

Badal Sircar's Bhoma: An exploitation of Subaltern classes

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Abstract: *Badal Sircar is recognized as a promising literary figure in Indian literature. He not only lifted but also enriched the Indian theatre. He is a strong voice of oppressed and downtrodden classes. He has written more than fifty plays. Basically he has written his plays in Bengali but later on many plays were translated into English. His plays majorly address the social issues and reflect the bridge between the rural and urban life. Bhooma is known as the best literary masterpiece. The research paper tries to attempt find the voices of subaltern classes. The research paper also exposes critically the harsh realities faced by subaltern classes. Bhooma gives a painful picture of oppressed class.*

Key Words: *Badal Sircar, Subaltern and exploitation.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Badal Sircar's Bhoma originally written in 1974, but it was translated in English by Samik Bandyopadhyay in 1983. Badal Sircar has changed the definition of Indian theatre as he established third theatre in India. Badal Sircar was born in 1925, he was hailed from middle class family. He grew up by watching monstrous and brutality of Calcutta city thus he describes Calcutta as "a monster of a city, but monster that is alive." (Eila Dutta, 1) He did acquire civil engineering in 1947. He took job in Damodar Valley complex but he was not interested in job. His writing was mainly influenced by Polish playwright Grotowski. He wrote *Solution, X, Ram Shyam Jadu, Baropishima, Shanibar, Evam Indrajit, Baki Itihas, Pralap, Tringsha Shatabdi, Pagla Ghoda*. He was a pioneer of Third theatre which mainly deals with the voices of peasants, tribal and rural classes. His plays really shed a light on materialistic world and oppression of subaltern class. Badal Sircar's Bhoma reveals the problem faced by peasants and rural classes in Rangabelia village. Badal Sircar's Bhoma is based on actual experiences of his friend, who was heading village school as head master in Rangabelia. The play basically revolves round materialistic world, exploitation of peasants, and inequality towards rural class. Bhooma set in Sunderbans district in Calcutta. The play too reflects the post-colonial background. The play epitomizes the suppression of subaltern classes. In Bhooma Badal Sircar presents the harsh realities of peasants of Rangabelia village and inferior position of rural classes. The notion of Subaltern was first used by the Italian Marxist Antonin Gramsci in his famous article "Notes on Italian History". According to Gramsci Subaltern classes refers to any "low rank" person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic dominations of ruling elite classes". Ranjit Guha also defined the subaltern "a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way" (3)

2. Exploitation of Subaltern classes:

In Bhoma Badal Sircar addresses the issues of peasants and rural class. The play has six characters. They all represent the subordination and exploitation of peasants and rural class in the name of power and class. The play is very significant the title of the play speaks the struggle of common men. The suffering of rural man is not entertained by the bureaucracy. Badal Sircar presents the exploitation of subaltern class. A stenographer represents pains and agonies of lower class men. Stenographer works in Samson and Blackbird Company. He has only 455 rupees salary. He wanted 20000 rupees loan from bank. The manager asks many questions in order to check his loan liabilities. The stenographer tried to satisfy the bank manager by his wise answers however he did not ready to grant his loan permission. The bank manager laughs at him and asks silly questions:

Five: How many workers? (*Three Plays 72*)

Five: liabilities? (*Three Plays 72*)

Five: What have you mortgaged? (*Three Plays 72*)

The manager is engaged in scrutinizing all his liabilities and raises question over his loan and asks him "You can't have it without security! Get the shed back first; if everything else is satisfactory you can up to 10,000 on it." (*Three Plays 72*)

The stenographer's loan is not sanctioned by bank manager. It happens because of he is from lower class and he had no power to pursue the mind of bank manager. He becomes a victim of class. He is subordinated due to his societal position. On the other hand Bank manager just asks to Mr. Mukherjee don't worry "oh, that's only a formality, sir, there's no question of securities" (*Three Plays, 72*). Bank manager talks over phone sir, we are ready to sanction your loan amount. The two events are indicating that lower classes are subordinated in the name of power and class.

They are deprived of equality and justice. Finally the Bank manager insults stenographer in the following words: Five: Don't be childish. Can you bank give loans without securities? (*Three Plays, 72*) Bhooma also reveals the subordination of peasants. Villagers in Rangabelia are exploited. Badal Sircar points out truly the wide gap between urban and rural classes. Peasants live in Rangabelia. They still have a little land for farming. The village has no proper road, no facility of doctor and the electricity has not yet reached there. On the other hand India has successfully sent its first artificial satellite Aryabhata into orbit and metro rail will soon be introduced to Calcutta. Badal Sircar cries for subaltern classes those who have been waiting since generations and generation for electricity, transportation system and better road. Peasants cultivate kharif crop which is totally depended on rain only. They yield wheat, paddy in a year one times. Due to the lack of water they could not cultivate the land whereas Calcutta city will be witnessed for a second Hooghly bridge. The farmers actually produce gold but they have treated like beggars. Even they had not got any support from bank. They live under tension. They thought constantly about interest of bank. Having toil the whole year they still live in poverty. They are longing for help. Badal Sircar feels very sympathy for farmer's subordination. The efforts of farmers are not valued. It is seen in the following conversation:

One : Three million rupees, only three million, million rupees-on loan. We need water.

Give us water. We need fertilizers. Give us fertilizers. Give us fertilizers. Give us land.

We need water. Give us water.

Two: This earth has sucked up so much blood already, hasn't it?

One : Yes, hollow earth. Down, deep down, drop by drop this blood has seeped through and gathered in a subterranean reservoir. (*Three Plays, 74*)

Nobody sees the tears and pains of farmers who actually harvested gold and run the country. On the contrary. India is on the edge of self-reliant on the basis of its continuous progress in industry and agriculture. Badal Sircar denies with saying that "this fact are only living in a fool's paradise" (*Three Plays 74*) Bhoma is telling about deprived villagers, farmers and rural class in Rangabelia. Characters in this play make a fruitful discussion over the issues of subordination of farmers.

Two: High-yield variety, sir. On this side I have two-thirds of an acre-under Jaya, and there a little less than half an acre where I'm trying I.R.8.

One: looks like a bumper crop.

Two: With your blessings, if there isn't much of a pest problem, I expect 18-20 quintals per acre.

One: Eighteen to 20. I should think not less than 30.

Two: I could have got 30 sir, if I could not only apply the required dose of fertilizers. That I couldn't sir, didn't have the money.

One : Is that your own pump set?

Two: Good heavens, no, sir, where could I get it? I've only one acre of land. Sir, and that too mortgaged to the money lender. What can I get bank loan on?

One: Whose is the pump set then?

Two: What's the price like?

One: This year it's risen to seven rupees per hour. Till last year we got it for five. For poor People like us, it's crazy to cultivate paddy in the dry season, you can call it beggars craving to ride horses. Say, I've hardly an acre, and it's going to cost me at least 1,200 rupees for water alone. On top of that there are fertilizers, pesticides. But then, with good luck if there's not much trouble with pests, with your good wishes, sir, it's not going to be too bad." (*Three Plays 75*)

Gadai Mitter is a landlord who usually provides his Rustom pump on seven rupees per hour to farmers in Ragabelia. He used to dominate poor farmers in the name of power. Farmers look like "subaltern social groups were also in a position to subvert the authority of those who had hegemonic power." (Homi Bhabha, 200). Gadai Mitter uses his power to exploit farmers. He behaves like a monster with farmers. He is corrupted by power. He had easily got loan from Bank. Badal Sircar sheds light on Gadai Mitter.

Two: Ah. For, him it's easy enough! he has more than 25 acre of land . Had a Rustom pump set already – five horse power , and last year he took a loan from the bank and brought this Sambird-

One: Those field there-do they belong to Gadai Mitter?

Two : No, Sir, that belongs to three different people, Gadai Mitter cultivates those on sharecropping terms.

One : What ? A rich man like Gadai Mitter –a sharecropper?

The farmer's grief is turned deaf ear. It is seen in the following lines:

One: My heart has dried up. My heart is a piece of leather. Can you spare me a drop of water to moisten it?

One: I asked for a drop of water, Sir, I didn't speak any nonsense. My heart has become dry leather. (*Three Plays*,76)
Badal Sircar appeals to landlords or rich people to be humanized with subaltern classes. The injustice melodies against poor farmers are noted in the following lines:

“Three: The land is gone.

Four: The crops are gone.

Two : homes are gone.

Three: An acre of my land was eaten away by the Bidya river three years ago.

Four: But we have to pay revenue still on that piece of hand.

Three : My home was eaten away by the Gomor river. (*Three Plays* ,103)

3. CONCLUSION:

Badal Sircar's Bhoma is taken up the issues of subaltern classes. Badal Sircar appeals superior classes to be treated fair with subaltern classes. The play underlines the untold pains and pangs of subaltern classes.

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