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SRI S. Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College, Sattur, Tamilnadu, India



Exploitation Of Labour Class People In Badal Sircar's Procession

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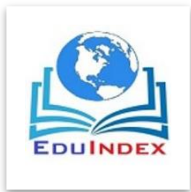
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Abstract: *The aim of the post colonial writers is to bring to light the effects of the colonialism on the colonized through the destructive political, economic and cultural ideologies imposed on the innocent people. The political dominance on the colonized has made the government be one-sided, biased and irresponsible in fulfilling the needs of the common people. The economic dominance has favoured the privileged colonisers and paves the way for the capitalised economy that has destructive effect on the colonised.*

Kew Words: class discrimination, capitalism, corruption, black marketing, illegal trade, socio-political violence, exploitation.

Sircar's *Procession* is a play that largely focuses on the calamitous effects of colonialism and capitalism on the subalterns and the miserable condition of the labour class people in the post colonial era due to the practice of the habits and customs of the colonizers and their ideologies imposed on them. Moreover Sircar also focuses on the harm and the bad effects caused by the foreign civilization and also their scientific, technological advancements.

Procession is a play similar to that of *Bhoma* in one aspect. In this play, there are no well-defined characters, plot or story line as in *Bhoma*. It is made open ended deliberately in order to leave the people take decisions and find suitable solution to the problems dramatised and demonstrated in the play. The play should be analysed in thematic level first, so that it could be easy to read the mind of the playwright while writing the play. Sircar deals with the themes of class discrimination, capitalism, corruption, black marketing, illegal trade, socio-political violence, exploitation of the subalterns as well as their resistance, effects of the colonial ideologies, culture and their practice of their civilization in our country. Another important aspect in which the play is to be analysed is based on the dramatic technique adopted.



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Sircar stands unique among his contemporary playwrights with his 'Third Theatre' which is very important form of theatre in the post colonial period. Sircar has made use of his own theatre form along with the slight adoptions from folk theatre and rural theatre and he is clever enough to use 'Third Theatre' as a weapon to build the strength and confidence of the subalterns and the lower class people to resist against the exploitation.

There are many interesting details about the play *Procession*. Sircar has an idea of producing the play even before he began to write it. Sircar himself says, "It is one of the very few plays where I had the idea of the production even before I began writing it, particularly the procession idea" (qtd. in Dutta viii). The play was first performed in 13 April 1974 in a village at Ramchandrapur by his play group called Satabdi which has also performed the play *Bhoma*. The play *Procession* was a big hit and success like *Bhoma*. It was translated in to many languages because of its popularity. The play was also performed in many languages in many States of India and mainly in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Rajasthan.

Procession was published as a play along with Sircar's two other plays as a collection titled *Three Plays* in the year 1983. Brian Crow and Chris Banfield have analysed and contributed to the reputation of the play through their criticism. They observe:

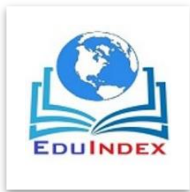
Michhil (*Procession*, 1974) has been an immensely successful play using the noisy, chaotic evocation of Calcutta's crowded streets in a theatrical setting that incorporates an audience arranged informally around the acting arena, in a fast-moving, satirical tragic-comedy of police repression, establishment hypocrisy, race riot and personal loss of direction. (129)

Sircar has written the play *Bhoma* with the background set in the villages of Sundarban district. Similarly he has set the background of *Procession* in Calcutta since it is a city of procession. Sircar himself has a desire to make a kind of procession in Calcutta and he has used his play to fulfill his desire. He has made his play with many variegated scenes he has scan in the streets of Calcutta, chatting in teashops, conversations in coffeehouses and various scenes in the offices. Sircar has made use of the image of procession repeatedly in the play to present both the optimistic and pessimistic sides of the individual's unity as a community under a single roof in the name of procession.

As it is already said, the play focuses on various themes and the readers can see an old man, character in the play enlisting their various processions. *Michhil* is the Bengali word for procession. The old man says:

. . . Michhil, Michhils for food and clothes, Michhils for salvation, Michhils for the revolution, Michhils in military formation, Michhils for refugees, Michhils for flood relief, Michhils mourning, Michhils protesting, Michhils festive, Michhils with stars. (PN 8)

Thus, Sircar has created many processions in the play to make his readers and audience aware of the problems they encounter and to know how they are exploited and how to resist and rebel against those various forms of domination and oppression in the post colonial era.



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Though we got freedom from the British colonial rule in 1947 itself, we didn't enjoy it to the fullest even in the 1980. So the adverse effects and ruinous results of the colonial rule still have a strong impact on the common victimized people. Sircar wants to present all the above analysed aspects in front of the people in an indirect and ironic manner. The class discrimination as ruling class and working class in the society of capitalist economy is made evident by Sircar through various illustrations of scenes.

THE MASTER: What is the greatest enemy of civilization?

CHORUS: Communism.

THE MASTER: Who upholds, preserves, and protects civilization?

CHORUS: You, Master!

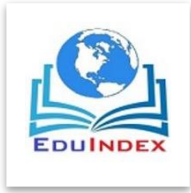
THE MASTER: Rest assured, my children, I'll keep you civilized. Communism is the religion of the animals. Keep in mind that you are not animals, you are men.

CHORUS: But Master, we're dying.

THE MASTER: There's heaven for you after you die, and heavenly happiness. Animals have no heaven. I bless you, you'd die as men, not animals. (23-4)

Sircar does not want to condemn anybody directly rather he wants to ridicule and satirize the materialistic master class in a subtle, ironic manner. Sircar has criticized not only the ruling class but the middle class also that remain supportive to this exploitation rather indirectly. According to Veena Noble Dass: "The play attempted to expose the collaborationist role of the Bengali middle class during the British Raj" (74). The master class who worships capitalism as the God believes that Marxism or Communism is the satanic enemy to them. Because the ruling class people are highly materialistic and money minded and their greed for money has further paved the way to the selfishness and inhuman attitude towards the working class people. The ruling class people look down upon the labour class and subalterns as machines that can be used at maximum to earn and avail profit as much as possible and leave them with too meager wages. The masters believe that the equal distribution of wealth and absence of the hierarchy in social structure are the greatest demerits of Communism. It is well known that inequality and partiality are the essential parts of the western civilization and the influence of it is very strong in the minds of the post colonial modern men in the bourgeois society. Manchi S. Babu is also of the same view and he says: "Inequality is an indispensable part of civilization and so egalitarianism destroys civilization. That is why the Master tells the people that Communism is the greatest enemy of civilization" (106).

The upper class people are clever enough to deceive the subalterns by telling that it is our duty to stick on to the noble ideologies of our religion which will reward us with the life in heaven after death. The master persuades the suffering common masses to bear with the torments they undergo because they can be happy in heaven after death. The worst fact is that the innocent common people accept and believe the words of the self centered masses as the



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truth. Manchi, S.Babu also says, "Whatever may be the noble aims of religion, it is usually used to approve the oppressive and exploitative culture and to obscure awareness" (106).

In the capitalist society, it is highly essential to adopt Communism for the welfare and equal distribution of the wealth among the people and especially the labour of working class and the subalterns. Sircar ironically ridicules the money minded, materialistic and self centered upper ruling class people as influenced by the western civilization and technological advancements imposed by the colonizers during the colonial era.

Thus, in *Indian History Made Easy*, Sircar dramatizes the clever and cunning strategies of the British colonizers in holding and controlling the political and economic system of India. Sircar has mirrored the miserable and pathetic plight of the colonized people. Sircar makes the people aware of the existing colonial policies even in the post colonial India with a selfish motive by the ex-colonizers.

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