

Women Exploitation as Depicted by Mahesh Dattani in the play *Bravely Fought Queen*

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ABSTRACT

The attempt has been made to discuss the theme of women exploitation as depicted by Mahesh Dattani in his play, *Bravely Fought Queen*. Dattani explores the marginalization of women and also their attempt to articulate their voices against the patriarchal society that subjugates the women and makes them worth for nothing. The theme of exploitation is discussed in the light of three female characters Alka, Dolly and Daksha.

1. Introduction

Mahesh Dattani is considered as one of the best Indo English playwrights in the world of English literature. He has enriched English plays with his literary outputs. He touches the burning current issues of the Indian society in most of his plays. His present drama *Bravely Fought Queen* deals with social issues like male dominance, dowry system, prostitution, and exploitation. The present paper throws light on women exploitation through the characters like Alka, Dolly, and Daksha.

2. Women Exploitation in *Bravely Fought Queen*

In the present play, Dattani focuses on the three Indian couple. He mainly concerns with the position of women in Indian family especially educated women. The play deals with three couples, each existing in a hierarchical relation with others. The play centres on the Trivedi family with its two brothers Jiten and Nitin and their wives Dolly and Alka. Dolly and Alka are sisters. All the relations are maintained firmly under some rules and regulations. Praful is the only brother for the two sisters. The third family that is connected with the characters of the Trivedi house is that of Lalitha and Sridhar - a couple whose identity is still in formation. In this hierarchal relationship, Sridhar is the employee of the Trivedi brother's, and Lalitha in that sense, is socially obedient to the two sisters. Jiten, the elder son always treats his wife Dolly as slave and she is considered to be a pawn in his hand. Dolly has been married for fifteen years to Jiten who has always ill-treated and beaten her up. She reminds him up that how on her mother Baa's instigation, he had beaten her up and kicked her when she was pregnant. As a result, she gave birth to a premature and spastic Daksha who is now studying in a spastic school and wants to be a dancer. Her only interest is to listening to soulful thumris by Naina Devi to forget her sorrows and the emptiness of her life.. Both husband and wife feel reluctant to talk about Daksha till the end of play.

ALKA: She must like you very much. She hardly ever mentions her daughter to anyone.

DOLLY: Stop it!

ALKA: She doesn't tell anyone

DOLLY: Stop it, I said! (34).

Dolly by listening her daughter's name always remembers how she was tortured during pregnancy when a letter arrived insinuating that Dolly, Alka and Praful's father was not legally married to their mother and that he lived elsewhere with his family and four children. This is also one of the reasons for their husband's torture on them. Her only pastime seems to be dressing up and going out for an evening's social engagement which is cancelled one day and due to which when she asks her husband to take her out to evade the suffocating atmosphere at home, but Jiten ignores her. This shows his hatred for her as he considers only a puppet that must follow and not to demand and command.

Baa, the mother-in-law keeps filling in the blanks from the upper level that Dolly's brother has lied about their parents. Dolly tells her husband that she didn't know what Praful told him about their father and she thought that her husband knows everything before marriage. But the damage was done. At that time Dolly and Alka's father was living with his wife and four children, implying that the two sisters and Praful were born out of wedlock and that their mother was that man's mistress. Baa becomes very angry when she comes to know the truth and says:

Baa: Your mother is a keep...a mistress! My sons have married the daughters of a whore!

Dolly: Your mother never understood that. She blamed it on us!

Baa: Throw them out of the house (96).

Dolly takes up for her mother:

My mother didn't know about his wife till later. She was deceived too! (96).

Jiten is a womanizer and plays with all girls who work as a model in his company. Dolly never asks him about it and remains silent. Dolly reminds Jiten that she won an argument with him only once and that too when she became pregnant, otherwise it is he who always has his own way. Jiten wants Lalitha to get out of the house before they can argue any

further. But Dolly is adamant. She wants to discuss everything with him in Lalitha's presence because she has been a witness to the family's dirty linens washed in the public. So little more won't do any harm.

On the other side Alka and Nitin consider each other as enemy more than husband and wife. Alka is a spirited young woman in her early thirties and also suffers from the same predicament. But she is gregarious and drowns her sorrow in drink. Jiten never makes an effort to spend time with Alka rather the latter accept some attention from him. That's why when Jiten and Nitin planned to take them out, both are seem to be very euphoric and take all sort of efforts in order to make them gorgeous. Alka, due to curiosity, makes a call to her husband to ask when they are coming and where they are going in that evening, emphasising that he was the one who said that they had to go and that too on business matter.

Jiten and Nitin's father was a cruel and a dark man who harassed their mother. This kind of cruelty perpetrated on Baa by her husband is brought to light every now and then in the play *Bravely Fought the Queen* when she feels jittery even after so many years of his death:

I have married such a villager! Aah! You slapped me? Never, never slap me. Nobody has hit me. The men in our family are decent (83).

Baa sees 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. He is more subdued and sympathetic character. Even Baa the mother of

Jiten and Nitin is tortured by her husband in front of their own sons.

The play *Bravely Fought the Queen* clearly depicts the plight of modern educated women. In this play all the women characters are the examples of exploitation that is still prevalent in urban families of our country. It also shows the reality that women cannot be kept suppressing for a long time. If they are not heard for a long time, they will fight back. They suffer not because they are sinners but because of the men whom they believed and submitted themselves and their life in their hands. At last, when Dolly raises her voice and blames him for everything, at that time he realises his mistake and expresses regret to Dolly, blaming Baa for everything that happened.

One can't say that women are born as sinners and they are suffering just because of men whom they trust a lot. They not only surrender themselves but also their life which is fully ruled by one man army.

3. Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that Indian women are still under domination and oppression that the long sustained patriarchy is still going on and will be going on and on for men are not going to get themselves reformed. The subjugation, the torture of the way our women suffer may be different but the age-old system of dominance over women by men will never end and they are, and will always be victims in our chauvinistic society. Mahesh Dattani pens the pains and sufferings of Indian women in his plays through the various female characters.

Works Cited

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