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**EXPLORING THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES OF POST MODERN INDIA IN THE  
PLAYS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR AND BADAL SIRCAR**

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**Introduction:** Indian English drama made a humble beginning with the publication of Krishna Mohan Benerjee's "The persecuted" in 1831. However, the real journey of Indian English drama began with Michael Madhusudan Dutt's "Is this called civilization" which appeared in 1871. Drama in India has a long history. The earliest plays were written in Sanskrit based on the Vedas and Upanishads. Over the centuries Indian drama has undergone various metamorphoses and still continues to flourish in all regional languages.

**Key words:** drama, violence, contemporary society, conscience political exploitation, lovelessness, modernity

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Indian English drama emerged as a powerful voice to record the changing dynamics of social system, with the changes in the mechanism of power oppression, new pattern of personal relationship, collapse of values and the psychological derangement of new generation. The collective efforts of Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani gave a new identity to Indian drama. They made experiments with world drama by reinvestigating history, legend, myth and folklore. They devised strategy for indigenous aesthetics and dramaturgy. The dramatists have tried to expose the socio-psychological spectrum of the predicament of man in shifting social conditions and moral values [2]. Vijay Tendulkar portrays the contemporary society and the predicament of man in it with a special focus on the morbidity in his plays which remind us of Nietzsche's words "the disease called man" and also Freud's description of human civilization as a 'universal neurosis'. His plays touch almost every aspect of human life in the modern world and share the disillusionment of post modern intellectuals [3]. In his play he is concerned with the middle class individual set against the backdrop of a hostile society. He presents modern man in all his complexities. Man's fight of survival, the varied moralities by which people live, the social position of women, the covert and overt violence in human being, these are his abiding concerns. *Silence!* *The Court in Session* was his first play in which he marked out as a rebel against the established values fundamentally orthodox society. This play combines social criticism with the tragedy of an individual victimized in society. *Encounter in Umbugland* is one of his first political plays. The political satire of this play exposes the secrets of politics that are designed to reach positions of authority. *Ghasiram Kothwal* is also a political play. This play is to set a historical background and it focuses on the power games that men engage in and the corruption, violence and sensitivity in which they indulge in the process. *Gidhade* is based on sex, violence, and evil. It is a dramatization of deep seated, unmitigated

depravity, perversity, greed and diabolic villainy reflected in the ravenous members of middle class family. The characters symbolize the rapacious vultures and betraying their avarice, vices, and immorality evince the repulsive sensuality and domestic violence manifesting the internal atrocities of devilishness. According to Kanrad "the staging of *Gidhade* could be compared to the blasting of bomb on otherwise complacent marketplace". Tendulkar has said that *Gidhade* was born out of a personal crisis in his life. It shows the degeneration of a family with compassion and cruelty. The play is a ruthless dissection of human nature revealing its inherent tendencies to violence avarice, selfishness, sensuality and sheer wickedness. *Sakharam Bindu* explores the complication of human nature and the manifestation of physical lust and violence in a human being. Tendulkar seems keen to demonstrate the basic and essential complexity of human nature which is neither black nor white but varying shades of gray. In *Kanyadaan* he portrayed a dalit writer as a drunkard, wife beater, manipulated and blackmailer. *Kamala* is a tropical drama inspired by a real life incident. Tendulkar deals with flesh market where women are sold and bought. Selling and buying woman stills happen in modern, democratic India. In *Kanyadaan* the familial and social symbolism of the ancient ritual collides against contemporary social processes whose very purpose has been to subject to patriarchal authority, prescribed gender roles and caste divisions to radical scrutiny. Tendulkar raises certain cardinal questions regarding the value system of a modern success oriented generation who are ready to sacrifice human values even in the name of humanity itself [4]. Tendulkar has created memorable male and female characters. He explores the position of woman in contemporary Indian society through his female characters. It is his women who help to reveal his social conscience on account of their position in society. He depicts woman as being equal underneath their socio-economic class. Badal Sircar, a great Bengali playwright, uses contemporary situation and social problems to project the life in death attitude to

modern life. The central theme of many of his plays is a sense of utter meaninglessness in our existence, which leads to a state of metaphysical anguish. This anguish is in fact closely embedded in the Bengali middle class psyche which was Sircar's constant concern since his earlier theatre. According to Ella Dutta "Sircar stands in the forefront of a new theatre movement in India". Both in form and content he has moved away radically from what proscenium has to offer us today." His first play *Evam Indrajit* brought him an immediate attention in theatre world. It is clearly existential like Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. It makes clear that our existence is a pointless practice of dust. It deals with a new aspect of physical deformity through the eponymous character. Sircar conveys in his *Stale News* that the social inequality, oppression and exploitation have not changed even a little till today. He juxtaposes the gross atrocities of oppression and exploitation of colonial India and those of post colonial India. The statement that man is the greatest creature of earth is repeated several times as a refrain along the narration of instances of oppression and exploitation in the play. *Stale News* also exemplifies how people are made confused and mindless by education press and mass media. Sircar's mini play *Marital* also presents the banal and disharmonious marital life of middleclass couples. Sircar is interested in the social dimension of the problems rather than the individual one. Sircar's *That Other History* like *sakharam Binder* exemplifies the power struggle at family level. Sircar's *Procession* elucidates how mental deformity is effected and it is perpetuated. In the play he aims at exposing various devices of civilization in observing our awareness. The inclusion of revolutionary processions in the play unfolds Sircar's own disillusionment with the existing communist party and their movements. Ella Dutt

observes "He does not wish to create new myths in place of old. He prefers to raise the consciousness and create awareness of the issues". Sircar says that the life of man itself becomes a kind of procession a ritual which is devoid of vitality or meaning. Sircar does not blame any individual, any class or any government. He criticizes the system. He incriminates civilization for all human misery. Civilization has caused all these deformities. Inequality is an indispensable part of civilization and so egalitarianism destroys civilization. Sircar's *Scandal in Fairy Land* elucidates the crucial role of the press in moulding the public opinion though it is a funny tale for children. Sircar's *Bhooma* depicts the impact of lovelessness on our society. The play repeatedly attempts to prove that exploitation is not only in human in itself but also caused by the lovelessness of man. He says that competitiveness and individualism strain the relations between parents and children and the lovelessness boomerangs in every family. Individualism destroys our love of nation and breeds dishonesty and corruption. An important aim of Badal Sircar plays is almost missionary dedication to the cause of social change and his use of theatre to highlight the ideal by exposing the gap between the ideal and the real. He worked hard to change the content of his plays drastically. His plays, belonging to the third theatre were powerful response to the various socio political realities he encouraged. These plays show Sircar's deeper understanding of the problems of the nuclear age and the poverty, corruption, greed and the industrial and agricultural exploitation of the poor. Contemporary issues are what make street plays succeed. Perennial issues like communalism, terrorism, police brutality, bride burning, dowry system, caste inequalities, health care and alcoholism are included in repertory.

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