

DE-CENTERING THE HUMAN SUBJECT: EXISTENTIALISM AND POSTHUMANISM IN *EVAM INDRAJIT*

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Abstract

Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*, a milestone of modern Indian theatre, discovers the concept of 'de-centering the human' in literature and challenges the long-standing humanist notion. In literature, we often assume that human beings are at the center of meaning, purpose and agency. But in Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*, that centrality begins to collapse. Existentialism teaches us that humans must create their own meaning in an absurd world, while Posthumanism challenges the idea that humans are the most important agents in existence. Sircar's play reflects both these ideas, through the characters- Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Indrajit. They are presented not as unique individuals but as interchangeable types, trapped in repetitive cycles of work, marriage and routine. Human uniqueness, freedom and centrality are disputed and doubted. It also questions Anthropocentrism and bridges Existentialism and Posthumanism. Human centrality is de-emphasized. The life of the characters is shaped by social structures, routines, and systemic cycles. Narrative emphasises repetition, monotony and futility. The work explores how Sircar destabilises the autonomous human subject, exposing both the absurdity of human existence and the limitations of human centrality. The play resonates with contemporary debates on posthumanist thought, suggesting that meaning and society extends beyond the individual human to include social, structural and systemic forces.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, de-centering, existentialism, posthumanism,

Badal Sircar is the most prominent playwright in Indian English literature, and well-known for 'The Third Theatre'. It was intended to be people's theatre and made it as a device for political awareness, education, and social change. Most of

his well-known plays have revealed the existential crisis, confusion, frustration, disintegration, disillusionment and the meaninglessness of modern urban man. *Evam Indrajit*, one of his famous plays, translated in English by Girish Karnad, mirrors the scenario of the country which was extremely dark and depressing. This paper investigates how *Evam Indrajit* embodies the de-centering of the human subject through Existentialist and Posthumanist frameworks.

In *Evam Indrajit*, the central character is The Writer, who narrates the story and struggles to create a meaningful play. He ultimately fails to produce anything substantial. He has no content or ideas about what to write. The Writer said, “What shall I write? Who shall I write about? How many people do I know? And what do I know about them?” (3). He lacks of interest to understanding the people around him. He ignores to write about the suffering masses, toiling peasants, sweating coal-miners, and snake-charmers.

The Writer, who appears within the play, admits the impossibility of a coherent story: “There is no story, only fragments...pieces that never come together” (7). Other characters are Amal, Vimal, Kamal, Nirmal (Indrajit) and Manasi. Through these characters, Sircar exposes the entire men and women in the world. In the contemporary scientific age, the mindset of so-called modern man often appears to be rigid, mechanical, leaving a little space for delicate human emotions and sentiments. In contrast, Badal Sircar presents in *Evam Indrajit* the character of Indrajit whose outlook on life is completely different from these pseudo-modern people.

Evam Indrajit captures the essence of Absurd Theatre by using of repetition, lacking humanistic sense, communication breakdown, and unanswered endings. The characters live in the loop mode of education, work, marriage, children, and death. The Writer said to the audience, “From home to school. From school to college. From college to the world. The world is an office. Like this one. A lot of business is transacted here—very important business—A lot of people work here—Amal, Vimal, Kamal, and Indrajit” (Sircar, 30). Amal, Vimal, and Kamal are virtually identical. Even Indrajit, who seems different, tries to blend into the same pattern. Indrajit struggles with the awareness of meaninglessness but cannot escape it. The Writer narrates this via his poem:

No, there's no'scape
And yet
There's no'scape
Hungry mornings. Wakeful nights.
Shattered days. Bitter hours.
.....

It's all me—it's all I am,
And yet
There's no escape. (55-56)

Existentialist philosophy, associated with thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, emphasizes the lack of inherent meaning in life and need for individuals to define themselves through their choices. In Europe, Existentialism was shaped by the trauma of the Second World War. In India, *Evac Indrajit* mirrors the frustrations of the post-independence middle class. Sircar compares his play *Evac Indrajit* with Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* which deals with the futility of Existence, repetition, and in search for meaning in a meaningless world. "For us there is only the road—so walk on. We are the cursed spirit of Sisyphus. We have to push the rock to the top—even if it just rolls down" (Sircar, 59).

The play resonates intensely with existentialistic ideas and depicts human alienation, and the collapse of individuality. Jean-Paul Sartre said in his 1946 lecture, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, "Man is condemned to be free". Indrajit distinguishes the pointlessness of his situation yet cannot avoid living and choosing. The writer observes all these chores and says,

It's all a question of going round and round. The answer is a circle—a zero...One moment, one single moment. Deny that circle. Deny that going round and round. Deny the whole question. One Moment, one moment in the present life...Let us save this life. Let us save this one moment in the present- that is life. (25-26)

Posthumanism evaluates the long-standing humanist idea that humans are the autonomous center of meaning and history. Instead, it stresses interconnectedness and the supremacy of systems that limit human society. Although usually read as Existential or Absurd, *Evac Indrajit* can also be interpreted as a Posthumanist work because it weakens human uniqueness and centrality. There is no central hero exists. The play shifts attention away from a single human subject to repetitive social patterns. Thus the play justifies the Posthumanist aspects of loss of individuality, fragmented existence, systemic determinism, de-centering the human and bridges Existentialism and posthumanism. From a Posthumanist view, the play questions anthropocentrism and presents humans as fragments of larger social systems.

In conclusion, *Evac Indrajit* is a profound act of de-centering the human subject in both Existential and Posthumanist frames. Through interchangeable characters, fragmented narrative, and repetitive cycles, the play erodes the idea of the human as unique, central, and autonomous. It portrays a true picture of the contemporary society, the meaninglessness and pointlessness of modern life. *Evac*

Indrajit thus stands as a milestone work that dismantles humanist assumptions and redefines the role of human in literature and theatre.

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