

EVAM INDRAJIT

by Badal Sircar

(PART-4)

CHARACTER SKETCH OF MANASI:

Though, Indrajit is the protagonist of the play *Evam Indrajit*, it is the character of Manasi who steals the limelight with her passive presence. She influences the direction of the play and defines other important characters in it by her subtle presence. She appears to be an epitome of the intelligence. She is treated in a different way than other female characters in the play.

Manasi's character is mysterious and charming. She appears to submit to the social norms, yet is not a victim. Behind her mild exterior lies a highly individualistic personality.

Manasi is introduced in the play in the very first act where she sees the plight of the Writer, in trying to write a play and asks him, "Finished (writing)?" She seems to understand his situation and takes interest in his writing. Her presence is encouraging enough for the Writer to focus on his work. When the Writer clarifies that he does not know many people around him about whom he can write, Manasi directs his attention towards the audience comprising of real people with real problems about whom the Writer should write. Manasi tries to draw his attention towards the actual scenario from where he can gain inspiration to write a play. It is on Manasi's suggestion that the Writer turns his face towards the audience and tries to look out for the plot of his play from his observations of the lives of people present in the audience. Through her concern towards the Writer's struggle, to find a suitable plot for his play and with her enquiries about his work progress from time to time, Manasi makes her presence felt in the first part of the play.

Manasi is Indrajit's cousin and they are very close to each other. Indrajit himself tells the Writer that he liked talking to Manasi and often spent time with her. Indrajit felt very comfortable discussing everything with Manasi, as she did not judge for anything he said.

She is matured enough to understand that she cannot fight with the society to establish her own set of rules and doesn't even know who she has to fight with to break those rules. She is a perfect foil to Indrajit's character in the play. Unlike Indrajit, she accepts things as they are. She knows that there's no point in trying to worry about the rules imposed by society on individuals because in that process people would head towards complicating their lives more. She is an intelligent woman and knows how to calm Indrajit down with her opinions when he became angry about rules binding individuals in society. Her feeling of being scared was perhaps a result of the reign of the patriarchal society that demanded a certain amount of obedience from women.

Manasi's sense of anger is validated through Indrajit's voicing of his anger in the play for, she cannot be angry herself being portrayed as the stereotype of the submissive woman in the play. It is because of Indrajit's "Anger against rules" and his questions on rules being different for men and women that Manasi feels a sense of calm within, because Indrajit asks those questions about discrimination of rules and vents out his anger on her behalf. She also tells him that, "I feel stronger because of you" She accepts the social situation around her as it is, at times does feel disturbed but not angry because she wants to "take life more easily" and knows that there's no use in worrying endlessly about situations where she cannot do anything to bring about a change.

Manasi is found to be conscious of her family relationship with Indrajit and says "No" to him when he said he would marry her the day he gets a job. For Manasi it was a social taboo and something she could not do. She appeared to be conforming to the rules enforced by society on individuals. She did not want to bring disgrace to their family so she stood firm on her decision of not marrying Indrajit. Manasi had made her stand very clear to Indrajit from the very beginning of the play and continued to stand by it till the very end. This shows her autonomy over her thoughts and dedication towards her own decisions where Indrajit could not do anything to change mind. While the Writer and Indrajit remains confused for a long time about various things, Manasi is never confused; she is clear in the head about how she sees life and what she wants from life.

The third act, in which Manasi meets Indrajit even after his marriage and converse with him comfortably, shows how she is not scared of rules, quite contrary to how she projects herself in the play. Here she does not seem to be afraid of the fact that Indrajit has a wife now who might know about their secret meetings and cast doubt on the nature of their relationship. She also did not seem to be afraid of the fact that her relationship with Indrajit after his marriage was not socially acceptable and could be labelled as an objectionable act by society. But these questions did not bother her or stop her from meeting Indrajit.

This proves that Manasi was not afraid of social taboos but rather afraid of commitment and did not want to be bound by rituals to save a relationship.

The last part of the play reveals Manasi to be a practical person who understands and can distinguish between illusion and reality and thus suggests that Indrajit should give up living in the illusory world and accept the real world for what it is. She is aware of the troubles that life has to offer but still swears by moving ahead by walking the road, which is the most prominent message that the play gives out. She knows there is no choice and is prepared to live with whatever comes by her way unlike Indrajit, who is restless and loses patience quite easily. Quite contrary to Indrajit's nature, Manasi has a calm demeanour and places her points with utmost poise.

In the play, Manasi is portrayed as an educated, urban woman who is at par with Indrajit in terms of intellect. Manasi could match up to Indrajit's mental standards and that's why he could feel free to talk to her about everything. She breaks the notion that men can only be intelligent. Manasi becomes catalytic in the development of the plot and her presence is valued because it enhances the creativity of the writer and analytical skills of Indrajit. The Writer as a spokesperson of the playwright, Badal Sircar, crafted the character of Manasi to fulfil his intellectual cravings and be guided through in his journey as a playwright by an inspirational figure.

Manasi can be seen as an example of a modern woman who is way ahead of women of her times. At that time and age when women were still grappling with domestic issues, Manasi has a career of her own as a teacher. She has an independent mind and led a life governed by her own choices- choice to love Indrajit and not marry him, choice to have a career of her own, choice to meet him after his marriage, choice to remain unmarried. Her refusal to marry Indrajit may not be only because of the moral codes that bind her but because she did not want Indrajit, the person she loved deeply, to be the subject of scrutiny and wrath among their family members. She cares more for his reputation and her own independence. She is a strong woman who loves Indrajit unconditionally and her love did not mean possession. Though she confesses to have succumbed to social norms, it remains a doubt whether it was the fear of social taboo that led her to not marry Indrajit or was it because of her independent nature that she did not marry Indrajit. Though she appeared to be submissive she was clearly not so. She never was a victim figure. Lastly, even if she did submit to social norms, it was a submission out of her own choice which ultimately portrays her to be an independent woman.