



BADAL SIRKAR: THE QUEST

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There's a term in psychology called 'trauma'. It suggests a suppressed pain or suffering of soul, We want solvation from this 'trauma'. The quest of this salvation is the basic quest of human life. A gifted and successful artist craves his own solvation of society. So there goes on a continuous search for this emancipation in our life which longs for a peaceful abode. In other words we always haunt for the identity of a 'Satya Bari' (a home of truth). Along with it there goes on a restless quest for a form and to reach this goal we have to find-out a new route. This quest of adventure is enhanced by the quest of have that leads us to live a life after the artist own fashion. The artist is not contented with this but various aspects of quest goes on his domain and they are, the quest of history, politics, economics and last of all quest for time-all these constitute a whole society. When an artist becomes a dramatist, his quest tends to turn all these aspects of society into a dialogue through words, language and conversation which also require another quest of these elements. In this way a timeless quest goes on in the realm of an artist.

Jibananda, the poet of fragment existence and fragile time wanted to take refuge to a lady with "Pakhir Niner Mato Chokh" (the eye like bird's nest). The artist life is short lived but his quest, his quest for humanity is eternal an abode peace where there is a profundity of dwell- ings and fathomless love eve and a response of this abode. Dramatist Badal Sirkar is found to be absorbed in such a quest standing on the platform of fleeting time. He has searched for life, the meaning of life and a tranquil coexistence of life.

The man, who was born in the great city of Calcutta on 15th July, 1925 was Sudindra Sirkar. His quest for existence was not the world on drama a first, but the quest for bread and refuge for mankind. This had brought him to the stage of politics inspite of being a successful engi- neer. Taking a begging bowl, he collected subscription for the distressed people suffering from epidemic. This was his first quest.

But quest cannot confine that artist to a limited circle in whom there is artistic sensibility. The artist's play "Gandi" also speaks of this truth. Diversity comes from something particular and this is true to an artist's life which leads him towards a greater field of quest. This diver- sity has a great role behind making Badal Sirkar from Sudindra Sirker. In his own words "Then comes such a situation when my detachment occurs from there. Then arises the question of filling up of that time. Two ghings enter into it at a time. Town planning study was the evening class. And then that there ereeps into my thought bit by bit."

It was at the position of luxury for whiling away the time. It can be called a hobby "... hobby and sporadic hobby". At the time he had a comedic bent of mind which is not a farce, nor a satire, rather a situational comedy. He wrote 'Solution EX' in 1956. He acted and directed the play after 'Birinchhi Baba' of Parasuram. He wrote 'Bara Pisima' a play when he was in London in the year 1957-59. His quest of situational comedy goes on through the drama. In 1961 he produced 'Ram-Shyam-Yadu', 'Samabrittya'. This was his second phase of quest.

In this way, when the artist reached at 'Abang Indrajit' (And Indrajit) in 1963, there was a revolution in the dramatic art of India. The feelings of the artist was hushed in the darkness of structure in 'Abang Indrajit'. It was the artist conception that this cannot be brought into narrative*5. The chief feature of this play was the hollowness, the dream, the lethargy, themonotony etc. of the middle class society. In the utmost effort of an Indrajit's emergence from Amal-Bimal-Kamal, the profound truth, suffering, hopes and emotions of middle class life has found a special from. A new dimension is added to the domain of drama. The play written after Amal-Bimal-Kamal is named 'Abang Indrajit'. The characteristics of an absurd drama can be found in 'Abang Indrajit' in comparing it with Martin Esslin, W.A. Armstrong, Eugene Ioceso, Albert Camus. But Amal-Bimal-Kamal are the people of our Bengal as well as of India and we have in them an identity of the real and living picture of middle class soci- ety. Eventually this play is a new creation in the dramatic art of India. The creator's profound quest is fruitful here. The zest of his quest went on in 'Baki Itihas' (1965), 'Tringsha Stabdi' (1966), 'Pagla Ghora' (1967), etc.

In 'Abang Indrajit', there is a quest for personality. The dramatist quest is going on for 'Satya Bari' (real home). It is the conception of Badal Sirkar that in order to have the identity of that real home we have to move towards the simple and primitive time. He things that communism existed at the very beginning of creation and that communism had been obstructed by the formation of community. I know this from a discussion with the artist. May be he had quested for so many old houses



for this reason. He wants to go back to that values in his play 'Ballavpurer Rupkatha'. In the quest of equality, values and the resort of love there goes on a 'Michhlil'⁶ (Procession). In the quest of real house there is a ton-a tone of life. The dramatist takes away his character to a distant place in the quest of a house where there shall be a profound tone of life. He takes him to a solitary gungle,⁷ diverting his way. He makes his Prince one with the fuel gathering mother and brother. He dreams of a great house (society) free from exploitation and classless society, which is built of the simplicity of the forest and bound in the profound sympathy and love. This quest is still going on and he wants to accom- pany all in this quest. He makes a continuous search for that abode where there is 'Paramatya'⁸ (cordial neighbour) in every abode. In reality 'Badal Sirkar' is in quest for such an abode.

He not only found such abode but also a form for himself. He travelled through-out U.S.A., Canada being a awarded Nehuru fellowship in 1971-73. He went to Nigeria for service. There he came in contact with various schools of drama. He also came in contact with 'The Poor Theatre' of groatovski. He also discussed with Beck. As a result he buildup his own philoso- phy and along with it there formed a treatment in favor of his own thought. Through This came the thought of 'The third Theatre'. There disappeared the distance between the stage and the spectators. 'Angan Mancha' came in to existence. Play then came down to the soil of man. Its form was built quite different from that of 'Proscenium theatre'. Due to the coordination of oral speech and body language, oral speech became strong. Theatre became naturalistic. There no stage, no equipments, very thing like river storm, telephone etc. Are expressed through human body. A bridge is built directly between the actors and spectators. As a result this type of drama became popular. The people of the soil became admired enjoying the theatre that tells of their life with out any fees. At the end of the theatre and apron is spread for contribu- tion and what comes of it is enough. In the play 'Bhul Rasta' (wrong path) it is found that this last object is also incorporated in to the play proper. This play centers round a character that begs and sings. At the end of his story fraught with sond spreads his wrapper bound round his waist for alums. In this way the dramatist mixed his philosophy of 'Free Theatre' in the play proper. This constituted a new form of 'Third Theate'. Through out his dramas, he quest of man and his problem goes on. And out of this quest in built the drama. The dramatist goes to the remotest village of Rangabelia at Sundarban and knows Bhoma. His play 'Bhoma' is a product of his journey to Ranabelia.

Life the play 'Flagging' by R.N. Tagore, dramatist Badal Sirkar wants to arouse his path with the rhythm of his walk. The abode that he searches-makes others to search, he seeks the way to for reaching that abode. Once he had chosen the path of politics would not lead him to the real abode. The play that he wrote named 'Michhil' (procession) is no procession of any politics. It is the procession of man in the quest of a path, a procession to arouse the path. As if the quest of that path might arise by the tune of that drama 'Michhil', and all the spectators might join that path hand in hand. He takes away the two characters keharam & Becharam beyond 'Hattamala'. That is a mysterious path, a path of imagination and expectation. By the side of that path, the green coconut seller feeds green coconut water but she does not know the idea of price. There is a concrete bright path but it is neither the path of Calcutta nor any path for emperor. He seeks the identity of that path by misdirecting the prince and taking him to a wrong path, the path that the dramatist things to be the path of real abode. The sincere quest for path leads one to reach to goal one craves. The theatre parties of his plays traveled through the path from village to village, mention may be made of Thakurnagar, Ramachandrapur, Balarnpur, Charchat, Machlandapur etc. They have made an inrode in the mind of the rural people and this is the another way which built a direct connection between man and man. In this way the actors as well as the characters, spectators and above all the dramatist himself make a quest of a path through out the philosophy of their dramas.

The artist wishes to live and makes others live through his art and love of humanity. So his chief quest is the quest for love, the love of humanity. It is his philosophy of life to make a bridge between the heart of man and that bridge would be the bridge of love. His chief object is to remove the salty gulf that is extant in modern man. Through out his dram 'Manuse Manuse' (among man) we get the unquestionable key-note of love and then comes the pleasure of life, the rhythm of life in this way he projects his philosophy of life through out his characters and some times through the creation of opposite character. He makes that key-not more obvious and more truthful. In order to make a communication with the world humanity he incorporated the teaching of 'Espe- ranto' advocated by Gamen Hague.

'As the sensibility of time spontaneously over flowed from the gesture of this univeres'¹⁰ and the sensibility of 'grey history' were the quest of Jivananda Das, so also, the 'eternal time' was the basic quest for the dramatist Badal Sirkar. He can very easily unit his own time with that of the primitive. This is what we may call the unifica- tion of diverse sensualities. In the play 'Tringsha Satabdi' (thirtieth century) he has made a quest of huge time. We makes a perfect mingle of 6th August, 1945 with that of 18th September 1974, the day in which the explosion of Indian atom bomb was done at Rajasthan. He observes past, present and future in the same back ground within an wink of eye he can make a combination of the time of Mahabharata with that of Mangaladasi (Modern maiden). In the play 'Khat mat gring' he observes past, present and future



through the symbolic character 'Young' and Girl'. In the quest of his time there comes of Veda, Puranas and history-comes out the post war time, the sense of Russian and French revolution. He has made the right observation of time by the creation of incoherence of time. And through all these, the dramatist has sought a time, the time of come, that time of love, the time of indifference from man to man. He has observed the change of modern time through out his plays.

When the dramatist transform his philosophy in a play, he has to quest for dialogue, language and words suitable for this purpose. And so in his work-shop he makes the participants to practice of going from one word to another keeping a link. In that art he also exceptionally skilled. In his 'Abang Indrajit' he has made use of three tier conversation : totally colloquial in conversation and to some extent polish conversation and again some where deep felt conversation. Sri Girish Karnad has adopted this type of conversation and directed the drama by translating this art into english. But later on his dramatic conversation has become full of Zoke and surrealism to a great extent. A search for its cause remains us the Dariofoe the noble awardee's remark about his 'Accidental Death of an Anarchist' 11. In order to uphold the incoherence and pretence going all-round, he thinks sharpened sarcastic conversation suitable medium. All the intocherece of life is the target of attack in Sirkar's play. Through his plays he points out the worthlessness in humanity, economic and social evils. In order to expose all these social anomalies and to show us a real path, he had made use of such sharpened sarcastic and humrous conversation. So the quest is the basic word in his play.

Quest has a rhythm of itself. Badal Sirkar is incomparable in that rhythm and in the revolution of his 'third theatre this rhythm is still going in. In the play 'Spartacus' the character that comes riding on ass in his coming, his patern of walk there is a rhythm, which also involves the spectators. The rhythm of the revolution of 'Third Theatre' goes on involving the spectators. There is a rhythm and rhyme and also poetry in what he wants to say, which way he wants to say and in his philosophy. And persusing that rhythm 'Bhanu Mati Ka Khel', 'Michhil' etc. goes on.it is his rhythmical quest that is our modern effort of quest.

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