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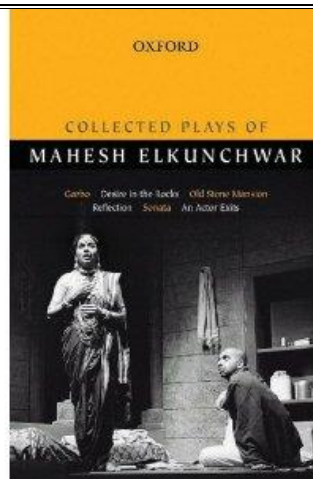
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*Garbo - Four Outsiders* by Mahesh Elkunchwar

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Dr. A. S. Kanna

*Garbo - Four Outsiders* by Mahesh Elkunchwar

## **Garbo is about Young People**

‘Writing Garbo was a mistake, I think. Staging its performances would've been a second mistake, which I wanted to avoid,’ said Mahesh Elkunchwar in an interview, explaining why he chose not to give permission to produce the play which he scripted in the 70s. To his mind, it was a “risky proposition” (since it involved so-called indecency) which would fall flat in the hands of a lesser director or lesser actors. To his consternation it can be said that staging Garbo must have been the best, since many films are being produced with such indecency.

Garbo is about the class of young people living aimlessly with the shattered dreams, the diffusion of mediocrity, and the burden of inhibitions. It is a play about the generation which breaks out into defiance of living out their own lives with non-conformism for a credo; throwing up in the process of small minority culture, containing within itself its own seeds of destruction. Garbo is a woman in her late twenties who confronts her destiny but finally lands into trouble of sorts. As an inspiring actress she ends up doing B- grade films, as she couldn't get good opportunities.

## **Significance of the Name *Garbo***

Elkunchwar, probably would have named the character of the woman after the great Hollywood actress Greta Garbo. She is regarded as one of the greatest and most inscrutable movie stars in the Hollywood. There was some speculation that Greta Garbo was bisexual, that she had an intimate relationship with men as well as women. Soon after her career took off, she became known as recluse throughout her life. She lived the last years of her life in absolute seclusion.

## **Intuc**

Intuc is a cynical intellectual and a college professor. Pansy is a young man who shows gay tendencies in the play, and Shreemanth, a rich man, whose apartment is Intuc's and Pansy's residence. The three men try to fill void between and inside them with seemingly meaningful

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conversation, music and sexually charged- discussion about Garbo, the struggling actress and the woman in their lives.

### ***Evam Indrajith and Garbo***

When Mahesh Elkunchwar wrote *Garbo* in the early nineteen seventies, Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajith* was already making rounds in the country's theatrical circles, with productions in English and several other languages. *Evam Indrajith* and *Garbo* were both about the class that Mahesh Elkunchwar describes in retrospect as 'we young people'. Cities Kolkatta and Mumbai carried different histories, and hence different cultures, but the young people in both places felt the same frustrations of shattered political dreams, the diffusion of mediocrity and the burden of inhibitions, as the post-independence euphoria dissipated into thin air. If Sircar, from an early generation, could only lament the collapse of youth aspirations, with a precarious reaching out to an Indrajith, who is different from Amal , Kamal and Bhimal, lost in the mire of mediocrity, Mahesh Elkunchwar's young people, a generation later, would rather break out into the defiance of living out their own lives with non- conformism for a credo; throwing up in the process, a small minority culture, containing within itself its own seeds of self-destruction.

In an interview at Nagpur, the playwright says,

Suddenly the non-conformists among us had decided to shake off all this artificial baggage imposed on us by tradition. At the same time we had realized that we didn't know what to do with the freedom, and we almost abused it. Since we were not equipped to use this freedom creatively or constructively, we began to destroy our selves in the process. (xii) (Mahesh Elkunchwar, "Garbo")

### **Cynical Posture and Trivial Conversations**

The play opens deceptively with a sense of cynical camaraderie on a Sunday morning. The set is bare and grey, except for a few bean bags, a carom board and low tables. Cigarette smoke and alcohol are, only making the progression of a long day.

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In the beginning of Act I we find a trivial conversation between Intuc and Pansy. The futile chat, when measured, reveals the superficial attitude of the society. Pansy is fond of listening to the western music. But it seems Intuc feels that he doesn't enjoy the music here. It should be a strange experience to Intuc when it brings the tears while listening to the real music. And he says about the music that, "it's a different thing altogether. You should see the crowds that come there. God knows where the bastards buy all that enthusiasm." (05)

But Pansy feels that it has nothing to do with the music itself. He assures that he enjoys it within him and inside of him. And he never bothers about the people around him. Intuc doesn't agree with Pansy, because he feels that those days are gone, when one could enjoy music as a private pleasure. Now a days, these musical concerts are an immense fraud perpetrated by the community upon the community. He shames everybody from the singers down to the listeners, who are under religious obligation to pretend to be intensely interested in art.

### **Characters Floating in Incomprehensible Universe and Self-deception**

The characters in this kind of absurd drama are lost and floating in an incomprehensible universe and they abandon rational devices and discursive thought because these approaches are inadequate. The more complex characters are in crisis because the world around them is incomprehensible.

We find self-deception in the character of Intuc, which can be understood as the guise of existence as a character, individual or person. He destroys himself through the social category of his formal identity. This essentially means that, being a poet one must believe that his social role is equal to his human existence.

Living a life defined by his occupation, social, racial and economic class, in the very faith of self-deception, he tries to identify himself in a different milieu finding,

The whole world rushes to these concerts, and this twerp says he'll go mad... our illustrious ministers..... sit in the front row. The singer treats them... humble bow from the stage. Then there are some cultured ornaments strewn around, chaps who've been accepted as art-lovers by the world. (06)

The conversation between Intuc and Pansy is quite interesting, though it is trivial. Because Intuc is a poet whereas Pansy is just an art school dropout and ran away from his parents. Pansy is quiet immature which is reflected when he says, "you know, Intuc, if you've got music in your blood....."(06)

### **Achieving Greatness, Pretension of Greatness**

Intuc believes that this kind of bloody language comes from being immature. Every time Pansy wants to attend the school regularly and become a great person like Shreemanth and Garbo. But Intuc says that anybody can achieve that greatness in the country. He explains of his own experiences that he wrote four stories and won the state fame. He also believes that he would be world famous one day as the people go on gossiping about him and his works. When Pansy asks him if he were great, Intuc replies that he is not great. He felt that he was disgusted being famous and great. In fact the people are fools, they call him great, but he never feels within himself, such greatness. He feels that the stories and the poems are all a hoax. He is doing everything to become famous. Because fame is a sort of pleasant allegations foisted upon one's name. Even if he stops writing all that sort of nonsense, people won't forget him. Intuc becomes angry when he observes that Pansy is not paying any attention to his words. Pansy is vexed up with Intuc and blames him how he would torture the students in the class room. Intuc says the students are a kind of wild sanctuary if he wants to keep them under control, he must pretend to possess the wisdom of sages, the chastity of saint and the ascension and the strict moral code of monks.

### **Jealousy about and Showing Off of Proficiency in English!**

Suddenly, Shreemanth enters the scene which interrupts Intuc's speech. He feels that his rudely interrupting behaviour in the midst of his highly intellectual and committed discourse is not becoming of gentleman. Shreemanth gets angry and uses bad language; perhaps he is jealous of Intuc's proficiency in English and tells him, "here, You, cut out the fancy language, and how dare you call me a gentleman huh? I am standing (standing) here." (09)

When Intuc advises him to use good English, he becomes very angry and feels insulted. He couldn't tolerate his advice, so he wants to take revenge on him like a police officer. When Intuc asks where he gets the arrest warrant from, Shreemanth says he gets it from society. Finally, Intuc asks what charges are against him. Shreemanth explains in a ridiculous manner that,

You are guilty of using impossibly clean languages shorn of all obscenities, thus causing acute embarrassment to those who are in the habit of using abusive language..... You are both guilty of expressing contempt and disgust towards drinking, meat-eating, smoking, opium, hemp, and LSD..... Instead of having a bit of fun with good looking chicks and letting them go, you sloppily indulge in pure and sublime love, and, in your attempts to remain celibate, you either soil your underwear at nights, against which habit the entire race of dhobis is soon going to launch a protest in the form of demonstration, or/and you lock yourself in the toilet at odd hours of the day and night causing great inconveniences to others. There are many such charges, but you will hear them in court. Now come on. Come along. (10)

### **In Judgment**

The three of them walk around. Shreemanth sits down in an elevated chair and he feels himself like a judge in the court. He asks Intuc to explain against his charges.

The philosophy of self-deception is again reflected in the words of Intuc to cover up his real nature. He says,

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Milord, we are decent, white-collar, middle-class intellectuals. However eloquent speech outside the court may be, it is a sacred tradition with us, going back thousands of years and fully endorsed by society, that our lips shall remain sealed at the time of judgment. (10)

### **Self-deception – An Important Characteristic of Humans**

It can be said that human beings are susceptible to self-deception because most people, like Intuc, have emotional attachment to beliefs, which in some cases may be irrational. Robert Trines suggests that deception plays a significant part in human behaviour. He also says that it has been theorized that an instinct for self-deception can give a person a selective advantage; based on the rationale that a person can believe his own 'lie.' Here Intuc's statement enables the audience to believe his distortions; he will not present such sign of deception and will therefore appear to be telling the truth.

### **Names Reveal the Personality**

Of the foursome, Shreemanth alone, the earthiest of all, has a name for himself. The others carry their role in their names. The play is in a theatrically effective and crystallized projection of the prevalent attitudes, vague feelings and undefined frustrations growing at the hearts of the three young men.

### **Language Becomes the Most Effective Tool to Reveal the Character**

Playwright's harsh language, bold body language, abrupt breakdown of dialogue, and restless pauses succeed in conveying the stifling state of the protagonists' existence and their physical desires.

It is seen in the words of Shreemanth very clearly what he has in his mind about Garbo.

Come off it, yaar. Who's bickering? Aren't we all involved with Garbo? I mean, I certainly am, only physically. If this is so, and is openly admitted to be so, and Garbo doesn't seem to mind, why the hell are we chucking weighty words at each other? Sheer hypocrisy. And we don't want that. Do we? (17)

### **More as Sex Symbol**

With this one can understand that they are all involved with Garbo, and treat her as a sex symbol. But Intuc treats her differently. He wants to see Garbo as Garbo only. Physically and morally, they feel that they don't have the right to define the character of Garbo. As far as Intuc is concerned, Garbo is a challenge. He feels that all this business about a woman being an enigma is a myth. Once she is understood, nobody wants to look at her again. Once she is explored, the thrill is gone. He also feels that a woman should be able to satisfy fully, and yet withhold a part of herself from someone like Shreemanth. It is seen when Shreemanth asks Intuc to tell about Garbo, the promiscuous-woman and enigma, Intuc tells that, "even after fulfilling the needs of all the three of us, a part of her still remains untouched." (19)

### **Garbo – Centre of Desire**

It is clearly indicated that all the three men have the desire for Garbo in the play when Shreemanth says: "now the three cheers for Garbo the sex-Machine." (20)

They have been waiting for hours for the arrival of Garbo, but she feels it is nonsense. Garbo's character draws both our dissatisfaction and sympathy. Hers is a waste of a potentially creative life. Elkunchwar portrays her as a woman condemned to hopelessness and a deranged mental state on account of thwarted desires and unfulfilled urges. Garbo imagines that she is trapped in absurdity with all her strengths and limitations, muddling through meaningless existence. Her pervading sense of loneliness is the result of an anger which enfolds her hatred for a world that compels her to sacrifice herself and render ceaseless routine duties as a sex machine. Elkunchwar gives vivid picture of her existential angst boiling with rage.



## Confrontation with the Moral Brigade

There is a short respite when they come together in a comic piece of a play-acting in which they confront the neighbourhood moral brigade. Even in his Party there is a little tragedy in the play. Spiritual isolation is signified by a comic failure of communication when characters are collectively faced with the reality of life. But exhausted by the effort, they sink into a spell of self-pity, and once Garbo goes out for a while, a piece of information dropped by Garbo casually- that she is pregnant- suddenly occupies centre stage. A new background opens up at once. For the two older men, initially at least, it is a question of shirking responsibility; but faced with their own smallness and cowardice, they make a turnaround, seeking salvation in a collective fatherhood exclaiming in the words of Intuc that,

We are doomed people, we have neither seen, nor experienced, nor created anything beyond filth. Let us grab this opportunity. It's our only hope, our only chance. We will create something beautiful out of this filth. The world will know that there is a life somewhere which is beautiful, pure, fearless, innocent.... And Garbo we can't achieve this without you. (40)

But even Intuc spells it out, extremely well, Garbo has her doubts:  
It's very beautiful and all that. To be the mother of a beautiful thing! (Practical.)  
But do we have the guts to see the whole thing through? Suppose we suddenly get cold feet? And there are all the other difficulties. If we decide on this, I'll lose nearly a year, and all my contracts will have to be cancelled one after the other.  
What guarantee then of finding work again after the year's over? (40)

She simply wonders when Shreemanth wants to transfer some money to the name of the child.

You have all gone mad. Right now you're getting drunk on your own words.  
Suddenly one day you'll come to your senses and then there will be no escape.  
(41)

## **Self-Centred and Lacks Motherly Love?**

After having observed Garbo's reluctance to be a mother of child, Pansy feels that she doesn't have even a bit of motherly love in her. There is only one reason that pregnancy should scare Gabro: society hates woman and kids, particularly it hates teenage woman. It especially hates teenage unwed pregnant women who get knocked up under unapproved circumstances. She feels that the new born is not legally bound to be an approved representative of the state. She feels that the whole business of the fatherhood and motherhood is nothing but a crass hypocrisy. Garbo does not attach her thoughts or ideas to any fixed nature or essence. She gives preference only to her emotions and the thoughts that overpower her that moment. Instead of developing any constructive vision, her mind envisages pessimism and hollowness in her life and that makes her to complicate the relationship with everybody. She is a hypersensitive and an intolerant woman who exerts her ill temper towards different personalities holding different mind-sets.

## **Inner Conflicts Caused by Contradictory Dispositions**

We also find her to have inner conflicts due to contradictory dispositions within her own self. Garbo is a woman above the average. She is a combination of the real and the unreal. Her ideas and activities are governed by her immature mental attitudes. She feels herself to be a call girl who flits from one man to another man. Despite her disreputable life, she expresses her desire to be loved by someone and

To love somebody one day. To lose myself in love. Is this possible? There's a heap of ashes within me. Will I find one life ember in it? I have no more strength left. Will I be able to live intensely again? (41)

## **Diffident Character**

Garbo also believes that she is not a proper woman even though she has three men to love, but she feels that a woman does not need love. In fact she only needs to give and this is because she has everything inside her, the fountain of life whereas a man is hopelessly

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inadequate. She feels so much emptiness and inadequacy in her, those women are just amazing and they can do anything and need nothing because they have it all anyway. That is why a man goes after a woman to get what he hasn't got. It reflects in the words of Intuc,

This is your chance. Your life will once again shine forth like the sun, and the child will bloom like a flower in the warmth of your light. Garbo, Garbo, Garbo, a new life is beckoning you. Don't reject it. It's our only chance. Garbo this is our only refuge. Our only chance to create something beautiful. You are life itself. We will do anything for you. You only have to say the word. We'll do it. Come Garbo, come. Come and stand in the centre. You are life. We bow our heads before you. Garbo, Garbo. (42)

### **Protective Escapes**

Although, Elkunchwar's characters are in contact with each other, sometime it is difficult to maintain a complete self-centredness. As a result each of his characters must have one or more protective escapes to which he resorts. In fact this play is filled with escapes from social reality, which reminds of his Party

All the three men fall under the spell of their own words and the dream they conjure up their only refuge, their only chance to create something beautiful. Finally the Act ends with an adoration of the Dream. The characters elevate it to a ritual plane.

SHRIMANTH, INTUC , PANSY

You are life

And the root of all life.

The spring of all hope,

The fulfillment of all happiness

Are you. You are the beginning of belief.

You are the everlasting.

All future sons are in your womb.

Give us your light.

Give us your son.  
He will burn up darkness and destroy it.  
Retribution in the face of injustice,  
Compassion in the face of suffering,  
Sympathy in the face of calamity,  
Courage in the face of death.  
This he will be. He we will be creation out of destruction.  
Mother!  
Mother!  
Mother! (43)

### **Visionary Spell**

The visionary spell nags over Act II for a while, with Intuc's saying,

INTUC: I can understand now the joy of those poor people felt when they saw  
the new born Jesus in the manger. (45)  
He also experiences that, "I'm weighed down by a feeling of deep respect." (48)

But the spell slowly dissipates through Act II, as they realize that Garbo has lost the child while shooting a stunt scene. For instance she has a pathological need to lie. Here Garbo is the witness to the brutality, who says that,

It was during a camel race. He said he would never have included the shot had he known about me. Poor chap felt terribly guilty. He kept insisting it was entirely his fault..... I'm playing the role of a Lomani girl..... second heroine.....terribly fiery, and terribly passionate..... And terribly beautiful. (Pause.) They could have used my double, but I just didn't think. (49)

### **The Last of the Lost Civilization**

Garbo is the last of lost civilization. She has found solution in the arms of the three young men who are at the beginning, not the end, of cycles. Intuc is very passionate, violent, primitive, a second-generation pole who is battling his way up from the bottom. Garbo is depicted as the victim of the collapse of the society. In the second Act of the play, the tension shakes through the action and becomes more melodramatic.

When she announces that she is pregnant, the child is their only hope of creation, the redemption to their damned existence. The symbol of all three men clinging to Garbo is especially powerful. They feel that she is the mother woman who has the power to procreate and re-introduce the meaning into their lives. The plot of the play is, how each character searches for the escape route- how in the first Act the three men bare their sexual urges in relation to Garbo, how later they are afraid to face the reality that Garbo is pregnant. It also tells about how even in her pregnancy they look for their own salvation.

### **Striving to Make Real the Dreams**

It is quite appreciable for the playwright to bring the class of the young people striving to realize their long lost dreams in the play. Mahesh Elkunchwar is indeed very courageous to talk about women being treated as sexual objects and also gay inclination while keeping the play in a traditional structure which makes the play entirely different from others.

Suddenly when the dream shambles, the fragile community-Intuc, Shreemanth and Pansy- is on the edge of break up, Pansy starts wanting to go home, and Intuc starts retreating to fashionable obscenity.

Let's return to filth. The world we desired was not for us, could never have been. (Laughs bitterly.) We were idiots, out to turn dreams into reality. (Pause.) Let's go back our world now. The world of filth. As a punishment. And as a sort of consolation too. (51)

### **Accumulated Filth**

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But the filth profile rates here with a series of exposures and confessions. When Pansy wants to go home, Shreemanth says that he cannot leave them. He feels that he has already been with them and their part of world, which has completely been caught in its vicious circle. It reminds us that all the characters who attend the party in Party are wrapped in their web. Just like Shreemanth, Barve has everything he wants pomp and glory. Yet, there is in him a feeling of insecurity. He doesn't want anyone to reach zenith. Shreemanth insists that their life is more beautiful than Pansy's parents as they are blackened by the smoke and ugliness. But Intuc feels that it's just a kind of figment and imagination and also says that the filth is the only truth. On one hand, Shreemanth doesn't want to face the brutal reality that he is a homosexual; on the other hand he wants Garbo forever.

### **What Characters Perceive**

Intuc believes that there is some invisible force against them, which is trying to inflict them. So they find Garbo, the only way to face such invisible forces. These invisible forces are trying to crush them and force them into filth. And, therefore, they want to create their own world of filth before these powers can plunge them into it. It is, indeed, reflected in the words of Intuc, when Pansy wants to go home, he says, "there is no escape for you." (51)

Pansy eventually realizes, as in Sartre's No Exit, that there is no escape for the protagonist. The fulfillment of his love does not provide him with a refuge for escapism either, and similarly Indrajit's visit to London further frustrates him, and he verges on suicide; he fails in this regard too. He concludes: The past and present are two ends of a single rope Therefore, the play Evam Indrajit is in the absurdist tradition in that we do not comprehend anything significant, meaningful and traditional in it. Neither does it possess a logical or coherent plot.

There is another extreme by Pansy, when he charges Shreemanth with homosexual assault.

Pansy says that,

He used to barge into the bathroom. So I began locking the door from inside. He took off the bolt and threw it away. He had all the hangers removed from the bathroom so I couldn't take my clothes in with me but had to come out to dress. He's always hanging around in my room when I'm changing. (54)

Shreemanth cannot bear to face such reality and so he wants to name the child after him only to cover up his physical weakness. But here the domination of the homosexual theme in the play becomes quite explicit in *Garbo* and of which Mahesh Elkunchwar is absolutely aware.

### **Difficult to Face Reality**

Shreemanth affair with Garbo clearly fits into Sartrean concept of love which is that it is a desire to possess other's consciousness. Therefore the play is unconsciously coloured with Sartrean existentialism. The theme is evolved through the dreams, despair and disillusionment of Shreemanth.

In this affair, of the three, Shreemanth is more passionate to Garbo to possess her because suddenly and without warning, Garbo offers herself to Pansy and secondly, he later discovers that he is not responsible for the child in the womb of Garbo.

### **Love – The Very Essence of the Absurd**

Mahesh Elkunchwar has considered love from the beginning as the very essence of the absurd. Like many writers, he uses man's sexual adventures to reveal his essential silliness but goes beyond many writers in his insistence that it is not necessary any sense, in any kind of love, nor does he deny its power.

Love is essential but it has entirely different significance for each. Shreemanth needs love to cover up his physical weakness or satisfy his impotence. To him, it is the physical act of love

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and more. Garbo's sensibility is the key to her approach to love. She feels that she needs someone not to fulfill her sexual desires but to protect her. She is described in terms of society, and not in terms of her own existence. Unlike Indrajit, who prefers to be called Amal, Kamal or Vimal and conform to the dictates of society or the doctrines of tradition, she never cares for the society.

Repeatedly, Pansy keeps saying that he wants to go home or else he would kill himself. He has already shown in lot of frustrations from the beginning of the play. He feels, above all, that he is only disliked by the parents. He loves Garbo who has given him some temperamental physical pleasures. Garbo terribly feels that she is responsible for corrupting Pansy. She confesses that,

I played around with him just for fun. Then it became a habit. An enteraining game. (Pause.) But he attached different meaning to everything. (To Intuc.) Do you know the kind of places he has followed me to in broad daylight? He became addicted, and I was responsible. He would throw tantrums, cry, rage, threaten me into giving myself to him. I gave in each time, because I was either fed up, or annoyed, or in the mood for a lark. I should have hardened my heart at least once. (Pause.) Pansy, you're still young. (58)

### **Can She Live Alone?**

But at one stage, in spite of non-conformism, Garbo feels that she cannot live alone. She is feeling sick. Hence the only way for her is to continue to face the cameras again and again with phony postures and gestures. She, sometimes, feels that she should have got married, but she is in frustration. She suffers from periods of depression. She obviously knows that she could continue in the films any longer. And there are many times when she feels deep-down restlessness. Besides she doesn't even have faith that someone would marry her because,



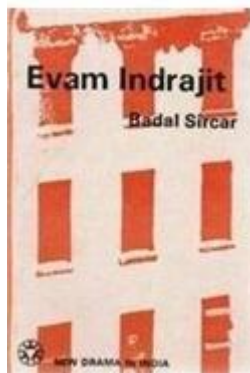
Men who danced around me two years ago are now at the most willing to have me as a keep. The proposition has actually been made to me. (Laughs.) I must give it serious thought. Maybe two years from now they won't even want this way. (64)

### **Garbo is an Illusion**

According to Mahesh Elkunchwar, Garbo is nothing but an illusion that they have built for themselves. As it is already said there is some kind of inescapable force which doesn't even kill them. They are depicted as the cowards; moreover, they demand Garbo to commit suicide if she doesn't give them new lives. Intuc says, even the youngest boy of all of them, Pansy, is also unable to escape from the ultimate disillusionment. Because one day he will surely realize with a shock that he too has started slithering through mud. So he feels that nobody escapes ultimate disillusionment. They are living in illusions, perhaps they love illusions. Now their loneliness increases, when their illusions fade one by one.

### **Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit***

We can find the same characters in Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* which discusses a number of issues that we face as a part of growing up. It's a play about Amal, Vimal, Kamal, Indrajit, Manasi and Aunty- it tracks their lives from carefree college-goers to anxious job searching professionals to the baggage of family life and through all this the Writer takes us through the rigmaroles of Indrajit's mind, his fears, apprehensions, his romance and his heart-break.



It is also a projection of the attitudes, fears and frustrations of the educated urban middle class of the 1960s. The somber existentialism draws attention to the crisis of the individual. It is pessimistic and holds out little hope for those who value ideas, dreams and poetry.

### **Cause for Celebration**

There is a course of celebration for Intuc, when he admits his ugliness because of Garbo that he is not capable of writing honestly. Because he feels, rightly, he never lived honestly in his life. In contrast to Intuc the writer in Evam Indrajit emphasizes of a purpose in life apart from the basic biological functions in an age of science. Modern man has become anti-romantic, dry, logical and scientific in his attitude. This precisely is the reason that the writer is perplexed, for, the protagonist Indrajit whom he has got for his play is a man who thinks realistically but dreams romantically.

Having frustrated with mental torture Garbo decides to tell the truth that the abortion was not an accident but she killed her own baby. She tells them:

I wanted to punish him. He didn't come to my tent. I went to his one night, because I wanted a role in his next film. He sniggered. He laughed at me. (Pause.) I couldn't bear it. He'd been like that from the beginning, taking every opportunity to insult me. And when I went to win him over, do you know what he said? He pointed at the camels and said, 'Go to them. That's what you want.' (Pause.) I didn't even have a second heroine's role. I was playing the ageing elder sister. I had about three scenes to do. (Pause.) When I did the camel scene my entire body was being churned up, and I kept praying, let it happen, oh God let happen. And it did. When I felt the warm blood streaming down, I screamed. Now let me see. Just let me see his miserable face. (65)

The three young men are astonished, but Garbo feels very happy that she has seen them for what they are and their inner minds. She is very glad as the child has luckily escaped from such vicious circle.

### **Anxiety, Guilt, Despair and Sin**

Kierkegaard always writes about anxiety, guilt, despair and sin. Sin, according to him, can be defined as despair at not willing to be oneself or at willing to be oneself before God. When one is not able to perform an act according to one's will one falls in despair. According to Heidegger, man in despair considers himself to be a victim of external conditions, but when he comes to understand that the trouble is within, he intensifies his predicaments. He finds that he is standing on the ground of nothingness and suffers from the dread of death, a version of insecure feeling. Dread is a type of fear mixed up with indefiniteness. The realization of the contingency of one's own indefinite situation in the world creates anguish. Sartre also considers anguish to be the outcome of man's uncertainty. Anguish of death and the notion of nothingness suggest his loneliness.

### **Inability to Assimilate Truth**

Intuc can't assimilate the truth and starts to blame her that she is false and coward. Finally, he asks her to leave the place as she cheated him. Garbo calmly replies that he had deceived himself first:

You should never have expected so much out of me. I'm an ordinary woman of flesh and blood. You burdened me with all sorts of imaginary virtues. I carried on for as long as I could. But I couldn't keep up the pretence forever. That doesn't mean I have done any wrong. And anyway, who are you to make demands on me? 26

### **Difference between Man and Woman**

Mahesh Elkunchwar has precisely shown the difference between man and woman. People are caught in a cycle of time in which the events change, but people are the same. Here the man Shreemanth is unable to fulfill his dreams and his existence in it, but the woman Garbo decides to cope with it. Finally, before she is killed or murdered, by Shreemanth, she internalizes her triviality and compartmentalization. It reminds us one of his women characters Damayanthi in Party, who believes that there is strange compulsion. Damayanthi knows that her life is artificial, and there is nothing in her life. She too lives in a world of hustle and bustle.

Mahesh Elkunchwar develops a character of Shreemanth, which represents not the universal, but the very male ego of a generation. The playwright is very conscious of existential loneliness of the human condition. He is aware of man's helplessness before the overpowering forces of circumstances. He is conscious of the fact that the very condition of life dooms, man to failure, and there is nothing any one can do about it.

Man is basically a social animal. He has become socially engrossed to the extent that his individuality has dissolved in its framework. He fails to define society, and society defines him. The ongoing frustrations, burning problems and inconsistencies in life have become a routine for him, as they have for the social order.

### **Relevance of *Evam Indrajit***

It is in such an age that *Evam Indrajit* holds relevance. The very title *Evam Indrajit* exemplifies modern man's state of identity crisis. Unlike Manasi in *Evam Indrajith* who gradually merges with Auntie and accepts the tradition, Garbo can't do it.

Shreemanth retains the identity of a radical; he turns into an existentialist who has to carry his impotence in the rest of his life. On one hand, the drama in *Garbo* grows out of a claustrophobic real-life situation pushed to the limits of endurance, burgeoning into a surreal holy drama that is too unreal and brittle to stand the test; on the other hand *Evam Indrajit* is a story of discontent, of unanswered questions, of repressed emotions and above all, it's the story of the youth. Satyadev Dubey rightly asserts that *Evam Indrajit* presents the residue of the

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middle class who have failed to adjust, align and ceased to aspire and also those who are enmeshed in the day-to-day struggle for survival. It is a typical absurd play such as Ionesco's *Amedee* or Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in that it exemplifies the hollowness and futility of a pseudo-modern existence.

Badal Sircar was asked in an interview whether he considered *Evam Indrajit* as a political play, or an existential play; he said that he never considered the play as a political play, and he did not know the philosophy of existentialism. Therefore the play can be perceived as an Absurd play. The play keeps on echoing that our existence is a pointless particle of dust. Therefore the play is unconsciously coloured with Sartrean existentialism. The theme is evolved through the dreams, despair and disillusionment of the protagonist Indrajit.

## **Absurdism**

According to Martin Esslin, Absurdism is the inevitable devaluation of ideals, purity, and purpose. Here too the play *Evam Indrajit* is deduced as nothing but an expression of despair. Nevertheless, we can discern a ray of hope in the dreams of Amal, Kamal and Vimal. Indrajit is no exception in this regard. As critics perceive him as the mythical Sisyphus preparing to carry on the burden of his existence, we discover a ray of hope in his words. "This is the keynote of our initiation. There is no pilgrimage, just journey. No destination but only the road which itself is our pilgrimage. Herein lies both deity and destination."

## **Mahesh Elkunchwar as an Existentialist**

In this context Mahesh Elkunchwar can be called an existentialist. The existentialist concludes that human choice is subjective because individuals finally must make their own choices, without help from such external standards as laws, ethical rules, or traditions. Because individuals make their own choices, they are free; but because they freely choose, they are completely responsible for their choices. The existentialist emphasizes that freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. Furthermore, since individuals are forced to choose

for themselves, they have their freedom-and therefore their responsibility - thrust upon them. They are condemned to be free.

For existentialism, responsibility is the dark side of freedom. When individuals realize that they are completely responsible for their decisions, actions, and beliefs they are overcome by anxiety. They try to escape from this anxiety by ignoring or denying their freedom and their responsibility. But because this amounts to ignoring or denying their actual situation, they succeed only in deceiving themselves. The existentialist criticizes this flight from freedom and responsibility into self-deception. He insists that individuals must accept full responsibility for their behaviour, no matter how difficult. If an individual is to live meaningfully and authentically, he or she must become fully aware of the true character of the human situation and bravely accept it.

### **Recurring Themes: Sex and Death**

Sex and death are recurring themes in Elkunchwar's plays. He sees sex and sexuality as part and parcel of the communication crisis. The sexual act can be the culmination of total communication and in that case, it becomes a total pleasure. But sometimes, people seek communication through the act, when that fails, they suffer great pain. He, therefore, says, a promiscuous person is in need of help, not condemnation. Promiscuity is a symptom of an illness; it is not an illness in itself. It really wonders when society will realize these things and death of course. It's a universal enigma.

*Garbo* is in fact a contradiction of ideas. Elkunchwar, probably, may be thinking the modern life, as it is lived in Bombay. He is actually taking the people far away from the values and traditions that are kept off. They are in confusion and they want to be non-conformal. In their ability to become non-conformal, they went into a mess. In describing the muddle he tried to make use of the fact that Garbo pretends that she is pregnant and she says that she lost her pregnancy, and all these three people differently react to it. But the fact of it is, tradition and modernity, as such; they don't take a person far off.

Elkunchwar, literally, would like to interpret saying that these non-conformal attitudes and living don't take anywhere near the solution. He feels that it is only confusion. Elkunchwar, himself must have undergone the same kind of confusion when he stopped writing for eight years. During this period, probably, Elkunchwar wanted to become a non-conformal, but he realized the futility of non-conformal, and came back to conformism.

It is also said that the playwright has profusely conveyed the sense of emptiness and unrest of the four protagonists in the play. Even though Elkunchwar's concerns originally centre on the issues of his own generation, he manages to convey the sense of purposelessness, emptiness and unrest that defines the lives of the play's four protagonists to the contemporary audience, without compromising on Elkunchwar's signature, hard-hitting realism.

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