

BRAVELY FOUGHT THE QUEEN

The Plot of Bravely Fought the Queen.

Ans)

"I am certain that my plays are a true reflection of my time, place and socio-economic background. I am hugely excited and curious to know what the future holds, and my art in the new millennium in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially and culturally."

This is the ^{voice} ~~voice~~ of playwright and director of many productions of English plays in contemporary India - Mahesh Dattani, writing in the Preface to his Collected Plays. Dattani is the voice of urban India in the twenty-first century and he presents the various problems of modern Indian society focussing on the middle class milieu. His plays continually address the problematics of urban living - ranging from oppression of women and religious minority to alternate sexuality. Like Ibsen in European drama and Moham Rakesh in Indian drama, Dattani takes the family unit as the locale of his plays. His play "Bravely Fought the Queen" charts through the emotional, financial and sexual intricacies of a modern day Indian family. A cry for the acceptance of shifting Indian values, this play portrays the clash between traditional and contemporary cultures that has created a new social landscape.

The narrative is ~~centered~~ ^{centered} around an affluent, urban Indian family, in which two brothers Titen and Nitin, co-owners of an advertising agency, have married two sisters. The play opens on the view of the plushly fashionable but ill-maintained living room of Titen and Dolly Tribedi. The two focal points of this set on the main stage level are a well-stocked bar and a music system on which Thunri is played.

Dattani uses several actions in several time time frames but on the same stage and it gives the audience a complex theatrical experience. Instead of having a simple exposition - complication - resolution, the plot has elements and structures

of a crime thriller, the suspense of which is resolved
resolved at the end in the light of some unexpected revelation.

The first act titled "The Women" starts with
the arrival of an unexpected visitor Lalitha - who
says that she had been asked by Sita Trivedi and
her husband Sidhar, to meet Bolly that evening. The
lack of communication between the husband and wife
gets highlighted in the course of the play as Bolly starts
dressing up to out with her family in the evening that
was already cancelled by her husband previously. We
get to know about almost all the characters in the play.
Alka, Bolly's sister and sister-in-law who is married
to Niten enters midway of the conversation between
Bolly and Lalitha about Daksha, Bolly and Sita's
daughter. Dattani, through his deft handling of dialogues
and stage-directions makes the reader aware, that
Bolly and Alka live in identical houses situated
side by side who look after their paralytic mother-in-
law Baa, who is ~~not~~ situated in the first floor. Alka is
shown to be an alcoholic, ~~by Bolly~~ secretly helping
herself to liberal quantities of Rum. The way the two
sisters talk about Kanhaiya, the nineteen year old
makeshift cook, hints at the frustration through which
they are leading their lives. Naina Devi's music, the
topic of Kanhaiya comes as a ^{symbol of} liberation for the two
sisters. Dattani also repeatedly brings out the image of
the kousai of which Lalitha is fond of. The bizarre looking
matured yet stunted plant seems to in a way
hint at their own lifestyle and the circumstances
they are facing. We also get to know about Praful,
the brother of Bolly and Alka who according to the latter
is a domestic tyrant. Significantly enough the old
peggar woman in the courtyard is also introduced
in the first act.

The plot and action of Act I plays of the

the three Tridevi women against each other in the presence of the outsider Lakhta, who seems to be normal than them. Dolly emerges as an isolated woman, locked in a loveless marriage and a mother-in-law who constantly intrudes into her personal space with her insisted demands for attention; her compulsive ringing out the loud electric bell; the image of the mask on Dolly's face and her fear of cracking it ~~path~~ potently drive home the breach between the appearance and reality in the lives of the Tridevis, since the composition of the characters are loaded with 'ironies'.

According to Smt. Asha Kuthari Chaudhary in the essay of Plot:

"It is significant that Dattani names his first act as 'The Women'. Such a designation is an early indication of playwright's attempts to prevent female experiences from being subsumed under a monolithic hierarchical order that valorises only male subjectivity."

Act, II titled 'The men', is set in Titen and Niten Tridevi's office, the characters featured here are quite literally the counterparts of the women in Act I, being Dolly's husband Titen, Akka's husband Niten and Vidhar being Lakhta's husband. Strikingly Mahesh Dattani presents the action of this Act as if it were a replay of ~~not~~ the same segment of time over which events of Act I had unfolded, only with a different cast and a different location. The men are seen in their milieu - the office, and their part of the telephonic conversation are presented with only Baa remaining constant on the stage with the bar, from which Titen helps himself to drinks and gets drunk. Act II opens with Niten going through the company's accounts, using the fact that they are "Always in the red. No matter how much money we earn".

Titen seems to be indifferent so this had etched out a plan to draw an amount of Rs 12 lacs from Praful, their brother-in-law. It is gradually revealed that their current project of the Re-Va-De account has failed

rough weather ^{since} ~~despite~~ the audio-visual advertisement conceived for it is rejected "as tasteless and degrading" through Titin's reactions and comments regarding the audiovisual, Duttani makes it clear that Titin is debauched character who threatens to fire Siddhar if he does not sell the ad, and, ~~proceeds~~ orders him to pick up a prostitute for him. After that the discussion between the two brothers turns into ^{ownership of} their ancestral property. Titin urges ~~that~~ Siddhar to throw ~~him~~ ^{him} out of the house so that they can get the trusteeship without obstruction. Finally Siddhar enters and has the clinching lines:
"She's young and fresh! (Under his breath) And she is great. I had her on the back seat. You can have my leftovers."

As in Act I, Act II of Bravely Fought the Queen shows the cracks, fissures and tensions underneath the facade of the lives of the upper middle class men. Mitin's sensual description of his brother's near-violent encounter with an auto-rickshaw driver with a "strong black arm" and his uneasy complaint, "Why did you say we both pick them up?" all point towards his unusual sexual orientation. Titin's violence has its root to his oppressive father. Music joins Baa and Naina Devi as they are both women who pursued music the former being unsuccessful due to her demanding husband.

Act III of the play entitled "Free For All" and is set in Betty's room once again. The talk centres around Kanhaiya and drifts towards Naina Devi who "dared to sing love songs sung by whores". The story reminds latter of the poem about the Rani ~~of~~ of Thanvi -
"... so bravely fought the martyr queen"

where the big question the masculine theme of a qualification that has been thrust upon the valiant actor of 1857 Sepoy Mutiny.

The plot in "Bravely Fought the Queen" is interspersed with spaces above mentioned, that serve as vantage points for evaluation and subsequent criticism!

Psychic dynamism integral to contemporary urban life and leading to a projection onto a stage of internal conflict, and the unravelling of incidents occur in the third act where the characters are confronted with the real situation of their life. Mitin refuses to obey Titen's direction of driving Aka from the house since he is more sympathetic and gentle. Baa reveals to Mitin that Praful has been nominated to enjoy the trusteeship of the property. Titen confronts Dolly and in the process Dolly reveals that Titen beat up his wife in an advanced stage of pregnancy instigated by Baa. When they learnt that Dolly's father did not stay with her - resulting in a premature delivery of a spastic child Saksha - the shock of truth behind her dance-like movements becomes too terrible to digest. Dolly's accusation makes Titen move out and run over the beggar woman.

Mitin's confession almost concludes the play when he addresses to his sleeping wife revealing his alternate sexual orientation, who was once seduced by Praful and was now going to ~~be~~ be in the "powerful arms" of the auto driver.

The plot structure works principally by locating this sense of injustice in the lives of female subjects who populate the play, and amplifying it through several phases of time warp. The latter is achieved through a cinematic arrangement of stress points in a format in which meaning derived from unexpected formation of contrasts and juxtaposition.

The effect is attained by a series of juxtaposed realities. Naina Devi's valiant non-conformity stands in stark opposition to the abuses suffered by Baa.

The plot strategy behind plot-structure is to hold the audience's interest attention by small, disconnected incidents while the play long interests are being manifested at a different level of consciousness. Sathar asks his audience to direct their attention more towards inner development which plays out a "progressive disclosure of antagonisms, desires or appetite which are hidden at the beginning". It is a well-knit one with strong undercurrent of patriarchal notices as domination and oppression of marginalised women though the play progresses not through a predetermined subject and plot, but through an increasingly intense and revealing of emotional planes, exteriorisation of psychic

of 'crossing the desert patch'. Ezekiel employs a kind of subtle irony in delineating how religion, supposed to be a guiding force among human beings, ends up on the contrary.

Thus the venture to gather virtues results in breeding of vice. The poet points out the fact that the pilgrims, thinking that they have left their worldly vices before embarking on a spiritual mission, are in fact unable to sever their ties with their earthly ways. Ezekiel laments the loss of a friend " ... whose slightish prove / was quite the best of all our batch."

"A shadow falls on us - and grows", suggests the vicious contamination that has affected the purity of their goal. There is a strong foreboding, akin to Lopez's short story, "Akaly", that the quest will be a failed one. The reader cannot help remembering the lines from Eliot's "Hollow Men"

"Between the idea
and the reality
between the motion
and the action
Falls The Shadow ..."

The journey of the pilgrims occurs on three levels - physical, spiritual and metaphysical. After the moral lapse, there is a "physical threat" ... We / were twice attacked, and last our way ~~setting~~ setting serenity follows, when "a section downed liberty / To leave the group, echoing the inner fragmentation of the pilgrims haunted by doubt and fear. There are the last wanted emotions during a pilgrimage as hawkey and faith are supposed to fortify one's progress. The poet says: "I tried to pray" implying that prayer now required conscious effort and concentration; the leader smelt the sea which is the place of regeneration and origin of the soul similar to Eliot's Marina.

The pilgrims are reduced to "A straggling crowd of little hope", "who noticed nothing", suggesting the lack of vision necessary for spiritual illumination. The "Exaltation minds" transform into a group in which "some were broken, some merely bent." This reveals the despair and disoriented state of the pilgrims, who come for mundane things "like soap".

In their listless state, the pilgrims had also been "Ignoring what the thunder meant", it immediately evokes in the minds the last section of Eliot's Waste Land:

"What the Thunder said", the hallucinatory terrain in Eliot's poem suggests a quest theme too, in which understanding the thunder's words are imperative in order to surrender before God and fulfill one's enterprise. The fable of the Beṅḡalārāyaka Upaniṣad must be recalled, the threefold

offspring of the creator Prajapati - gods, demons and men - approached him for knowledge after completing their formal education. The creator uttered the syllable 'da' to each group and they made out different meanings -

- gods - 'danayata' (control yourself)
- men - 'datta' (give)
- devil - 'dayadhvani' (compassionate)

The fable exhorts men to practise all ^{On signifying men comprehend} ^{Ben junctions for it} is suggested that there are no gods and demons other than men. The pilgrims in Eliot's Kamuyay as heed to the voice of the thunder and fail to grasp the divine wisdom, an action that will render their journey futile. The thunder is symbolic of illumination, and which is related to man's longing for the higher world.

The pilgrims forget their purpose on reaching the destination, like the Toyean protagonist in Araby:
"The trip had saddened everywhere."