriend and he is also looking for a job so that he can lead a settled life. This time the Dead man appears again and listens to all the busy humdrum life of One. Though the Dead man appears before different characters as an ally pretending to listen to their problems but he never comments on their problems or planning. He remains as a silent observer of their problems. It seems that the Dead man is shocked at the behavior of the individuals that he has encountered so far. The people are so much engrossed within themselves that they forget to look around them towards the people who are really suffering in their day to day life.

ONE:           It’s only five minutes.

EIGHT:       Indeed? I’ve been waiting here for a full 10 minutes.

ONE:           Poor dear – and all the times you’ve been late, what about...

EIGHT:       If you knew what it’s like for a woman waiting all by herself at a  
bus stop ...

ONE:           Are we going to fight? Or go to the film?

EIGHT:       Did you get tickets? How? Not black?

ONE:           You don’t have to worry about that.

EIGHT:       Don’t be silly, spending all that money ... (130)

The Dead man who had been holding a mysterious role so far finally expresses something when One reads the news of the exploitation of the Santhals in the newspaper. It seems that his search for a person possessing a strong and determined ‘self’ is finally over. Therefore, he stands in front of One and shows him his bandaged hand where something has been written. He has finally come across someone who seems to be really concerned with the real problems existing in his society. One reads from the hand of the Dead man and deciphers the entire situation.

ONE:           ... When the State of Bihar came under British rule, the barter – based economy and social life of the Santhals began to crumble under the impact of the exploitation and oppression of the British merchants and the money-based economy they introduced. The Santhals began to emerge into the open after the almost complete insularity they had enjoyed in their social life for thousands of years. (125)

The introduction of money-based economy by the British had a deep impact on the livelihood of the Santhals. They had remained corruption free in a barter based economy. But the inability to possess money and move in the hierarchy of the society broke down their ‘self’ and weakened them to a certain extent.

The next newspaper report read by the characters brings before the audience the violent face of bonded labour in India. They reveal how bonded labourers have found it difficult to sustain in the money based system which has led to their deteriorating condition. According to the terms of bonded labour, not only that particular individual was bound to work under the landlords but their upcoming generation was also forced to work as a slave.

TWO: According to a survey on bonded labour or on men who have been forced to sign bonds enslaving themselves for life, there are 5,55, 000 of these in Uttar Pradesh, 4,67,00 in Madhya Pradesh, 3,25,000 in Andhra Pradesh, 2,05,000 in Tamil Nadu, 1,93,000 in Karnataka. (142)

So, the numbers produced by Two before the audience is bound to make people wonder about the form of degraded 'self' that the bonded labourers have been facing so long. No one is there to stand for them and the problems so far discussed by the characters that occurred in their daily lives are nothing compared to the problems faced by the bonded labourers.

On the other hand Three and Four reveal before the audience why the people have been suffering so much. According to the information provided by Three and Four, only a few people in West Bengal are lucky to call themselves wealthy because most of them are living below the poverty line. Flood has been a major player of creating havoc among the people of West Bengal. The poor people have been mostly affected by this devastating flood and lose their sustaining 'self'.

THREE: Seventy percent of the population of West Bengal lives below the poverty line, and 95 percent below the basic nutrition line. The five percent at the lowest rung of the income level have a per capita expenditure capacity of only 31 paisa a day. Between 1961 and 1971, the number of landless agricultural labourers has almost doubled in India ...

FOUR: In the third devastating flood in a row, 1, 52, 55,000 people have been affected in West Bengal. Two earlier floods this year affected a total of about 5.7 million people. The State government has information of 813 dead and 765, lost till date. Two lakh one thousand three hundred and forty five heads of cattle have been killed. The Government of West Bengal has conveyed these statistics in a memorandum sent to the Central Government. (143)

The Harijans were not only victim of natural calamities, they were also targeted by the dominant class by subduing them physically. Once they were not able to satisfy the wishes of the landlord they were made victims to various sorts of atrocities. The Harijans who were the subalterns due to the various injustice meted upon them, never got the opportunity to rise above this state of being a subaltern. Their 'self' was crushed to such an extent that their existence was made almost invisible in their society. They never got the support of their own community itself because they had a fear within them that if they helped the victimized people, they will also suffer the same fate. Mass killing and gang rape were common incidents for the Harijans and this form of punishment was inflicted in order to make their 'self' subdued and make them convert into an 'other' in their own society.

SEVEN: Another case of atrocities on the Harijans took place in the village Bajitpur in Bihar. The operation was conducted by about 400 ruffians led by the jotedar of the neighbouring village on 15 November. The violence raged from nine in the morning to four in the afternoon. Nine Harijan women were gang raped openly, at the center of the village. Every

house in the village was set on fire and all the possessions  
of the Harijans were carried away ... (161)

In this context, the “crowd imagery” concept of Elleke Boehmer as mentioned in the introduction chapter can be brought into reference. Boehmer discussed this concept in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. According to him, the concept of “crowd imagery” can be understood as a process of othering. (Boehmer 95) Whenever a colonized person started disobeying the commands of the colonizer, they were depicted as “unruly, inscrutable, or malign” and it was believed that they had lost their ‘self’. The term “crowd imagery” was employed by the Europeans to portray the “lack of character and individual will” in a colonized society. They were considered as “others” who were far away from being included into their civilized society. The same instance of “crowd imagery” can be related to the instances of violence occurring with the Harijans as mentioned in the play *Stale News*. Often the Harijans were considered as “unruly, inscrutable and malign” because they disapproved certain policies of the dominant group of people. The dominant group took this opportunity to penalize the subalterns who were mostly the Harijans with higher rate of interest on their borrowed money. In lieu of their borrowed money, they also had to agree to remain as bonded labourers under the landlords for several generations. If they opposed the conditions and dared to stand against the landlords, they were considered as “others” who cannot be considered as civilized human beings. Moreover, they were controlled by means of either killing them in groups or by inflicting other modes of punishments such as gang raping the ladies. This mass punishment was inflicted in order to set an example before others in the group so that they do not consider opposing them like the ones who had already done so from their group.

The incidents and statistics read in the newspaper leads One to consider taking a strong stance on behalf of the poor people who have been suffering so much in the hands of the dominant group. However, he is surprised with the information as those serious incidents which should have provoked the conscience of the people, are considered as 'stale news' by most of the people. They are engrossed within themselves and do not care about the sufferings of other people around them. The same case has happened with One because though he is willing for a fight to bring back the lost 'self' of the subalterns, he cannot find some spare time from his busy life.

One becomes disturbed towards the end of the play with the sudden arrest of the Dead Man by Two. He opposes the decision of the government because he believes that the government has once again tried to subdue the voice of the subaltern. The Dead Man was one of the few persons who had dared to bring back the lost 'self' of the people who were unaware of the sufferings of the Santhal tribe. So, he believed that this was an attempt to neutralize the revolution that was begun by the Dead Man. Even it was learned that the person who was responsible for leaking the information about the Dead Man will be rewarded by the government. He urges the Dead Man to voice against the injustice meted upon him and stop remaining silent.

ONE:           Death, blood and fear rule over this land. Everyone knows what happens and what will happen behind the prison walls. Why don't you scream? Is it still not time? Not time? (163)

So, through his above mentioned words One wants to voice about the error ridden Indian judicial system. He asks the Dead man to express his inner feelings when there is still time, otherwise he will not get a fair chance to express what is contained within him after he is being

put into prison. Moreover, he knows it very well that the voice of people like the Dead Man is very significant for the society. It is so because they have got the capability to change the fabrics of Indian society through their voice. Moreover, people like the Dead man can only think of bringing about a change in the society because they are free persons who are not confined to the busy humdrum life of the modern society. Their 'self' has not been victim of the pressures of becoming part of a race of collecting more money and looking to defeat others in this process.

*Stale News* is one of the significant plays of Badal Sircar through which he advocates for a society which will be free from the caste and racial discriminations existing in our society. The discriminations in our society have made the Indian society fall victim to the crooked mentality of the ruling class who looks only for their own material benefits. The character of the Dead Man is significant for the direction of the play because he has been presented as a character who is aware about the social happenings around him. At a time when the other people are not concerned about their social happenings, the Dead Man is presented as a character who through his constant presence around the characters who are representatives of the modern society tries to make them conscious about the real problems around them. He tries to bring back the 'self' of the individuals who have been transformed into an 'other' by the competition of survival prevailing in the modern society. He can be said to be successful to a certain extent because One who was also like the other characters at the beginning of the play, becomes conscious about his social surroundings towards the end of the play. He learns how the Santhals have been facing serious discrimination from the landlords as well as the government for many years. He even learns how their existence has been put under serious threat through serious crimes such as mass killing and gang rape incidents. He even vows to fight for the justice of such socially deprived classes when he becomes free from his obligations towards his family. Therefore, it can be



noticed that in the play, Sircar tries to portray the modern individual as one who prioritizes his own problems at the top of the list and after that only if he has some spare time decides to look towards the problem of others. They have turned the people who have been facing identity crisis as 'others' in their own community. Those 'others' are also the subalterns who despite having large in number in their group cannot fight against the dominant groups who rule the society. They are unable to voice against the dominant groups because they believe that they do not possess the necessary resources to sustain in the society. They have a fear that if they decide to fight against the injustice meted upon them, they will not get the monetary resources to sustain their lives which are mostly provided by the ruling class. So, Sircar, through the play, very aptly presents the violent face of modern society by bringing the Santhal tribe as one of the worst sufferers of such condition.

An exhaustive analysis of the three plays taken for discussion in this chapter brings forward the fact before us that the depiction of the condition of the subalterns is a major issue to be found in the plays of Sircar. He successfully portrays how the subalterns have been facing a degradation of their 'self' and are being turned into an 'other' in their own society by the dominating classes. In the first play *Indian History Made Easy* taken for discussion in this section, it is found that the degradation of 'self' occurs mostly with the Indians during the colonial period. They are being turned into an 'other' in their own land and are being turned into subalterns. Their resources are being looted and made to work as slaves in their own land. In the second play *Life of Bagala*, the degradation of 'self' occurs with an individual and that is Bagala. He has been converted into an 'other' in his own society by a group of people who take advantage of his status as an orphan and uncommon name. His 'self' has been destroyed to such an extent that he does not dare to voice against whatever injustice is meted upon him. He can

also be considered as a subaltern in a society which contains full of opportunists. Finally, in the play *Stale News* it can be noticed that through the foregrounding of the Santhal tribe, Sircar wants to highlight the problem of caste discrimination which the subalterns have been facing in the hands of the ruling class. Through the character of the Dead Man, Sircar wants to portray the unwillingness of the modern individuals to show signs of sympathy towards the subalterns. Even after knowing how difficult it has become for the subalterns such as the Santhals to survive in this materialistic world, the people do not come forward to help them. This can be considered as a sign of degradation of their 'self'. They consider the suffering people as the 'other' in their community. So, in this way it can be noticed that the three plays taken for discussion in this chapter throw light on the plight of the subalterns in the hands of the ruling class. Moreover, these subalterns also suffer identity crisis due to the degradation of their 'self' which they suffer mostly due to the atrocities of the ruling class. Therefore, it can be said that Badal Sircar has proved himself successful in the depiction of the 'self' and 'other' dichotomy in the selected plays taken for discussion in this chapter.

## Chapter – V

### Conclusion

An exhaustive analysis of the plays of Badal Sircar's such as *Evam Indrajit*, *Procession*, *Bhoma*, *Beyond the Land of Hattamala*, *Scandal in Fairyland*, *An Indian History Made Easy*, *Life of Bagala* and *Stale News* reveals that the concepts of 'self' and 'other' constitute cardinal features of Badal Sircar's plays. Throughout these seven plays, it is noticed that the dilemma of 'self' and 'other' occurs mostly within the lives of the individuals. The hectic life that they have to face makes them struggle with their identities. The characters work to avoid the past precisely because it is filled with pain and horror for them. The characters do come to grip with these experiences, accept and recognize them in their consciousness. Badal Sircar is a master of handling the situations in his plays. He knew exactly how to touch the minds of the audience through depiction of realistic incidents in his plays. Through the introduction of third theatre, he revolutionized people's plays and made the content reach to people. He abandoned the proscenium stage and took limited amount of props to reach to his audience. Through his plays, he attacked the political issues prevalent at that time. His plays were meant for the subalterns residing in India who are the worst sufferers of that time. They are deprived of their basic rights by the ruling class and are inflicted to a lot of torment if they fail to fulfill the demands of the ruling class.

An analysis of the seven plays of Badal Sircar strikingly reveals the fact that 'self-realization' of the 'self' about its marginalized position may help him elevate his position from being a subaltern. This emphasis on the importance of 'self' has been satisfactorily developed by Sircar in his play *Evam Indrajit* where the playwright tries to stress on the fact that in an

existential world one's identity is not fixed. The identity of an individual changes based on the situation. The play has taken the postcolonial era as the background where there are a lot of competitions among the youths regarding the limited opportunities that are available around them. The failure to grab those opportunities one after the other led to the continuous recognition of the 'self' that it was becoming distanced from the other people residing in the society. This distancing from the other groups created a sense of angst and frustration in the minds of the modern generation. In the play, it can be seen that modern youths like Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit try to express their opinions in front of the government. However, the government is not keen to listen to those opinions. The government has its own group of beneficiaries, for whose happiness it can do anything. This 'othering' of individuals in the modern world has led them to believe that their 'self' is different compared to other privileged people in the society. Individuals like Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit have only to follow the orders given by the government. This type of angst which has been gathering in the minds of the modern youth starts to develop a revolutionary attitude in them slowly and steadily.

Sircar in *Evam Indrajit* has brought forward the static life of individuals through the existential phenomenon. To express this nihilistic attitude of life, Sircar had taken help of some songs. These songs expose the repetition of the same activities in our day to day life. This repetition of the same activity has made our life boring. This repetition of activities in our day to day life helps us forget about the real truth that all of us have to face one day and that is of encountering death. The 'self' in such an environment where there is competition and tackling down of opponents all around becomes essentially pessimistic. The denial of anything new to happen in our lives has made our life mundane. This mundaneness in turn has led to the hampering of the progression of the 'self'.

What prompted Sircar to deal with the topics such as 'self' and 'other' in his plays is the basic denial of humanity. Another important aspect of Sircar's use of 'self' and 'other' is his objective to unearth the traumatic experiences undergone by the subalterns in the hands of the ruling class. The traumatic experiences stored in the minds of the individual have made them to adopt various sorts of measures to counteract those resistive measures. One such measure suggested by Badal Sircar in his play *Processions* is by mentioning about the various colourful processions taken out in the streets of Calcutta. The processions taken out in the streets of Calcutta represent the identity crisis faced by the individuals particularly the subalterns due to the constant negligence they have received from the ruling class and the upper class society. The playwright in the play also mentions about the degradation of 'self' that occurred during the freedom movement. They were made to forget about their identities and it was attempted to merge the identity of theirs with the identity of the colonizers. After bearing all those assaults, a time arrived when they became 'self-conscious' regarding the injustice meted upon them. The time had finally arrived when they needed to decide whether they wanted to protect their 'self' or allow themselves to get converted into an 'other'. The 'self-conscious' moment wherein they decided to return from the state of otherness was a stepping stone for India's freedom movement. The various slogans used in the freedom movement are indicative that the Indian masses wanted to bring back their 'self' of being an Indian. The Indians could only recognize their 'self' at the cost of being converted into a subaltern in their own land. Their subaltern status could be attributed as the conversion of them to an 'other'. The only way for them to come out from this degraded situation was by recovering the 'self' by joining the various processions that were taking place in different parts of India.

The play *Procession* is a third theatre based play of Badal Sircar. The play represents the tendency of the human mind to achieve a society which is based on equality. The characters are in search of a real home where they will find calmness of mind. The two central characters in the play, the Old Man and Khoka are hesitant to join the processions first of all since they believe that all these processions are vague. They believe that they will be lost in those processions. They are represented as the subalterns who have lost their 'self' after waiting for the real procession for very long. Towards the end of the play it is depicted that they have found the real procession. This real procession comprises mostly of the subalterns who have been left as wanderers in the journey of life. It is believed by them that this real procession will lead them towards rediscovering their lost 'self'. The music along with the Chorus which is accompanying the real procession provides them with a positive vibration. It leads them to believe that the problems they have been facing for so long will finally receive a solution. Their 'self' which was transformed into an 'other' through the satirical tone of the society, finally finds a way to rediscover their lost soul.

*Bhoma* is another significant play of Badal Sircar where he concentrates on the process of crushing of an individual's 'self' by the society. The character Bhoma not only represents a single individual, it also represents the entire peasant class of Sundarban whose life has remained same even after the granting of independence to India by the British. The 'self' of the marginalized classes has been inflicted to continuous demolition due to the negligent attitude of the upper class and the government. The preference of urban metropolitan cities like Calcutta over rural areas like Sundarban by the government has made life miserable for the peasant class. The peasant classes are the subalterns whose 'self' is totally ignored by the people who are in power. To portray the plight of the peasant community of Sundarban, Sircar used the medium of

third theatre. In third theatre, props are ignored within a play. Instead of using props in a stage, the characters try to communicate with the audience through the means of various body gestures. In the play it is seen that the characters One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six try to explain the troublesome life of the peasants of Sundarban through body gestures. The body gestures very wonderfully portray the level of harassment on the marginalized sections by the upper class people. Sircar is very clever in not only depicting the problems existing in the society but also offering a solution to those problems. In the play, Bhoma is presented as a representative of the oppressive classes who uses his rusty axe to cut down all the poisonous trees that exist in the society. The oppressive classes are symbolized through the poisonous trees of the forest. So, Sircar wants to show that only by making one's 'self' strong one can learn to stand against the evils existing in the society. Bhoma is presented in the play not as a single individual; he represents everything where a common man toils to survive such as the paddy fields, the harvest, sowing etc.

*Bhoma* can also be considered to be a satirical play because it attacks the hypocritical society of the bourgeois class who does not hesitate to exploit the proletariat class at every possible opportunity. Through the play, Sircar also does not forget to bring forward the actual picture of the government institutions such as the banks who actually work for the benefit of the upper class of people. Though they are meant to work for the people who are in distress such as the marginalized section of people, they actually look to please the aristocratic people who are already enjoying a luxurious life. Through the play, Sircar wants to make the audience aware of such kind of people and pleads them to help the people who are our bread and butter provider.

*Beyond the Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland* are another two significant comic plays of Badal Sircar where he demonstrates how people may adopt wrong paths due to

the degradation of their 'self'. Both of them were written as children's plays to demonstrate the difference between an ideal corruption free society and a real society where there is all sorts of exploitations. *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* takes as its main protagonist two thieves Kena and Becha who have lost trust in people around them due to the continuous negligence received from them. They have considered themselves as 'others' in the society whose 'self' has become too far apart from the other individuals in the society. That is the reason when after escaping from this society, they enter into an ideal society which is free from any sort of corruption they cannot believe it. The people in this society has not faced the degradation of 'self' because there is no medium which can degrade their 'self'. They do not know what money is; instead they consider people in their society equal to each other. Kena and Becha after knowing the value of the people in this society begin to realize how degraded their 'self' has become after leaving in a corrupt society. They promise to themselves that they will transform their 'self' and will work hard to earn their livelihood like the other people do in this society.

On the other hand, *Scandal in Fairyland* brings into criticism the gossip nature of men which has led them to look for something sensational news around them. This search for sensational news has made the people incapable to judge the true facts of things. The rumours which they spread from one person to the other have made them possess a degraded 'self'. The owner of the newspaper in the play knows that people are more interested in looking for sensational news; therefore he does not hesitate to include false stories in his newspaper. He has already lost his 'self' and that is the reason why he looks for his own profit by including false news in his newspaper. He has no consideration towards the fact that these kind of news may also lead to conflicts in the society. However the paperboy amidst selling newspaper does not forget to remind the audience about the degraded mentality of the modern individual. They have



no patience to read the editorials; instead they search for something which will be a hot source of gossiping among their closed ones. This diversion of real facts and reclining towards imaginary facts has made man lose their own grip over their 'self'. They have fallen to the destructive mentality of others.

*Indian History Made Easy* is another play which through the medium of classroom teaching has brought the elaborate history of Indian freedom struggle in a very delightful manner. Through the use of terminologies such as "crowd imagery", the colonizers continued to rule over India for a period of three hundred years. It can be deciphered that the motive of Badal Sircar to present different periods of history in front of the audience was to make them realize how strong the 'self' of each individual was in the ancient times and how deteriorated it became after attaining a subaltern status during the British colonial period. The 'self' of each Indian became marginalized during the colonial period due to the continuous suppression and oppression they had to receive in the hands of the colonizers. Therefore, this period is also termed as one of the darkest periods in Indian history. The tattered 'self' of the subalterns needed something dramatic to stop itself from becoming an 'other' in their own land. Indian cottage industry was the 'self' of the Indians which gave them a sense of significance in front of the people of the other parts of world. When the foreigners started looting their 'self', they began to stammer in the journey of sustainability. Their 'self' gradually began to adopt a marginalized position with fear of being getting pushed further backward in their life. The downfall of the Indians can be attributed to the fact that they were more fantasized towards the glamour of the 'other' world. They could not recognize what they themselves possessed and what they could make from those possessions.

Sircar's play *Life of Bagala* can be mentioned as another notable play in the discussion of 'self' and 'other' dichotomy. It is so due to the fact that it takes into consideration the fact that the suppression of one's 'self' for a longer period of time may lead to the creation of an 'other'. In the play, Bagala is presented as a character who has been made a subaltern from his childhood days onwards by the society around him. From his friends to his relatives, everyone make joke about him. This constant humiliation received from the society around him has made his 'self' a deplorable one. It does not want to face anyone in that society. He is happy remaining alienated and this alienation that he has been undergoing for so long has made him think of alternatives such as committing suicide. However, when he later on finds suitable people around him such as the Old Man and Nilpari, his 'self' begins to regain its lost glory. He learns from him how to order things or request for things which he has never done in his entire life. This new found confidence in him makes him recover from his present position of being a subaltern. He has now found the courage to face the world around him properly.

*Stale News* is another play by Badal Sircar where he focuses on the 'self' and 'other' debate by taking a look into the Santhal revolt. The Santhals along with the other Indians were turned into marginalized group of people due to the continuous exploitation inflicted upon them. To make matters worse they were looted by people from their own country such as the landlords and the other middle class officials. The denial of the freedom to rule over their own land by the British government made them to protest against them at one point of time. The title of the play can be said to be appropriate since it considers the various news which are being published in the newspapers concerning the humiliation of the Santhals in their own land as something stale now. The conscience of the people has almost died and they are not concerned regarding the degrading condition of the poor people around them. The presence of the Dead Man around the characters

is significant since he tries to remind the characters that they are going astray in their lives and needs to think about the problems of the people who have been converted into 'others' in their society. Finally, when he was almost successful in raising the conscience of the individuals, he is arrested by the government. In this manner, the rising conscience of the subalterns is once again submerged by the authority so that they cannot stand against their policies.

The analysis of the seven plays of Badal Sircar taken for discussion in the chapters prove that Badal Sircar was really an advocate for the people who have lost their 'self' and are being converted into an 'other' in their own society. Sircar who was aware about the dilemma of the people who were also converted into subalterns by the dominant group wanted to rescue them from their problems. His plays can therefore be considered as belonging to the category of plays which creates social awareness amongst the people. He urges the people belonging to the upper and middle classes to create some spare time from their busy schedule and look to sort out the problems of the subalterns residing around them. Through the plays, he also pleads to the dominant groups not to make the subalterns feel like they are the others in their community. It is so because they are also just like other people, only lack of money has made them unable to move in the ladder of hierarchy. He also does not forget to remind the people that it is only by making the subalterns equal to them a developed society can be constructed. This society based on equality and harmony will try to diminish the dichotomy between 'self' and 'other'. Badal Sircar through his plays wants to achieve such a society and therefore his plays can be finally considered as successful plays which to a great extent are able to give human beings a ray of hope regarding how to try to diminish that dichotomy.

'Self' and 'other' are binaries created by the human society to control their authority over another group or individual. These binaries will continue to exist till human society exists and

Badal Sircar only tries to give a glimpse of the manner through which these binaries are created. He even knows that there are no solutions to diminish these boundaries because one class will always have to depend upon the other class for survival. The connection of these binaries with the characters in his plays has been successfully done by Badal Sircar. In fact the characters of the selected plays of Badal Sircar can be said to possess the 'self' as defined by Hegel, Kant and Descartes. According to Kant, the knowledge of the 'self' can be co-related with the knowledge of the self as appearance. On the other hand, Descartes believed that knowledge of the 'self' can be found within itself. The difference between the theories of Kant and Descartes is that Kant stressed on the possession of both understanding and sensibility for the acquiring of knowledge of the 'self'. On the other hand, Descartes did not stress on understanding and sensibility for the acquiring of knowledge of the 'self'. The theories of Hegel and Kant differ from each other in the context that Hegel believed that 'self' is controlled by the individual at cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. However, Kant only stressed on the cognitive and affective levels in the understanding of 'self' while he did not take the psychomotor level into consideration.

The theories of Kant, Hegel and Descartes have been successfully elaborated while analyzing the plays. While analyzing it was found that Bagala was a character whose 'self' was controlled by his maternal uncle and the other people residing around him at cognitive, affective and psychomotor level. It was because he was treated as a puppet by the people around him, after knowing that he was helpless in this world. He was converted into an 'other' in the society. On the other hand, the Writer in *Evam Indrajit* possessed a 'self' which was only controlled through the control over the cognitive and affective levels. He depended on acquiring knowledge of his own 'self' through understanding and sensibility of the reality around him. So, through these examples it can be concluded that Sircar has effectively encompassed the theories of Kant, Hegel

and others in his plays while dealing with the concepts of 'self' and 'other'. Through the different characters from his selected plays we come to know that he gives us an idea of what a dominant and a dominated 'self' stands for in the society around us. Through the elaboration of these binaries he makes us aware regarding the prevalent situation in our society and how we are expected to come out from this troublesome situation. In this way it can be commented towards the end that Badal Sircar is successful in dealing with an array of themes in his plays and among them the theme of conflict of 'self' and 'other' is most significant.

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**Depiction Of ‘Self’ And ‘Other’ Dichotomy In Badal Sircar’s *Evam Indrajit***

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**Abstract**

The play *Evam Indrajit* by Badal Sircar produced in September, 1965 made the Indians aware about the extraordinary talent possessed by Badal Sircar. Through the play, Sircar wanted to portray the frustrations and anger developing within the minds of the educated youth belonging from the middle class families residing in Calcutta. The middle class people considered themselves to be the epitome of the nation’s development. The middle class has been continuously attacked by the people possessing Marxist dogmas. It is so because the middle class have always preferred for a culture, national identity and stability. The middle class residing in Bengal have been able to resolve this conflict by aligning themselves with the leftist front. However, in other parts of the country the middle class have taken a different standpoint by opting for armed forces or the administrative forces. To portray this feeling of alienation and loss of individual identity of the middle class people which ultimately led to the creation of an “other”, Sircar produced *Evam Indrajit*. This paper will attempt to portray how the “self” and “other” negotiates with each other in a society.

Key words: middle class,

Marxist, alienation, self, other



## 1.0 Introduction:

“Self” and “other” dichotomies are intertwined in the colonial and post-colonial world of India. This division has captured the mindset of the Indian’s in such a way that it has continuously led to communal clash and economic subjugation of the lower strata of people. To remove the evils of communal clash and economic subjugation after Independence, the concept of a composite Indian culture had taken birth. This led the Indians to compete with the West in each and every arena. Moreover, there was a continuous craving from the Indians to get rid of the hegemony of the West. It was really a matter of shame for the Indian’s that they were giving so much superiority to the West even after gaining Independence. In terms of drama too, the concept of a composite Indian culture arose after Independence. The dramatists from India who were earlier following the Western model of dramatic creation started looking at things around them. This concept also inspired Indian artists to compete with the best around them. There was a platitudinous slogan of seeking one’s roots in terms of drama. This led to a self-belief within the dramatists that they can imbibe raw materials from their own culture which also possesses a glorious past. Therefore, the “self” and “other” concepts which were dwelling in Indian society started entering into Indian theatre. The recognition for a strong individual “self” within the plays started playing into the mindsets of the Indian dramatists. The hammering of the “other” which in the colonial context was the West started beginning from this period onwards. Through the plays of Badal Sircar we can find this clash between the ‘self’ and ‘other’ to a great extent.

In order to understand the context of “self” and “other” dichotomy within Badal Sircar’s play *Evam Indrajit*, the “self” and “other” theories by Hegel, Jung, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault have been incorporated for reference. The concept of ‘other’ is originally attributed to Hegel (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 10) where he stated that ‘self’ is recognized by an

individual as that which is solely controlled by them both at cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. The 'other', on the other hand, is uncontrolled by these factors. The complexity increases when the 'self' comes in contact with more than multiple 'others'. In this position the self tends to exert a force which causes the self to identify with or behave as an 'other'. Hegel mentioned in his seminal work that the consciousness of an 'other' is a necessary condition for the emergence of an individual self.

The play *Evam Indrajit* depicts the frustration and angst developing within the mindset of the youth of this generation. This angst is due to the continuous disappointment that the 'self' has received from the society around it. They are not able to stabilize their 'self' and are in the process of becoming an 'other'. The foundation of the theories by Hegel, Jung, Lacan will be useful in analyzing the two dimensional identities possessed by the characters within the play. Through these theories, the clash between the 'self' and 'other' within the innermost core of an individual will be depicted. The existential crisis in a society that leads to identity crisis of individuals will also be analyzed within the research paper.

## **2.0 Methodology:-**

The present study is based on analytical study and will be carried out by highlighting the dilemma of the 'self' and 'other' in Badal Sircar's play *Evam Indrajit*. The theoretical aspects of the problem is carried out on the backdrop of the notions of 'self' and 'other' as well as through secondary sources among which the play of Sircar is significant and is also based on library resources like reference books, scholarly journals and internet.

## **3.0 Objectives of the Study:-**

- i) To explore the dilemma of the 'self' in the characters of the play.
- ii) To analyze the identity and existential crisis faced by the characters of the play.

iii) To understand the impediments of the society that halts the progress of the 'self' as represented in the select play.

#### **4.0 Depiction of 'self' and 'other' dichotomy in Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*:-**

*Evam Indrajit* narrates the story of a playwright who struggles hard to write a play but is unable to do so. The playwright says that he cannot write a play because as an assiduous and honest person he feels that the modern life is too unstable which makes it very difficult for a writer to combine the elements existing within it. The writer is very delighted when he encounters the rebel Indrajit and strongly believes that it will help him in the construction of the play. However, later on he realizes that it is not Indrajit who is present, instead of him Nirmal is present which makes him utterly disappointed. Satyadev Dubey in the introduction to *Evam Indrajit: Three Modern Indian plays* states that "Evam Indrajit is in some ways about the residue; the residue consists of those who have failed to adjust, align and ceased to aspire, and also those who are enmeshed in the day-to-day struggle for survival." These individuals as stated by Satyadev Dubey are the "other" who is sidelined from the mainstream of society by the upper class people. Hegel's (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 8) stated that 'self' is recognized by an individual as that which is solely controlled by them both at cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. The 'other' on the other hand is uncontrolled by these factors. The complexity increases when the 'self' comes in contact with more than multiple 'others'. In this position the self tends to exert a force which causes the self to identify with or behave as an 'other'. In the same work he also mentions that the consciousness of an 'other' is the very condition for the emergence of an individual self. Similarly, we can link *Evam Indrajit* to Hegel's 'self' and 'other' phenomenon. Here, the 'self' of the urban educated middle class people comes in direct contact with the oppression and suppression inflicted upon them by the upper class people. The force exerted by the 'self'

is the force of rebellion which the middle class people apply on the upper class people. This often leads to the creation of an 'other' who continuously fights to diminish the tagline of being an 'other'.

Hegel in (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 10) mentioned that 'self-consciousness' is a movement whereby consciousness steps out of it. In this process of movement of 'self-consciousness', 'self' and 'other' are both moments of it and also are dependent upon it. The self/other binary makes a person recognize that, an individual is separate physically and mentally. At that moment one understands that the separate person is not the "self", instead the individual is an "other" which is separate and cannot be controlled or comprehended physically or mentally. The same case happens with Indrajit and Nirmal within *Evam Indrajit*. The writer after realizing that the individual whom he was assuming to be Indrajit was not actually Indrajit, instead it was Nirmal, he starts considering Nirmal as an 'other'. He begins to understand that Nirmal is separate from Indrajit both physically and mentally.

When the Writer begins to construct his play, he becomes perplexed at times to find out that he is not able to pave out a proper direction for his play. In his frustration, he begins to tear up his manuscripts. His inspiration for the play is a woman whom he names as Manasi. Manasi means creation of the 'mind' and can be considered equivalent to Jung's concept of 'anima'. 'Anima' and 'animus' were two significant terminologies coined by Jung in (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* 58) to identify the masculine and feminine characteristics contained within a female and male respectively. According to Jung, a woman contains some of the masculine characteristics which help her in thinking rationally. These masculine characteristics that are present within a female are known as 'animus'. On the other hand, a man contains some feminine characteristics which help him in governing his irrational thinking. These feminine

functions present within a male are known as 'anima'. The opposite characteristics present within both the male and female helps them in relating themselves as whole human beings to the world. The anima/animus is a major determiner of how we consider ourselves in the innermost chamber of our heart. The anima/animus within an individual helps one in constituting their 'self'. If the balance between the 'self' and 'other' is not equally proportionate within an individual, the 'self' of an individual begins to break down which leads to the formation of an 'other'. Since, the anima/animus has the image making capacity, an individual's 'self' also depends upon it. Therefore, the creation of the imaginary character of Manasi by the Writer also indicates the feminine characteristics contained within the Writer. The character of Manasi created from the core of the mind of the Writer indicates that he desires to think rationally. This rational thinking is necessary for him if he wants to give his play a right direction. He needs to put aside all the frustrations he has developed from the environment around him.

The reason for the frustration growing within the Writer is due to the lack of experience within him. He is unable to gather experience from his surroundings. He does not know about his own society and also about his own people. He can be termed as anti-social. Therefore, his source of material must be the people sitting in the auditorium. Generally, during the 1960's the middle class people were frequent visitors to theatre. Therefore, the Writer must take the middle class people as his source for the play. In doing so he misses in covering the important facts about his own society. However, the Writer finds the middle class people present in the auditorium not suitable as audience. The Auntie's continuous presence within the play reminds the Writer that he must not forget about his significant daily functions such as eating and sleeping. Sircar at the beginning of the play mentions to the reader that the auntie may also be called 'mother', 'elder sister' or anything else. She continuously goes on rebuking the Writer

because she cannot understand why he needs to write a play by forgetting his daily necessities. Her continuous homilies remind the Writer that there is no need of writing a play if one forgets about his own necessities and his own people. Her homilies which remind the Writer about his basic needs are:

AUNTIE : I just can't understand you!

[No response from the Writer.]

I'm asking you.... Are you coming in to eat or aren't you? You are the limit! I can't put up with this any longer.... (1-3).

The words of the auntie continuously remind the Writer that he needs to remember about his own 'self'. One can only write a good play if one is alert about his own surroundings. The 'self' feels secure only if it is aware about the society in which it is living. If one is not conscious about his own basic needs than how can that individual remain alert about the needs of the society. When the play progresses it can be noticed that the Auntie and Manasi begin to counterpoint each other.

*Evam Indrajit* is concerned with existential related issues found in the society and in this regard it is considered as an existential play. One significant aspect which the proponents of Theatre of Absurd want to assert is the cause and effect of lack of communication between human beings. Sircar through his characters in the play wants to assert that due to the lack of communication between individuals there has been a barrier created among the people in the society. Families have broken apart, the friendship bond has been weakened, and also men have become greedy to look for the hidden things concealed within the earth. Sircar decided to deal with absurd themes in his plays when he saw the socio-economic condition of Bengal in the 1960s and 1970s which was rather depressing and dark. The time period after the World War II was rather dark for Bengal

because various evil practices existed in the state such as black marketing, famine, communal riots, infiltration of refugees, post independence economic crisis and also division between the upper and the lower class which resulted in heated revolution.

So, from the above statement it can be said that Sircar through the characters of his play hopes to achieve a synthesis of absurdist philosophy and that of the Indian reality prevailing in the post and pre-independence Indian society. The characters in Sircar's plays feel that they have failed to communicate their feelings. Sircar's play *Evam Indrajit* exposes the dilemma of the Indians by bringing a synthesis of existentialism and Indian reality. It is a play which was first staged in the year 1965 and is about the prevalent attitudes, vague feelings and frustrations which are starting to grip the Indians slowly and steadily. The play ends with both the characters Indrajit and the 'Writer' looking for their aim in life when they do not find anything significant in writing and living. The prevalent attitudes, vague feelings and frustrations which have increased in the minds of the Indians have led to a broken 'self'. This broken 'self' has led to the crushing of individual identity. This identity crisis has ultimately helped in the formation of an 'other' which is different from the 'self'. This 'other' is formed from the synthesis of existentialism and Indian reality.

Through his existential play, Sircar also wanted to focus on the fact that in an existential world, one's identity is not fixed. It has no stability and it is changed based on the situation. The Writer who was busy in constructing his play, mentioned to the four youths that the female character of his play will be named Manashi. He also referred that she had a good relationship with Indrajit and questioned him about his relationship with her. However, as soon as Indrajit started speaking it was found that the name of the girl was not Manashi. So, at once the identity of the girl changed as the narrator changed. Indrajit

mentioned that both he and the girl are cousins and also good friends and often shared their feelings with each other. At this moment, a conversation between Indrajit and the girl at a public park is mentioned where Indrajit mentions that he is eager to break the shackles of the rules and regulations laid down by the society. However, the girl mentions that only the women folk are required to follow the rules of the society. The male folk are never confined in those rules. In reply to this statement, Indrajit mentions that he is a representative from the modern youth, so he will not hesitate to break the unnecessary shackles of society.

Indrajit: Is there a rule that one has to abide by rules?

Manasi: What else can one do?

Indrajit: One can hate rules. Why should they be there at all?

Manasi: What would be the point of hating them?

Indrajit: What's the point of worshipping the rope that binds you?

Manasi: I'm not asking you to worship it.

Indrajit: But you are! If the rope is a rule and you accept it happily - that is worshipping it.

Manasi: What else would you do with it?

Indrajit: Perhaps – tear it into shreds. Bring down all these walls which surround us. (215)



The people in modern world communicated in a language which left no trace mark on the mindset of other individuals. Therefore, Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* can aptly be denoted as an absurd play because it depicted the existential crisis prevailing within a modern society. Moreover, the inability of language to communicate properly also lends this play an absurd touch. In the play, the theme of absurdity was taken to a new height by the twelve poems and one full song. These poems cannot be separated from the central theme of the poem. Though, the main motive of the writer was to create an individual who was able to display his strong 'self' by standing outside of the mundane lifestyle of society, but in actuality he was a failure in doing so. His main character Indrajit who often revealed that his name is Nirmal too, cannot move beyond the periphery of routine daily life. He often found disturbances from other people around him who continuously stood in opposition to his progression of 'self'. Critics have also noticed the inherent question arose by Badal Sircar within his plays. In the essay, "Disillusionment and Social Change: A Re-reading of Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*", Moutushi Chakravartee has mentioned about the monotonous life experienced by the modern individuals. Moreover, she has also tried to pluck out the inherent theme of meek surrender to this lifestyle by the 'self'. She believed that by doing so, we are putting our self in harm's way. She wrote:

"Our life is a ritual of gyration, whose significance eludes us and most of us do not even bother to question why we do what we do. Perhaps, one tries to follow the path of the least resistance" (65)

Chakravartee through this statement wanted to stress on the fact that by not putting resistance to the absorption of daily routine lives into one's life, one was allowing mundaneness into their life. This mundane life will ultimately hamper the

progression of the 'self'. It will not be eager to move towards a new direction by breaking the shackles of tradition, customs which has already engulfed the mindset of the individuals. The mundane and absurd life that the individuals of the post-war world have been encompassed within finds expression in the song within the play:

One-two-three-two-one-two-three

One-two-three-two-one-two-three

Four-five-six

Four-five-six-five-four-five-six

Four-five-six-five-four-five-six

Seven-eight-nine

Seven-eight-nine-eight-seven-

eight-nine

Seven-eight-nine-eight-

seven-eight-nine

Nine-eight-seven-

six-five-four-three-two-one (Act I, p. 205)

This song depicts the repetition of the same numbers again and again. Therefore, the song is unable to bring forward any emotions out of any individual. Similarly, in our lives too, we repeat the same actions and activities again and again. This repetition of activities made us lose the charm for the work that we do. The same nihilistic activities took place in the lives of the characters within the play such as Amal-Vimal-Kamal. The lack of anything new in their lives has made their life shatter into broken pieces. These broken pieces can only be joined by some eventful happenings which need to stand apart from the activities taking place in our daily life. The writer summarizes the song through this comment where he states that it is completely undramatic to create a play through the characters residing in this modern world.

The writer analyzes the song and acknowledges

the fact that it begins with the numeral 'one' and ends similarly with another numeral 'nine'. This point towards the fact that our life moves around in circular motion and we are engulfed in the process of repeating the same activities again and again.

### **5.0. Conclusion:**

The play *Evam Indrajit* was set in the postcolonial era where othering of a group of people was done to establish control over them. Similarly, in the play too, we find that opinions of modern educated youth like Amal-Vimal-Kamal and Indrajit are not considered important by the government. It is so because their opinions vary from the opinions of those who are in power. Therefore, even though they remain in a democratic society, they are deprived of their basic rights. Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (95, 102) stressed on the fact that power is created artificially and exercised by the source which is generally the institution. He also mentioned that power is employed in a "net like organization" and individuals "circulated between its threads". So, in the postcolonial Indian society the net like organization is the government and the bureaucrats' working in its order. However, individuals like Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit had to circulate their lives based on the orders given by the government. This led them to possess a revolutionary attitude at times because there is no one who could listen to their sentiments.

Sircar in *Evam Indrajit* has brought forward the static life of individuals through the existential phenomenon. To express this nihilistic attitude of life, Sircar had taken help of some songs. These songs expose the repetition of the same activities in our day to day life. This repetition of the same activity has made our life boring. This repetition of activities in our day to day life helps us forget about the real truth that all of us have to face one day and that is of encountering death. The 'self' in such an environment where there is competition and tackling down of opponents all around

becomes essentially pessimistic. The denial of anything new to happen in our lives has made our life mundane. This mundaneness in turn has led to the hampering of the progression of the 'self'.

## **6.0 Findings:-**

1. Through *Evam Indrajit*, Sircar analyzed the frustrations and anger developing within the minds of the educated youth belonging from the middle class residing in Calcutta.

2. To understand the impediments of the feeling of alienation and loss of individual identity of the middle class people which ultimately led to the creation of an "other", Sircar produced *Evam Indrajit*.

3. The character of the playwright in the play cannot write a play because as an assiduous and honest person he feels that the modern life is too unstable which makes it very difficult for a writer to combine the elements existing within it.

4. The 'self' of the urban educated middle class people comes in direct contact with the oppression and suppression inflicted upon them by the upper class people.

5. The character of Manasi created from the core of the mind of the Writer indicates that he desires to think rationally.

6. The homilies of the auntie remind the Writer that there is no need of writing a play if one forgets about his own necessities and his own people.

7. Sircar through his characters in the play wants to assert that due to the lack of communication between individuals there has been a barrier created among the people in the society.

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# **CONFLICT OF SELF AND OTHER IN THE PLAYS OF BADAL SIRCAR**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO ASSAM UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
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**LANGUAGES STUDIES**

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**ASSAM, INDIA**

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## Chapter – V

### Conclusion

An exhaustive analysis of the plays of Badal Sircar's such as *Evam Indrajit*, *Procession*, *Bhoma*, *Beyond the Land of Hattamala*, *Scandal in Fairyland*, *An Indian History Made Easy*, *Life of Bagala* and *Stale News* reveals that the concepts of 'self' and 'other' constitute cardinal features of Badal Sircar's plays. Throughout these seven plays, it is noticed that the dilemma of 'self' and 'other' occurs mostly within the lives of the individuals. The hectic life that they have to face makes them struggle with their identities. The characters work to avoid the past precisely because it is filled with pain and horror for them. The characters do come to grip with these experiences, accept and recognize them in their consciousness. Badal Sircar is a master of handling the situations in his plays. He knew exactly how to touch the minds of the audience through depiction of realistic incidents in his plays. Through the introduction of third theatre, he revolutionized people's plays and made the content reach to people. He abandoned the proscenium stage and took limited amount of props to reach to his audience. Through his plays, he attacked the political issues prevalent at that time. His plays were meant for the subalterns residing in India who are the worst sufferers of that time. They are deprived of their basic rights by the ruling class and are inflicted to a lot of torment if they fail to fulfill the demands of the ruling class.

An analysis of the seven plays of Badal Sircar strikingly reveals the fact that 'self-realization' of the 'self' about its marginalized position may help him elevate his position from being a subaltern. This emphasis on the importance of 'self' has been satisfactorily developed by Sircar in his play *Evam Indrajit* where the playwright tries to stress on the fact that in an

existential world one's identity is not fixed. The identity of an individual changes based on the situation. The play has taken the postcolonial era as the background where there are a lot of competitions among the youths regarding the limited opportunities that are available around them. The failure to grab those opportunities one after the other led to the continuous recognition of the 'self' that it was becoming distanced from the other people residing in the society. This distancing from the other groups created a sense of angst and frustration in the minds of the modern generation. In the play, it can be seen that modern youths like Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit try to express their opinions in front of the government. However, the government is not keen to listen to those opinions. The government has its own group of beneficiaries, for whose happiness it can do anything. This 'othering' of individuals in the modern world has led them to believe that their 'self' is different compared to other privileged people in the society. Individuals like Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit have only to follow the orders given by the government. This type of angst which has been gathering in the minds of the modern youth starts to develop a revolutionary attitude in them slowly and steadily.

Sircar in *Evam Indrajit* has brought forward the static life of individuals through the existential phenomenon. To express this nihilistic attitude of life, Sircar had taken help of some songs. These songs expose the repetition of the same activities in our day to day life. This repetition of the same activity has made our life boring. This repetition of activities in our day to day life helps us forget about the real truth that all of us have to face one day and that is of encountering death. The 'self' in such an environment where there is competition and tackling down of opponents all around becomes essentially pessimistic. The denial of anything new to happen in our lives has made our life mundane. This mundaneness in turn has led to the hampering of the progression of the 'self'.



What prompted Sircar to deal with the topics such as 'self' and 'other' in his plays is the basic denial of humanity. Another important aspect of Sircar's use of 'self' and 'other' is his objective to unearth the traumatic experiences undergone by the subalterns in the hands of the ruling class. The traumatic experiences stored in the minds of the individual have made them to adopt various sorts of measures to counteract those resistive measures. One such measure suggested by Badal Sircar in his play *Processions* is by mentioning about the various colourful processions taken out in the streets of Calcutta. The processions taken out in the streets of Calcutta represent the identity crisis faced by the individuals particularly the subalterns due to the constant negligence they have received from the ruling class and the upper class society. The playwright in the play also mentions about the degradation of 'self' that occurred during the freedom movement. They were made to forget about their identities and it was attempted to merge the identity of theirs with the identity of the colonizers. After bearing all those assaults, a time arrived when they became 'self-conscious' regarding the injustice meted upon them. The time had finally arrived when they needed to decide whether they wanted to protect their 'self' or allow themselves to get converted into an 'other'. The 'self-conscious' moment wherein they decided to return from the state of otherness was a stepping stone for India's freedom movement. The various slogans used in the freedom movement are indicative that the Indian masses wanted to bring back their 'self' of being an Indian. The Indians could only recognize their 'self' at the cost of being converted into a subaltern in their own land. Their subaltern status could be attributed as the conversion of them to an 'other'. The only way for them to come out from this degraded situation was by recovering the 'self' by joining the various processions that were taking place in different parts of India.

The play *Procession* is a third theatre based play of Badal Sircar. The play represents the tendency of the human mind to achieve a society which is based on equality. The characters are in search of a real home where they will find calmness of mind. The two central characters in the play, the Old Man and Khoka are hesitant to join the processions first of all since they believe that all these processions are vague. They believe that they will be lost in those processions. They are represented as the subalterns who have lost their 'self' after waiting for the real procession for very long. Towards the end of the play it is depicted that they have found the real procession. This real procession comprises mostly of the subalterns who have been left as wanderers in the journey of life. It is believed by them that this real procession will lead them towards rediscovering their lost 'self'. The music along with the Chorus which is accompanying the real procession provides them with a positive vibration. It leads them to believe that the problems they have been facing for so long will finally receive a solution. Their 'self' which was transformed into an 'other' through the satirical tone of the society, finally finds a way to rediscover their lost soul.

*Bhoma* is another significant play of Badal Sircar where he concentrates on the process of crushing of an individual's 'self' by the society. The character Bhoma not only represents a single individual, it also represents the entire peasant class of Sundarban whose life has remained same even after the granting of independence to India by the British. The 'self' of the marginalized classes has been inflicted to continuous demolition due to the negligent attitude of the upper class and the government. The preference of urban metropolitan cities like Calcutta over rural areas like Sundarban by the government has made life miserable for the peasant class. The peasant classes are the subalterns whose 'self' is totally ignored by the people who are in power. To portray the plight of the peasant community of Sundarban, Sircar used the medium of

third theatre. In third theatre, props are ignored within a play. Instead of using props in a stage, the characters try to communicate with the audience through the means of various body gestures. In the play it is seen that the characters One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six try to explain the troublesome life of the peasants of Sundarban through body gestures. The body gestures very wonderfully portray the level of harassment on the marginalized sections by the upper class people. Sircar is very clever in not only depicting the problems existing in the society but also offering a solution to those problems. In the play, Bhoma is presented as a representative of the oppressive classes who uses his rusty axe to cut down all the poisonous trees that exist in the society. The oppressive classes are symbolized through the poisonous trees of the forest. So, Sircar wants to show that only by making one's 'self' strong one can learn to stand against the evils existing in the society. Bhoma is presented in the play not as a single individual; he represents everything where a common man toils to survive such as the paddy fields, the harvest, sowing etc.

*Bhoma* can also be considered to be a satirical play because it attacks the hypocritical society of the bourgeois class who does not hesitate to exploit the proletariat class at every possible opportunity. Through the play, Sircar also does not forget to bring forward the actual picture of the government institutions such as the banks who actually work for the benefit of the upper class of people. Though they are meant to work for the people who are in distress such as the marginalized section of people, they actually look to please the aristocratic people who are already enjoying a luxurious life. Through the play, Sircar wants to make the audience aware of such kind of people and pleads them to help the people who are our bread and butter provider.

*Beyond the Land of Hattamala* and *Scandal in Fairyland* are another two significant comic plays of Badal Sircar where he demonstrates how people may adopt wrong paths due to

the degradation of their 'self'. Both of them were written as children's plays to demonstrate the difference between an ideal corruption free society and a real society where there is all sorts of exploitations. *Beyond the Land of Hattamala* takes as its main protagonist two thieves Kena and Becha who have lost trust in people around them due to the continuous negligence received from them. They have considered themselves as 'others' in the society whose 'self' has become too far apart from the other individuals in the society. That is the reason when after escaping from this society, they enter into an ideal society which is free from any sort of corruption they cannot believe it. The people in this society has not faced the degradation of 'self' because there is no medium which can degrade their 'self'. They do not know what money is; instead they consider people in their society equal to each other. Kena and Becha after knowing the value of the people in this society begin to realize how degraded their 'self' has become after leaving in a corrupt society. They promise to themselves that they will transform their 'self' and will work hard to earn their livelihood like the other people do in this society.

On the other hand, *Scandal in Fairyland* brings into criticism the gossipy nature of men which has led them to look for something sensational news around them. This search for sensational news has made the people incapable to judge the true facts of things. The rumours which they spread from one person to the other have made them possess a degraded 'self'. The owner of the newspaper in the play knows that people are more interested in looking for sensational news; therefore he does not hesitate to include false stories in his newspaper. He has already lost his 'self' and that is the reason why he looks for his own profit by including false news in his newspaper. He has no consideration towards the fact that these kind of news may also lead to conflicts in the society. However the paperboy amidst selling newspaper does not forget to remind the audience about the degraded mentality of the modern individual. They have

no patience to read the editorials; instead they search for something which will be a hot source of gossiping among their closed ones. This diversion of real facts and reclining towards imaginary facts has made man lose their own grip over their 'self'. They have fallen to the destructive mentality of others.

*Indian History Made Easy* is another play which through the medium of classroom teaching has brought the elaborate history of Indian freedom struggle in a very delightful manner. Through the use of terminologies such as "crowd imagery", the colonizers continued to rule over India for a period of three hundred years. It can be deciphered that the motive of Badal Sircar to present different periods of history in front of the audience was to make them realize how strong the 'self' of each individual was in the ancient times and how deteriorated it became after attaining a subaltern status during the British colonial period. The 'self' of each Indian became marginalized during the colonial period due to the continuous suppression and oppression they had to receive in the hands of the colonizers. Therefore, this period is also termed as one of the darkest periods in Indian history. The tattered 'self' of the subalterns needed something dramatic to stop itself from becoming an 'other' in their own land. Indian cottage industry was the 'self' of the Indians which gave them a sense of significance in front of the people of the other parts of world. When the foreigners started looting their 'self', they began to stammer in the journey of sustainability. Their 'self' gradually began to adopt a marginalized position with fear of being getting pushed further backward in their life. The downfall of the Indians can be attributed to the fact that they were more fantasized towards the glamour of the 'other' world. They could not recognize what they themselves possessed and what they could make from those possessions.

Sircar's play *Life of Bagala* can be mentioned as another notable play in the discussion of 'self' and 'other' dichotomy. It is so due to the fact that it takes into consideration the fact that the suppression of one's 'self' for a longer period of time may lead to the creation of an 'other'. In the play, Bagala is presented as a character who has been made a subaltern from his childhood days onwards by the society around him. From his friends to his relatives, everyone make joke about him. This constant humiliation received from the society around him has made his 'self' a deplorable one. It does not want to face anyone in that society. He is happy remaining alienated and this alienation that he has been undergoing for so long has made him think of alternatives such as committing suicide. However, when he later on finds suitable people around him such as the Old Man and Nilpari, his 'self' begins to regain its lost glory. He learns from him how to order things or request for things which he has never done in his entire life. This new found confidence in him makes him recover from his present position of being a subaltern. He has now found the courage to face the world around him properly.

*Stale News* is another play by Badal Sircar where he focuses on the 'self' and 'other' debate by taking a look into the Santhal revolt. The Santhals along with the other Indians were turned into marginalized group of people due to the continuous exploitation inflicted upon them. To make matters worse they were looted by people from their own country such as the landlords and the other middle class officials. The denial of the freedom to rule over their own land by the British government made them to protest against them at one point of time. The title of the play can be said to be appropriate since it considers the various news which are being published in the newspapers concerning the humiliation of the Santhals in their own land as something stale now. The conscience of the people has almost died and they are not concerned regarding the degrading condition of the poor people around them. The presence of the Dead Man around the characters

is significant since he tries to remind the characters that they are going astray in their lives and needs to think about the problems of the people who have been converted into 'others' in their society. Finally, when he was almost successful in raising the conscience of the individuals, he is arrested by the government. In this manner, the rising conscience of the subalterns is once again submerged by the authority so that they cannot stand against their policies.

The analysis of the seven plays of Badal Sircar taken for discussion in the chapters prove that Badal Sircar was really an advocate for the people who have lost their 'self' and are being converted into an 'other' in their own society. Sircar who was aware about the dilemma of the people who were also converted into subalterns by the dominant group wanted to rescue them from their problems. His plays can therefore be considered as belonging to the category of plays which creates social awareness amongst the people. He urges the people belonging to the upper and middle classes to create some spare time from their busy schedule and look to sort out the problems of the subalterns residing around them. Through the plays, he also pleads to the dominant groups not to make the subalterns feel like they are the others in their community. It is so because they are also just like other people, only lack of money has made them unable to move in the ladder of hierarchy. He also does not forget to remind the people that it is only by making the subalterns equal to them a developed society can be constructed. This society based on equality and harmony will try to diminish the dichotomy between 'self' and 'other'. Badal Sircar through his plays wants to achieve such a society and therefore his plays can be finally considered as successful plays which to a great extent are able to give human beings a ray of hope regarding how to try to diminish that dichotomy.

'Self' and 'other' are binaries created by the human society to control their authority over another group or individual. These binaries will continue to exist till human society exists and

Badal Sircar only tries to give a glimpse of the manner through which these binaries are created. He even knows that there are no solutions to diminish these boundaries because one class will always have to depend upon the other class for survival. The connection of these binaries with the characters in his plays has been successfully done by Badal Sircar. In fact the characters of the selected plays of Badal Sircar can be said to possess the 'self' as defined by Hegel, Kant and Descartes. According to Kant, the knowledge of the 'self' can be co-related with the knowledge of the self as appearance. On the other hand, Descartes believed that knowledge of the 'self' can be found within itself. The difference between the theories of Kant and Descartes is that Kant stressed on the possession of both understanding and sensibility for the acquiring of knowledge of the 'self'. On the other hand, Descartes did not stress on understanding and sensibility for the acquiring of knowledge of the 'self'. The theories of Hegel and Kant differ from each other in the context that Hegel believed that 'self' is controlled by the individual at cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. However, Kant only stressed on the cognitive and affective levels in the understanding of 'self' while he did not take the psychomotor level into consideration.

The theories of Kant, Hegel and Descartes have been successfully elaborated while analyzing the plays. While analyzing it was found that Bagala was a character whose 'self' was controlled by his maternal uncle and the other people residing around him at cognitive, affective and psychomotor level. It was because he was treated as a puppet by the people around him, after knowing that he was helpless in this world. He was converted into an 'other' in the society. On the other hand, the Writer in *Evam Indrajit* possessed a 'self' which was only controlled through the control over the cognitive and affective levels. He depended on acquiring knowledge of his own 'self' through understanding and sensibility of the reality around him. So, through these examples it can be concluded that Sircar has effectively encompassed the theories of Kant, Hegel



and others in his plays while dealing with the concepts of 'self' and 'other'. Through the different characters from his selected plays we come to know that he gives us an idea of what a dominant and a dominated 'self' stands for in the society around us. Through the elaboration of these binaries he makes us aware regarding the prevalent situation in our society and how we are expected to come out from this troublesome situation. In this way it can be commented towards the end that Badal Sircar is successful in dealing with an array of themes in his plays and among them the theme of conflict of 'self' and 'other' is most significant.