

Utpal Dutta: A Real Maestro In World Of Theatre Of Bengal With Political Connotation

Dr. Sreyasi Ghosh

Assistant Professor in History Department,
Hiralal Mazumdar Memorial College for Women,
Dakshineswar, Kolkata, India)

Abstract: Utpal Dutta, a renowned stalwart in world of theatre, became a myth in cultural life of Bengal through his own power-packed plays and performances on stage as actor besides directorial role. Anunoy Chattopadhyay in introduction of Utpal Dutta Nataksamagra (Volume VI) highly appreciated him for creating several types of characters, maintainance of originality in drama-writing, performances as well-reputed director of plays coloured by Marxist ideological thought, explanation of Marxist aesthetics, translation and assimilation of world literature, active participation in people's cultural movements; commitment for using Dialectical and Historical Materialism in art and literature etc. He always upheld politics of class struggle. Propagandist Utpal wrote total 82 plays, 21 jatras, 15 translation dramas and 12 books of his essays. He, a successful actor of commercial films, never forgot his commitment towards Marxist ideology from 1951 upto 1993 when he travelled in India with his plays upholding dominance of the proletariat through class struggles. Utpal was a dedicated disciple of Geoffrey Kendal, pillar of International Shakespearean Theatre Company, had been deeply influenced by Brecht, Romain Rolland, Ibsen, Golswardi, Gorky and Chekhov. He created plays on a large number of themes such as on peasant rebellions etc. against the British colonisers (Sannyasir tarabari, Tota, Titumir), history of Indian independence Movements (Pherari fauj, Jalianwalabag, Baishakhi Megh, Delhi Chalo, Kripan, Kallol, Ekla chalore); the French Revolution (Nil Sada Lal), Baden Revolution (Srinkhal chara); The Russian Revolution (Lenin kothay ?, Stalin- 1934); anti- imperialist struggles in Vietnam and Cuba (Ajeyo Vietnam, Crusbidho Cuba); attack on Communist party- workers and violent political unrest in Bengal of 1970s (Bangla chharo, Dusswapner nagari) and horrible Fascist terror (Barricade) etc.

Keywords: Anti-Fascist, Class struggle, Communist, Propaganda, Social realism

I. INTRODUCTION

Darshan Chowdhury in his book entitled 'Thetarwala Utpal Dutta' rightfully opined that- "Utpal Dutter natyabhinoyer kal, arthat 1950-60 abar 70-80'-er dashak Paschimbange natyaandolan o natyakarmer ek swarnayug giyechhe. Oi samaykale dikpal sob natyanirdeshak, natyakar , abhineta- abhinetri ebang kalakushalir abirbhav ghotechhe. Sedin Gananatyangha ebang Group Theatregulir sarbik prochestar madhya diye Bangla natyajagat ek atyuchho shikhare uthte perechhilo. Utpal Dutta ei samayer ebang ei andoloner anyatomo sreshtho natyabyaktitto."

Utpal Dutta, an expert in Shakespeare and reservoir of knowledge on several political thinkers such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Hegel etc., decided from the days of participation in dramas in Xt. Xaviers College, that he would devote his entire life for political theatre, committed towards society. He once in an interview given to Bibhas Chakrabarti stated that Marxism could be more essential for a dedicated theatre-artist than Stanislavsky and Brecht. Utpal created a theatre-group of his own entitled 'The Amateur Shakespearians' and explained dramas like 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Julius Caesar' from outlook of a Socialist in contemporary socio-political scenario of Bengal created by onslaught of the Congress government on leftist activists, strikes, indiscriminate confinement of the

Communists during 1949. He joined Shakespearana International Theatre Company of Geoffrey Kendal and in 1953-54, participated in famous plays like Othello, Merchant of Venice, Julius Caesar, Macbeth and Hamlet etc. Kendal's training contributed a lot in making him an expert in acting, producing plays, stage direction, music, light, costumes, make-up etc.

Utpal's Little Theatre Group directly mentioned importance of Marxism- Leninism, and issues related to class struggle, state power etc. through political plays. It gave a new dimension to the concept of teamwork and established the labour class as creators of history. Vast and modern stagecraft was undoubtedly its unique and marvellous feature. Utpal himself stated about LTG that- "*Se no'phut uchu platform, koylakhani pithead o khad, yuddhojahaj, Titas parer mela, Meghnabakhshe maloder abhijan, Markin Yuktarashtrer dakshinanchaler railstation, Vietnamer yuddhakhetra –sob dhorar chesta korechhe shilposammoto rekha o range.*"

LTG made a successful drive for both propaganda and agitation and through production of *Din badaler pala* form of street-plays touched its zenith. Revolutionary songs of several countries, oriental as well as occidental classical music had been utilised with perfection. It did justice to scientific rehearsal and stagecraft besides giving equal importance to scenes, music, light, make-up art etc.

Utpal Dutta was not directly involved in any political party in his whole life and even his membership in I.P.T.A was of a quite short span but he used to take pride in announcing himself as *Propagandist*. He was an extremely popular actor of commercial films of various languages but but never lost his ultimate identity as a Marxist play-writer, director and ideological expert in Marxist aesthetics. He showed commitment towards his belief and ideology by tireless propaganda –based activities in mills, villages, meetings and processions etc. He gifted style of spectacular production for the audience through his well-reputed plays such as *Kallol, Tir, Angar, Pherari fauj, Titas ekti nadir naam* etc. He from 1951 to 1993 played a pivotal role in cultural movements.

Clashes and confrontations between autocratic, superstitious state power and scientific consciousness during the Gupta era of ancient India, rebellions of peasantry and subaltern people against the British colonisers, role of Rashbehari Bose and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Indian struggle for independence, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, anti- imperialist struggles of Cuba and Vietnam, the Fascist terror, custodial torture and violence inflicted by hoodlums during turbulent days of the 1970s in Bengal, especially the Naxalite revolution were several themes of his dramas which earned name and fame. He indeed played a daring role by production of political dramas namely *Barricade, Dusswapner nagari* and *Ebar Rajar pala* (trilogy of 1970s).

Anunoy Chattopadhyay in introduction of Utpal Dutta Natakamagra (Volume VI) praised '*Dusswapner nagari*' as one of the best political plays of contemporary world and stated its historical significance with clarity –

"... ei natak natak Kolkata shahar, ei nagari shasakder ghum kere niyechhilo. Tai sara desher madhye nipironer kendro hisebe bechhe neoa hoyechhilo ei rajya

ebang rajdhani Kolkatake, Sattarer dashaker ei Kolkatay protibadi sanskritio chhilo akranto. Natake asamanyo dakshatay bibhinno charitrer mukh o mukhosh unmochan kore natyakar ... shasakgoshtir swarup udghatan korechhilen. Se samaye e chhilo ek dussahasik kaj, kenona jekhanei Gananatyba P.L.T –r natak sekhanei gunda doler hamla... tabuo sesob upeksha kore ei natak abhinito hoyechhe."

II. BRIEF NOTE ON SEVERAL POLITICAL DRAMAS OF UTPAL DUTTA

'Delhi chalo' was tale of adventures and sacrifices of the heroic Azad Hind Fauj under leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The storyline upheld not only brutal nature of the British colonisers but also treachery of the Japanese forces which actually backstabbed I.N.A during its rapid advancement in the territory of our motherland India. – "*Azad Hind Faujer khadya nei, osudh nei, mal boibar ghorakachhar kichhui nei. Athacho pashei... Japani faujer jonyo rajasik byabostha.*"

Netaji did not lose self-respect while collaborating with Japan and so the great patriot declared that our indigenous territory after being freed from the clutches of British imperialism, should be under control of I.N.A and not under dominance of another foreign country namely Japan. In the drama, Utpal had shown that Japanese Commander-in-chief General Yamamoto gave an extremely difficult and deadly assignment to the guerrillas of the I.N.A and that was annihilation of the Pale airdrome, controlled by the British power, in May 1944. But when the Indian guerrillas' life was in danger, the Japanese forces did not proceed to rescue them and thus broke promise given by Yamamoto to Muhammad Jaman Kiani, Commander of the first division of the Azad Hind Fauj. Utpal Dutta vehemently criticised Gandhian policy of non-violent compromise with the barbaric British Raj. Through the character of valiant guerrilla Pradyot Majumdar, the play-writer declared boastfully-

"*Sasastro guerrillabahini chhara mukti nei samrajyabader kabal theke, mukti nei shoshan theke !*"

'Nil rakti' was a honest historical documentation of the Blue Mutiny/ Indigo Rebellion of 1859- 1860 against the horrible torture of the British planters on poor and helpless peasantry of colonial Bengal. Here peasant leader Meghai Sardar with devoted wife Jugalmoni started violent rebellion against the brutal treatment which peasantry had to withstand during the hegemonic control of the colonial planters on the indigo industry. The playwright criticised Rammohan Ray and Dwarakanath Tagore for having unshattered faith in the so-called civilising mission of the British colonisers besides blindly supporting indigo-planters' all self-centred endeavours. In the story, Ramram mukhujje, a landlord, popular in the village where Meghai Sardar and his family resided, sold this village to ruthless indigo-planter Larmur sahib who forcefully collected peasants' signatures in blank paper for making them chained as lifelong slaves. Here obliteration of prosperity of indigenous weavers during the colonial rule in Bengal was also highlighted. Issues like molestation of rural women (in the story Hemangini and Parvati) in hands of characterless indigo-planters had been

upheld by Utpal Dutta. The playwright explained the irony that the peasantry became completely helpless because magistrate, whom they thought could be provider of justice, was Larmur himself, the tyrannical indigo-planter of Asannagar. Meghai revolted and even killed his own foster-son Manik for his espionage to support the colonisers. Finally Meghai Sardar had to face an untimely death as martyr of the indigo rebellion but before demise, he selected his valorous wife Jugalmani as new chief of his group of peasant rebels to make the spirit of protest alive.

'Ajeyo Vietnam' gives a trustworthy picture of Vietnam's struggle against the deadly onslaught of U.S.A. In the drama brutal interrogation system of the American military officers to extract truth about the fugitive guerrillas from the rural population had been explained with utmost perfection –

"Grambasider jera k'rei bar kora jabe kothay ora lukiye ache. Jerar upay... prothom-chhuri, ektu ektu k're dhukiye. Dwitiyo-katatarer phas, goley porie chap. Tritiyo –banduker kudo diye hater angul chheche deya..... Chaturtha- chokher samne flamethrowerer fume chhere chokh goliye deya. Pancham theke ekadash- monostattik chapsristi..... atmiyer samne atmiyoke nirjatan... dwadash bishyayti... electric shock."

The playwright depicted significance of Mao-Tse-Tung's strategy of people's warfare in battle of Vietnam. Rural women of Vietnam were mercilessly raped during struggle against U.S.A and even innocent children were not spared. In the backdrop of such inhuman tyranny, men as well as female guerrilla commanders of the liberation Army of Vietnam did not lose hope and continued their rebellion till victory against the lustful, greedy and brutal foreign aggressors.

'Tir' was reflection of the Naxalite uprising in North Bengal during the 1960s-1970s. Jotdar Satyaban Singh's character was realistic enough who made peasant woman rebel Aatneshwari blind and her husband also faced police atrocities for giving shelter to a leftist leader Comrade Shibben Roy, who organized peasants against the highhandedness of the blind Congress supporters. Later the leftist leaders like Shibben also joined hands with the Bangla Congress and peasant female rebels like Debari besides some children had to face death due to police firing on 26th May, 1967. Utpal Dutta not only attacked socio-economic exploitation in the rural areas but also targeted patriarchal system prevailing in hegemonic form in rural households. So, Debari, had been beaten in hands of her husband Jonaku, who felt himself inferior before his educated wife Debari, quite conscious about teachings of revolutionary world-leaders like Mao-Tse-Tung.

Shibben Roy, once apple of the eye of the protesting peasantry, shouted during the Naxalite uprising on behalf of the United Front Government of Bengal that-

"... Naxalbarir sphulingota Bharatbyapi dabanole porinoto hoyar agei nibhe jabe. Oder... oder sesh kore din. Shoot to kill."

The playwright ended this drama with scenario of victory of the rebellious peasants and slaughter of tyrannical landlord.

'Crusbidhho Cuba' was story of victory of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara as reputed leaders of the Communist liberation army against the government of Batista and onslaught of U.S.A in 1959. Earl E.T. Smith, former American Ambassador to Cuba, in September, 1960 stated that- "Until

the advent of Castro, the United States was so overwhelmingly influential in Cuba that.... the American Ambassador was the Second most important man in Cuba, sometimes even more important than the President (of Cuba)."

The playwright through voice of Castro in his drama had shown that- *"... raktakto Jishu- uniyi Cuba. Cubai to aj crusbidhho. Cubar mathay kantar mukut, sara deho koshaghate raktakto. Tai Cubar rakte aj shapath-... jittei hobe."*

In this drama, brutal physical torture inflicted on the Communist rebels and their deaths was shown but in the end Utpal had depicted that supporters of Guevara and Castro became triumphant as their guerrilla commanders murdered pillars of exploitation in Cuba namely Esremada, Ramirez, Gomez and Andreas. Both urban and rural revolution occurred in Cuba through armed commanders under supervision of Che Guevara, main strategy-maker of the uprising.

'Lauhomanav' was a political drama based on story of defamation of Stalinist legacy during the tenure of Nikita Khrushchev in Russia. Here Balasiev, former member of Politburo of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, and ousted from the Party after 22nd Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, was brought before the military tribunal in post-Stalin Russia in 1963. He faced allegation of creating reign of terror in Russia with steadfast support from Stalin, giving capital punishment to several dedicated Communist leaders, and sending some leaders for lifelong forced labour in Siberia as punishment for so-called treachery against the Stalinist dictatorship in Russia. Balasiev stated in self-defence that he sacrificed his own son and beloved friend for sake of his country and for saving the existing government in Russia against the Nazi espionage system of conspiracy in 1943. Through the character of Balasiev, the playwright actually glorified the Communist ideology of class struggle of the Stalinist party of Soviet Russia.

'Angar' (1959) was one of the milestones in world of political dramas of Utpal Dutta. Its backdrop was the incident of severe disaster in coal mines of Dhanbad area of Bihar (Baradhemu and Chinakuri [Chasnala]). The workers of those coal mines faced a deadly situation due to fire and infiltration of water in mines. Utpal along with Tapas Sen, Nirmal Guha Roy, Rabi Ghosh, Umanath Bhattacharyya and Rabin Das visited slums of poor labourers and took interviews of those fortunate workers who narrowly escaped death in the disaster of coal mines. Later the playwright produced 'Angar' to depict horrific exploitation in life of workers of coal mines through his storyline where – *"Tapas Sener alor bahadurite darshak dekhlo koylakhanir bhetor jol dhukchhe, joler tal kramasho barchhe, khadaner madhye atke pora khani sramikera krome sei joler talay toile jachhe; pranantokor, marmasparshi, dambandho kora sei drishyo natakter bishay..... Theatre projojonay natakter bishay, upashapana, composition, choreography, alo, shabdo, abahosangeet- sob milemishe 'Angar' natak Bangla ... natyabhinoyer itihase ek anannyo najir hoye roilo."*

'Pherari fauj' was a realistic description of revolutionary movements of Eastern Bengal in 1930s against the British imperialist government. It became popular enough among the masses in 1960s. In its story, Ashok was a revolutionary who

murdered a British police official being inspired by the heroic Chittagong robbery and battle of Jalalabad. Brutal physical torture in police custody on the anti-British patriots, molestation of wives of armed rebels like Ashok, support for revolutionaries provided by so-called fallen women such as Radhamoni etc. all had been described with perfection maintaining connectivity with historical facts of contemporary period.

Utpal Dutta indeed provided a graphic representation of the historic Naval Mutiny (1946) of Bombay through his drama entitled 'Kallol' obtaining outstanding success. Khaiber ship played a pivotal role in its plot with proud statement of love for motherland India besides fathomless hatred towards the highhandedness of the British colonisers. The British government adopted the path of indiscriminate bloodshed to curb the power of the Mutiny. Nationalist Congress leaders like Gandhiji and Sardar Ballavbhai Patel besides the Muslim League fully supported the colonial government and were apathetic towards the sufferings of the pillars of the Naval Mutiny. Darshan Chowdhury in his book entitled 'Thetarwala Utpal Dutta' upheld the truth that – " ... *swadhin Banglaly 'Kallol' ... Congressi apashasaner punjibhuto apadarthatar biruddhe pragatishil samaj poribartane janamot tairi korechilo.... Rajnaitik theatare Utpal Dutter ei kashtarjito safalya rajnaitik andoloner sange milemishe giyechhilo.*"

The playwright produced one of his most remarkable plays namely 'Manusher adhikar' keeping in mind the incident of city of Detroit in America (August, 1967) where confrontations between the White population and the Black people reached its zenith. Utpal himself was deeply moved by fighting spirit of the black people and created his play on the plot of the infamous Scottsboro trial of Alabama of America in 1931. This particular case upheld the racial tensions and gruesome injustices prevailing in the society of America during the Great Depression. In 1931, nine black boys had been falsely accused of molesting/raping two white ladies, leading to their conviction by an all-white jury.

The first and most significant production of the People's Little Theatre was the drama namely 'Tiner talowar.' According to Darshan Chowdhury's statement – "*Bangla sadharon rangomancho pratisthar [1872] eksho bachhar smarane natakti lekha hoy ebang abhinoy kora hoy. ... 1876 –er December mashe British edesher theatarer kantharodh korbar jonyo ek kukhyato aain chalu kore. Tar nam 'Abhinoy nyantran aain [1876]. Sei aain prabortoner phole sedin British rajshaktir birodhi kono natyaprajajona theatarer paksher sambhav chilo na. ... 'Tiner talowar' 'nataker prekshapot, eksho bachhar agekar sei samaykar poridhite bistrilo.*"

Utpal Dutta created another successful play entitled 'Surjyashikar' where he unmasked the real exploitative scenario of the Gupta era, famous as the so-called golden period of the Ancient India. Here the emperor Samudragupta was totally driven by greed for hegemonic control on the kingdom and necessity of protection of class interests. Scientist Kalhan dared to confront the traditional belief of earth-oriented universe theory and propagated the truth of sun-centric universe; as a result he faced dire consequences due to wrath of Samudragupta's administration, staunch pillar of support for the superstitious belief system.

'Barricade' was undoubtedly a marvellous production based on the Nazi Terror in Germany in 1930s and it actually triggered as well as targeted the dominance of the Congress government of Bengal. The audience could observe strategy of Hitler, the Nazi leader during the second World War in the ill-reputed election of 1972 in West Bengal, where the supporters of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi forcefully captured power. Darshan Chowdhury opined that the incident of farce of election of 1972, Indira Gandhi and Siddharthashankar Ray's rise to powerful supremacy, murder of popular leader Hemanta Basu (Forward Block) etc. made situations of Berlin of 1930s and Calcutta of 1970s similar.

'Naya Jamana' was Utpal's translation (in Bengali) of Brecht's drama entitled 'Die Tage Der Commune'. History of heroic struggle of the Paris Commune against the Prussian army of Bismarck and ultimate downfall after bloodbath in 1871 was its central theme. The Commune was a French revolutionary government which controlled Paris from 18 March 1871 upto 28 May 1871. The National French Army, loyal to the Third Republic administration, suppressed the unrest during the "bloody week" starting on 21 May 1871, by killing in war or executing 10000 to 15000 revolutionaries of Paris Commune, symbol of Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

'Dusswapner nagari' was an extraordinary depiction of miserable condition of the city of Calcutta in 1970s caused by political violence as habituated practice. Killings of ultra-leftist political workers by hoodlums during the Congress government of Bengal, torture and murder within the police custody, molestation of women sympathisers of the Naxalites, obliteration of democratic rights and plight of uprooted Communists, ousted from their own bases/ stronghold had been described by Utpal Dutta in its story. The playwright's voice could be heard through a brave character Krishnachura Jana condemning the situation of Bengal in 1970s- "*Majutdarer ghush kheyechhe jara tader upre phelte hobe edesher mati theke. Khete chaile Pulish, C-R-P ar gunda leliye dey jara tader dhansho korte hobe.*"

'Lenin kothay' was such a drama where adventurous story of Lenin's escape in camouflage from the police supported by the Menshevik Party in Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Utpal Dutta here meticulously depicted Lenin's ideology of revolution of the peasants and working class - "*...Sramik krishak biplaber ... tatparya ei- aj theke Sovieter holo sarkar je sarkare punjipotider bindumatro sthan nei. Sovietgulir madhyame nutan rashtrajontro gore tola hobe. Ebar amra Russiay sarboharar samajtantrik rashtra gathaner kaj arambho korbo. Biswasamajtantrik biplab dirghajibi hok*".

'Ebar Rajar pala' (1977) was a daring production during the last days of the Emergency period in India under the rule of Congress headed by Indira Gandhi. It was a political satire. Dictatorial administration of Indira and dominance of her son Sanjay Gandhi created its backdrop and the play-writer's ultimate target was curse of capitalism.

'Titumir' was description of the rural rebellion in Bengal under supervision of Mir Nishar Ali (Titumir) in 1830s. Titumir was popular among the masses of both Hindu and Muhammedan communities. Titumir conducted the rebellion against the tyrannical landlords like Krishnadev Roy and the British colonisers. His fort of bamboos in Narkelberia, centre

of the Barasat rebellion, was bombarded by the British artillery, Titu himself died a martyr's death during battle in 1831 and his main commander Golam Masum had been hanged to death mercilessly before family members.

'Stalin-1934' was a political drama in which Utpal Dutta tried his level best to defend Stalin's Red Terror regime in Russia in its post-Bolshevik Revolution phase as only and ultimate weapon to save the country from sabotage and conspiratorial foreign espionage system. Hitler and Churchill both condemned Stalin as dictator and pillar of forced slavery system in Russia. But in reality Stalin rejuvenated the whole country and sacrificed well-being of his near and dear ones to support Lenin's all endeavours for establishment of dictatorship of the proletariat. Stalin's remarks in this play can be quoted here- '*Soviet Union Pary Commune noy. Hitler, Mussolini ebong Churchill janun je tader lakhho lakhho taka ekebare jole gecche. ... Swet santraser jababe lal santras, ar kono path nei.*'

'Bangla chharo' was not an original play of Utpal Dutta but shaped in shadow of the drama entitled 'The accidental death of an Anarchist' written by Italian playwright Dario Fo. Utpal structured his play actually in backdrop of violent years (1970-1972) of West Bengal where the Marxist Communist and the Naxalite party workers had been targeted as enemies of the Congress government. The character of a mentally disbalanced person had been created by Utpal to unmask the contemporary troubled situation and his own statement through the 'Unmad' character can be quoted- '*Ami boli Bangla chharte hobe atyacharke, beaini bandihatyake, swairacharke.*'

'Darao Pathikbar' was documentation of life and works of Michael Madhusudan Dutta, his patriotic flavour reflected in literature, deep soul-bonding with Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and protest against the indigo planters as well as the British imperialist government, attack on conventional Hindu society and indigenous landlords etc.

'Srinkhal chhara' was a drama written by Utpal Dutta in shadow of Stefan Heym's novel 'The Lenz Papers'. Utpal Dutta's play was based on Baden Revolution of Germany in 1849 and was historical documentation of life as well as political philosophy of Karl Marx, friend of Friedrich Engels. Dramatic representation of the 'Communist Manifesto' of Marx and Engels, propagators of the Proletarian Revolution, class struggle and egalitarian social structure could be found in the production.

'Kripan' displayed mutiny against the British imperialist government in February, 1915 in Northern India launched by Rashbehari Bose and Sachindranath Sanyal, leaders of contemporary Gadar Party of Punjab. Some weaknesses in the organization of the revolutionaries and sabotage done by espionage network of the colonisers destroyed the rebellion but thoroughly inspired the army besides peasantry in colonial India. Rashbehari Bose escaped arrest but other famous rebels were either hanged to death, murdered by firing or had to withstand the punishment of life-long imprisonment and transportation.

III. SOCIO-POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF UTPAL DUTTA REFLECTED IN HIS DRAMAS

Kuntal Mukhopadhyay in his article entitled '*Utpal Dutta natak rajniti o Fascibad birodhi darshan*' claimed that - '*Natak niye rajnitir kotha bolar khetre, sarbabharatiyo prekshapotei Utpal Dutta abadani sob chaite beshi. Anekei rajnaitik natak ebong Utpal Duttake samarthak shabdo hisabe byabohar korte kuntha bodh koren na.*' Actually in 1940s, political dramas were outcome of anti-Fascist cultural movement as well as I.P.T.A movement and Utpal, associated with Gananatya Movement, had been an exemplary character because he was different from play-writers like Jyotirindranath Tagore and Dwijendralal Ray. Other authors / stalwarts in world of plays used to uphold anti-imperialist themes in backdrop of socio-historical environment. But it was not at all true for Utpal Dutta that he produced some political plays with other several types of dramas. His each and every drama had been based on Dialectical Materialism and anti-imperialistic / anti-colonial as well as anti-Fascist political outlook. He always gave priority to street-plays as weapons of political revolution. From 1952-1965, his street-plays namely *Passport, Naya Tughlaq, Sourin Masterer sansar, Special train, Guerrilla, Samajtantrik chal* etc. depicted Utpal's fathomless support towards the Communist Party, deep-rooted apathy towards the Congress government besides sharp critique about sky-rocketing price-hike, and police atrocities during the Food Movement of Bengal.

During 1970s, Bengal experienced Presidents' rule after annihilation of the second United Government, and then leftist political activists were attacked, murdered, had to withstand terror of police atrocities. In this horrific suffocating atmosphere, Utpal, an ardent Marxist, utilised jattras as cultural weapons. During Emergency of 1975, Utpal faced a painful psychological experience and its outcome had been his dramas entitled *Ebar rajar pala* and *Dinbadaler dwitiya pala*. Mr. Dutta's close associate Satya Bandopadhyay opined that Utpal's three plays namely *Barricade, Dusswapner nagari, Ebar rajar pala* described the turbulent period from 1970 upto 1977 with utmost artistic perfection. Backdrop of Nazi terror had been skilfully utilised for making perfect documentation of police excesses and violence inflicted by hoodlums during the rule of Siddharthashankar Ray in Bengal of 1970s. Due to strong depiction of Utpal's political philosophy coloured by Marxism, and anti-Congress approach, his drama namely *Dusswapner nagari* was blacklisted as seditious by the police.

Utpal Dutta showed his commitment towards Communist revolutionaries of international fame through plays like *Crusiddho Cuba* and on the other hand successfully expressed his responsibility as an artist towards Indian struggle for independence by dramas entitled *Pherari fauj, Rifel, Titumir, Tota, Delhi Chalo, Sannyasir tarabari, Jalianwalabag* etc. He once supported the Naxalites by producing drama entitled *Tir* but later vehemently criticised Naxal leaders' mouthpiece *Deshabrati* for its ultra-leftist deviation.

Utpal until his demise, acknowledged without any inhibition and hesitation that no successful drama can be possible without commitment and no political revolution can be completed without cultural revolution. According to

Darshan Chowdhury, that play-writer faced merciless attacks on his theatre group, personal humiliation and even imprisonment but maintained his unshakable belief in Marxist ideology and this steadfast determination was praiseworthy enough as an artist in world of dramas.

IV. CONCLUSION

In history of modern Indian theatre, Utpal Dutta played a pivotal role as an actor, director and play-writer. He became an expert in experimenting with classic dramas during his painstaking travel in whole India and performing before audiences of several tastes. After formation of Little Theatre Group in 1947, he used to produce English plays of Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw, Clifford Odets but due to inconvenience caused by limited audience, he shifted towards production of Bengali dramas. He was indeed a pioneer in sphere of political street-plays and his active participation in I.P.T.A created an inspiring phase of his life. In 1959, Little Theatre Group took over Minerva Theatre and Utpal Dutta's created as well as produced famous dramas entitled *Angar*, *Pherari fauj*, *Kallol* etc. were undoubtedly milestones in sphere of expressing political ideology and successful experimentation with rhetorical frills in dramas. In 1971. he formed People's Little Theatre and production of his drama namely *Tiner talowar* was a landmark event. He himself transformed into an institution in world of Progressive cultural and political movements of Bengal.

On political plays written by Amal Ray, in backdrop of the Naxalite Movement of 1970s influence of dramas of Utpal Dutta, a committed Communist activist can be observed. *Orao ekdin chilo* (2003), *Shababahakera* (1979), *Dalal* (1972), *Nijabasabhume* (1976), *Jekhanei atyachar* etc. are some significant examples of Amal Ray's creations about custodial tortures, indiscriminate killings during the days of political violence of 1970s; bloody class struggles, molestation of women political activists during police atrocities, uprooting of many political activists during the days of Emergency regime (1976); rivalries among Communist parties, hegemony of hooligans during massacres in the period of Naxalism. Utpal was such an artist who declared – '*Ami Partisan, niropekhho noi. Ami rajnaitik sangrame bishwasi. Rajnaitik sangrame jedin amar iti ghatbe, shilpi hisabeo sedin ghatbe amar*

mrityu.' So he was no doubt forerunner of political play-writers like Amal Ray.

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