

Connecting drama with the theme of individualism

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The 'Drisya-kavya' or theatre happens to be an integral part of the culture of the people of India and without having a biased notion especially people of Bengal cherish and enjoy to experience such creative form of art which not only mesmerizes our eyes but also invokes our mind to not just to think but to think in different perceptions and perspectives. Thus boosting our senses to perceive the various happenings around us. The plays like for instance, 'Aswathama', 'Ak Nayoker Sesh Raat', 'A-pobitra', 'Captain Hurrah', shows or produces such an effect on the audience that we the people of the audience sense a certain unrest in our minds. The plays make us think in an unconventional, out of the ordinary way so that we do not just 'imitate' but act according to one's respective wishes or desires.

The Group Theatre of Kolkata which is a popular way of expressing their views and highlighting the social messages, developed in the 1940's, with their objective mainly to instigate people to think in the form of entertainment. The theatre basically try to create a chaos, an unrest in the mind, which is been performing or rather initiating the so-called traditional or societal rules which the society expects us to follow, which the people, who had become so accustomed that they are "scared of unrest" as "one invites unrest by breaking the norm". The work of theatre thus arises here, to create so much chaos, that it creates uneasiness, uncomfortable feeling within the mind and hence help us in questioning 'why' and even help us in questioning about our purpose of existence, what do we as individuals want and most importantly who are we, for if we answer it that we are human beings then we should as individuals have independent choices of our own need and desires and if are machines, we can imitate the way the society, tradition wants us to behave and think. The theatre thus, enables us to unleash the human caged in our machined body. The plays like 'Aswathama', written by Manoj Mitra, and directed by Koushik Sen, 'Ak Nayoker Sesh Raat' directed and written by Chandan Sen and 'Captain Hurrah', written by Mohit Chattopadhyay and directed by Sourav Palodhy.

In 'Aswathama', the original story in *Mahabharata* can also be interpreted in the play that reflects not only the present reality but also how an individual thinking of ideas, thoughts, gets crushed and ultimately people fall into the clutches of the ideas that are forced upon our

thinking, which suppress our own feeling of judging what would be good or bad for ourselves, but we let others or rather the society to decide for us. Similarly in the play, though Aswathama, a great warrior fighting for Kauravas and against the Pandavas but when the battle of kurushetra was over with the Pandavas winning, he being defeated craved for revenge but inspiteof having a spite against Pandavashe did not have the feeling of murdering or blood shedding of any other individual but on being instigated and provoked persistently by other characters within the play,he ultimately looses his grip on himself and also looses the ability to think as an individual and acted the others wanted him to act,hence , in the end we find him after discovering what grave crime he had sinned ,that he had killed the children of Pandavas in the place of the Pandavas, he starts begging for mercy for his sin,but the other characters does not experience the torturous feeling, emotion that Aswathama is going through in his mind,and thus suffers in his mind.

The plays 'Ak Nayoker Sesh Raat' too questions our habit of being dependent in the matters of making any decision in our lives according to the controlling powers of our society namely- 'the state',and 'the religion'. In this play, it mainly questions our being dependent on anything and everything which the state or the authoritative powers decides for us, for instance, what to speak, how to act, what to read and even what to eat. Thus, the play encourages us to think and act freely for governments may come and go but their act of manipulation the public remains, so unless we practice free thinking and walking astray and not following the path that the authority paves for us, the better it would be for every individual in a state and that defines democracy that is to not to just follow but create. In the Play a dictator namedBanhitaMusuana,twists and corrupts every wing of the democracy of his land in order to satisfy his whims and creating a disharmony in his land but when he is captured and is about to executed by the distressed people of his land, in his last speech BanhitaMusuana, asks the people that the killing of one man or any autocratic leader would not bring true democracy but the way of thinking differently,perceive every notion,situationin different perspectives and walk on a different path other than the marked one by any government would not be in continuous fear of being penalised for free thinking.

Again in 'A-pobitra' the play questions to think freely and interpret according to respective individuals and only in that process, the humans can truly gain knowledge and if we only focus on any subject and interpret the way society wants us to interpret, then our thinking gets narrowed and our knowledge about any subject constricted. The play evolves around the

theme that people or the society in the name of religion makes us follow rules that constricts our thinking or discovering anything new, like in the past when Darwin's theory on evolution was being tried to get itself merged in the conception of the people around the world, 'society' did not allow people to think rationally for society in the past believed that humans are descendants of Adam and Eve as they had read in the BIBLE, but Darwin's theory on evolution questions that very basic point of human evolution he justifies with his analysis that humans have evolved from Apes. The society could not accept that theory and punished whosoever tried to explain it or tried to prove the theory to be logical. The clay results in questioning the people to whether practice the notions or our purpose in our lives dictated and measured by the society or think differently, question anything and everything around us, so that we can discover a new path, it might not turn out to be the correctly chosen path but the effort, struggle and striving to find something new would be valued if not acknowledged by the society.

In 'Captain Hurrah', a lady (a hotel owner) thinking herself to be a captain of a ship (here she thinks the hotel as her ship) is moving towards a new land where one can feel the pure air, free of every corrupted atoms and when one digs the land, gold shall be oozing out from the ground, where she is rescuing people from the disease of imitation, and encourages to think and act not the way others tell us to act but according to your own wishes and interests so that we can fight for the freedom of our thinking and acting and even inspire others to do so. The leading lady in the Play asks the audience to not to be still like a motionless, inert machine, but create a stir in the society with our new way of interpreting any subject, so that we become 'humane'.

Such instance of free thinking mind getting penalized for his right to act freely and not to tread on the path of corruption and routined life is portrayed in Ibsen's *An Enemy Of The People*, where the play follows the story of Dr. Stockmann, a man who discovers that the main water source of his town is contaminated, he tries to have the local paper publish of his investigation and holds a town meeting to share his findings only to be shut down by the authority of his town, here, his brother (mayor of the town), Peter Stockmann. Though Dr. Stockmann remains undaunted and confronts the people of the society saying, "the strongest man upon the Earth is he who stands most alone."

In Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* too, the protagonist of the play Indrajit asks, "is there a rule that one has to abide by rules?" and through the play Sircar asks us to 'dream' and be like

Sisyphus where in the myth of Sisyphus, he continuously and persistently keeps on trying to move a big chunk of mountain on the top of a mountain, but as he pushes to the very top, it rolls down and hence he has to continue his task once more. Therefore like Sisyphus, we should continue our search for the eternal question which is what do we really want in life and seek it's answer for "we must go on...there's no respite."

It would be apt to conclude with these few lines of the play:

".....and hence There's no end
There's no hope of fulfilment
By the holy shrine at journey's end
Forget the questions, Forget the grief,
And have faith
In the road-The endless road....."

The words of Rabindranath Tagore's song from his play *Tasher Desh* encourages the readers to:

"Bhango, Badhbhangedao.....
Bondi pran mon hokudhao.....
.....Jirno puraton jak bheshe jak,
Kon nutoner-e dak.....
Bhoe korina ojanare, Ruddho tahari dware
Durdarbegedhao....."

While Sircar in his play raises apprehension about the seemingly endless frustration of the youth in contemporary society, Tagore inspires the youth to venture into the unknown bereft of any fear or apprehension. The beauty of drama lies in this contrast, juxtaposition and individualism of the creator.

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