

ASSERTION OF FAMILY AND CULTURAL VALUES

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Assertion means (fact). Each and every person has his own life and we cannot interfere in each other's life. They have their own tradition as well as culture also. He forces us to examine our own individual and collective consciousness. All the plays of Mahesh Dattani based on the Social issue the barren state of women, exploitation by the peoples, society and surroundings. He wants to create an awareness in the society through his different plays. All his plays deals with controversial themes. He wants to create an awareness in the audience. In one of his play "Dance like a man". This play informs us that there are some "unwritten rules" and we have to follow those rules and regulations. We blindly follow the unwritten laws of family conduct and that is the easier path to take.

There will be the Assertion of family and culture values in "Bravely Fought the Queen", "Where there's a will" and Dance like a Man". A powerful domestic tragedy, this play highlights the circumstance of a woman fighting against all the odds that the forces of patriarchy have piled up against her.

This woman is of course the "Queen" referred to in the title refers to the famous Rani of Jhansi. It is an intertextual derivation sourced from a translation of a Hindi poem about the indomitable Rani of Jhansi. Only, Dolly Trivedi is a woman who has to fight a battle against a violent and unfaithful husband, and against a tyrannical mother-in-law who rules over her sons and daughter-in-law with the weapon of her wealth. Even from her paralytic bed. The stage set is conceived in such a way that the mother-in-law bedroom is placed at a level higher than the rest of the stage. Some of the action of the play is enacted on this upper level, occasionally in flashback.

In this play "Bravely fought the Queen" questions the male and female roles in the society. In this the writer depicts the plight of helpless women victims of male tyranny with the delineation of Baa, he handles the mother-son relationship. Baa is the mother of Jiten and Niten. She is invalid who has been ditched by her husband. She sets up her sons against their wives. Jiten beats his wife Dolly when she is in advanced stage of pregnancy. This results in her child being born deformed. Niten is a homosexual and so his wife Alka has her own tale of woe to narrate. Dattani's treatment of this mother-son relationship takes on psychological overtones. In one of his plays "Where There is a will" which is a young man's play, Dattani shows fairly optimistically that there is a way by which men and women can find happiness on their own terms.

In this play we meet characters drawn from two generations. The father and the mother is Hasmukh and Sonal Mehta, and Ajit their son and his wife Preeti. Hasmukh is not happy about the behaviour of his son and the attitude of his wife Sonal. What he expects is implicit obedience to him as he practised in his father's case when things drift away from his control he thinks of a check-mate. He creates a twist and appoints his mistress Kiran Jhaveri its trustee. In this play there is the assertion of family and cultural values. This play has several interesting aspects Mahesh Dattani described it as the exorcism of the patriarchal code. "In Where There is a Will" has control over his family through his money and forgoes an opportunity to improve his interpersonal relationships. This move renders all the members of the family to the position of pensioners. Even after his death, Hasmukh hunts his house as a ghost. Let it be daughter, wife, mistress, daughter-in-law all are dependent on man for financial and physical security.

Man has always taken up a woman as a liability and a source of requirement. Women have been looked down upon by men as an object to meet their needs. They should be there to cook their food, smile cordially at his friends, run around attending to their needs and sexually satisfy them whenever they have the urge. If the wife is unable to satisfy the husband then there is always a mistress to do that. Mistress also are subject to compulsion to submit before him so that he may have the reins. The evils of patriarchy take centre stage in this play. Dattani covertly asserts that "Where there is will there is a Way".

Another play "Bravely fought the Queen" deals with the fundamentally societal functions as patriarchy. It is a character drama or more specifically a play in which the characters are conjoined with ideological shadows. Dattani's play challenges society's stereotypical constitutions of male and female identity. The locus of this awareness is sited in the phrase about the Rani of Jhansi : "Bravely fought the manly Queen". The implication contained herein is that a woman has to be "manly" that is, conform to the construction of manliness as propagated by patriarchy in order to be recognized as brave.

Jiten in "Bravely fought the Queen" resembles his father in appearance and in nature. In this the Baa's character which is most interesting and revealing, for in a series of flashbacks is revealed her tragic past of having been married to a dominating and violent man who had not only prevented her from singing in public, but also used to beat her up regularly and ill-treat her sons Alka is fond of dancing in the rain. In the main action of the drama, Alka gets more and more intoxicated, even as Dolly stands by her as a support, both literally and figuratively and as Jiten insinuates that Alka must be having a secret love affair with someone.

"Bravely fought the Queen" is also essentially a character drama, or more specifically a play in which the characters are conjoined with ideological shadows which are themselves cast by such fundamentally societal functions as patriarchy and the will to dominate.

Infact in one way the thesis of this play is somewhat similar to that of "Where There is a Will".

Only, Dolly is a Rani of Jhansi in her own right a fighter capable of confronting and humbling the patriarchal man who runs her life for her and denies her the slightest liberties and love that is her due as a woman, wife and mother.

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by patriarchy in order to be recognized as brave. But in the inset story of Naina Devi we are presented with another, divergent paradigm of heroism. This is that of a woman motivated enough to do what she wanted to do even in the face of patriarchal opposition that would brand her a "tawaif" or whore, a woman who ultimately was acknowledged to be a queen by dint of her resistant will.

A little more free in her relationship with her husband is Lalitha who is "liberated" enough to enjoy the "not-so-occasional" drink, and "to do exactly the opposite of what (her) husband want(s)" but is not capable for all that to go home without her husband as an escort. There are so many symbols in this play.

Equally apt and telling are the other smaller symbols in the play. Dolly's facemask, which she is careful not to crack by laughing but which nevertheless cracks a little later, is one such symbol. The thumris of Naina Devi played over and over again on the stereosystem simultaneously evoke and comment on the yearning for love and fulfillment experienced by all the major characters in the play. He is one playwright (Mahesh Dattani) who does not hesitate in mirroring the issue of sexuality, both heterosexuality as well as homosexuality. "Mahesh Dattani in one of his interviews says: "you can talk about feminism, because in a way that is accepted. But you can't talk about gay issues because that's not Indian. (that) doesn't happen here".

Mahesh Dattani boldly portrays homosexuality in his plays and many of his plays like "On a Muggy Night in Mumbai", "Do the Needful", and "Bravely Fought the Queen" deal with the issue of gays. It is a lively provocative play, "Bravely Fought the Queen" charts through the emotional, financial and sexual intricacies of a modern-day Indian family. This play portrays the clash between traditional and contemporary cultures that has created a new social landscape.

"Postcolonial India and multi-cultural Britain both have an urgent need for a cultural expression of the contemporary they require public spaces in which the mingling of eastern and western influences can take place. In the same way Baa and Praful in "Bravely Fought the Queen" propel events as much as the characters on stage. This kind of genius could be achieved only by a writer like Mahesh Dattani as Michael Walling points out: "To Mahesh, a play is never really finished. Play only really happens in the theatre, as ephemeral events.

It was this kind of skill that made the production of "Bravely Fought the Queen" a success not only in India but in England too. The whole play is beautifully presented in multi-layered levels which again is Dattani's adroitness. The way he Juxtaposes the past and the present, the imaginary level and the realistic level without breaking the flow of interest is simply marvelous. Jiten represents the conventional male who treats women as sex objects and also gets whored to his office. Baa while describing Jiten says: "Jiten is just like his father. Just like him". Baa's story is somewhat similar to that of her daughters-in-law, Dolly and Alka. So here we have two generations sharing the same experiences at the hand of their chauvinistic husbands and yet to come third generation, Daksha who also experiences the maltreatment of her father even before her birth and is born as a disabled child. Dolly exposes Jiten's cruelty when she says: "And you hit me ! Jitu, you beat me up ! I was carrying Daksha and you beat me up. Baa see the picture of her husband in her elder son, Jiten and thus automatically develops an inclination towards her younger son, Nitin who resembles her a lot. Nitin is a more subdued and sympathetic character. The mother-son intimacy comes out in the following lines :-

Women in Mahesh Dattani's plays are not victims. They are marginalized but they fight back. "Bravely Fought the Queen" and "That Long Silence" novel depict the plight of educated Indian women of our time. In the same way Dolly and Alka in "Bravely Fought the Queen" arm themselves at the end of play to fight back. Alka very boldly questions the authority of her husband and asks for an explanation for his disloyalty. She also exposes the betrayal of her brother for not revealing the existence of homosexual relation between her husband and her brother. All the women characters in "Bravely Fought the Queen" are examples of exploitation prevalent in educated urban families and also the examples that women will fight back if they are not heard or are suppressed for a very long time. In the play "Where There's a Will" there is the assertion of family and cultural values. This play has several interesting aspects Mahesh Dattani described it as the exorcism of the patriarchal code. "In Where There's a Will" has control over his family through his money and forgoes an opportunity to improve his interpersonal relationships.

His plays are so realistic that sometimes they generate a lot of discussion and controversy. He often uses split-scenes, hidden rooms and many other innovations. In "Dance Like a Man", Dattani makes use of the "flash-back" technique and the split-scene device. To prove the socio-cultural constructions of hybridity, consciousness and identity, we have to see the play of Dattani "Dance Like a Man" is a powerful human drama.