

**WOMEN AS VICTIMS IN MAHESH DATTANI'S
BRAVELY FOUGHT THE QUEEN**

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Abstract : *Baa, the mother of Jiten Trivedy and Nitin Trivedy and the unnamed mother of Praful and the two sisters Dolly and Alka represent the first generation. The husband of Baa was a drunkard and he frequently used to beat up Baa . Now, Baa becomes old and her husband is dead but his remembrance is still affecting her seriously. The mother of Praful and his two sisters marries for the second time without proper divorce from her first husband and therefore, she is taken as a whore. She (Baa) incited her son to beat up his wife. As a result, the baby, Daksha is born deformed prematurely at seventh month, she represents the third generation of women's victimisation and stands as the symbol of Jiten's torture on Dolly. For Alka also the suffering is indeed extreme. Her brother, Praful arranges for her marriage to Nitin. In fact, Nitin and Praful are homosexuals who keep a close sexual relationship. For the sake of maintaining their relationship he (Praful) lets her sister to suffer throughout her life. Then, we have Lalitha with her obsessive love for bonsai. Symbolically, bonsai represents these Indian women of India whom the patriarchal society has never given the chance to grow freely. Her creations of bonsais show that she is also a victim of the society with many unfulfilled wishes and suppressed feelings and longings because the society does not allow her to have them for her being a woman.*

Keywords : *Victim, Patriarchal , Oedipus Complex Homosexual, Gay, Bonsai, Claustrophobia, Chauvinistic*

Bravely Fought the Queen (1991) is the fourth play of Mahesh Dattani, who has won the prestigious Sahitya Akademy Award in 1998 for his book of plays, *Final Solutions and Other Plays* (1994). It was first performed at the Sophia Bhabha Hall,

Mumbai on 2nd August 1991. In the play, Dattani has dealt with the status of women in the present Indian society and thereby depicting the victimisation of women as they had been in the past. It is a domestic tragedy dealing with the odds and sufferings of patriarchal imposition and domination over women. All the women characters specially the women of Trivedy family in the play suffer because of male tyranny and domesticity.

There are four female characters who are physically present in the play. Again there are two other female characters whose presence is highlighted but not physically present however they have the same own story of oppression just like the four present female characters. Then we have six male characters of which two are not physically present. All of them except Sridhar exploit women. The women of physical presence in the play are Baa, the mother of the two brothers, Jiten Trivedy and Nitin Trivedy, the two sisters of Praful-Dolly and Alka, who are the wives of Jiten and Nitin respectively and Lalitha, wife of Sridhar. Sridhar is an employee in the company of Jiten and Nitin. Daksha, the daughter of Jiten and Dolly and the unnamed mother of Praful and the two sisters are mentioned but they are not physically present. The male characters who are physically present in the play are Jiten, Nitin, Sridhar and Praful . The two other unnamed male characters are the man who marries Praful's mother and Baa's husband. They are not physically present in the play. Now, let us deal with the female characters in the play and how they are victimised in the hands of their male-counterparts.

Baa

Baa and Dolly's exploitation is somewhat similar but it is Alka whose anguish and frustration is due to her husband's homosexual libido and her brother Praful's deceit of not revealing the reality of Nitin to her (Pant 2005: 44). The lines depict the exploitation of the three women of the Trivedy family in the play. First, let us see Baa. When the play opens, we find Baa as the ailing mother of Jiten and Nitin with white hair and in a white sari. Through a

series of flashbacks in the play and her inability to take 'memory' and 'past' out of her mind, we know that her past is really tragic and she has been the victim of injustice and tortures of her husband.

Baa's husband was a dominating and violent man who had not only prevented her from singing but also used to beat her up time and again. He also ill-treated their sons. His nature towards Baa and their sons was so rude and brutal that she becomes affected even after the death of her husband whenever she recalls him of making her unable to live in the present. Thus she is put in a condition in which she can not differentiate between the past and the present.

So, she clings to her sons with thorough expectation for what she does not get from her husband. She unconsciously arouses her sons against their father so that she gets extra favour from them. A very important thing is that as a result of the tyranny of her husband, she starts to have hatred for Jiten only because he has taken after his father in appearance and behaviour and starts loving Nitin in an excessive and abnormal way for he resembles her in nature and appearance. So, in her elder son, Jiten she sees the picture of her husband, therefore, she automatically develops an inclination towards her younger son, Nitin. Her obsession with Nitin, and her craving for love from her sons alienate her and arouse oedipus complex in Nitin turning him into a homosexual so that his love for his mother remains the same.

Further, her obsession with her sons and possessiveness over them intrude into the privacy of her daughters-in-law. Her behaviour of always adhering to her sons and gaining hold over them are to such an extent that they become intrusion into the married life of the two sisters. She lets Jiten to beat up his wife, Dolly even at the advanced stage of pregnancy and the result is that their daughter, Daksha is born prematurely at seventh month. In Nitin's case, she is stopping him from having children. Thus, she while trying to get her room, which her husband and the society had not given, snatches the room of her daughters-in-law through intrusion

and control over the married lives of her sons. And this overpowering attitude makes her a patriarch to her daughters-in-law.

Thus, it is the injustice, violence and ill behaviour of her husband towards her that she unconsciously desires love, support and understanding from her sons. Her inability to live in the present, and brooding over the past, and remembering past acts of her husband as fresh as it is happening now, her nature which is a bit deviated from normalcy are all the creations of her husband's lack of concern for her and his brutal and inhuman acts on her. Her hold over not only on her sons but also on her daughters-in-law is only an effort to get herself secured and loved by her sons. Indeed, she is victimized and the victimisation is upto the level that while she tries to hold control over her sons and daughters-in-law, her unforgettable and unfortunate past has held control over her.

Dolly

Dolly is the elder of the two sisters of Praful and wife of Jiten. She is portrayed as an isolated woman who has been hooked in a loveless marriage with an uncaring husband. Jiten marries Dolly not because of any attraction or love for her but only for the sake of the societal norm of marriage. He is neither loyal to her nor he tries to understand her, he gets his satisfaction of sexual desire from whores instead. He takes the advantage of being under the category of 'fortunate sex' where there is no restriction in every aspect of his life. And in his sixteen years of married life, he has taken Dolly out only once and this shows that he is not treating her the way she deserves.

Her husband is there bearing the symbol of patriarchal domination. He used to beat her up for every petty matter. Then we have her mother-in-law unconsciously or consciously imposing dominance over her and her sister and exploiting their husbands as the strength and basis of her patriarchy. Then another man who indirectly has let her suffer is her brother, Praful. He deceives Baa and her sons by making them to think that his father and the two sisters' father is only one person. The two sisters are the children

of his mother's second marriage while he is the child of her first marriage. It is for their being accepted as daughters-in-law by Baa that he did not tell her the truth that he and his sisters (Dolly and Alka) are not of the same father (though their mother is same) but Dolly and Alka are in the thought that Baa completely knows about their parentage. Baa realises this truth at a time when Dolly was pregnant with Daksha that her (Dolly's) mother married for the second time to a person who was already married. So, society including Baa takes her as a whore and Dolly is the daughter of that whore and Baa doubts Dolly to be like her mother. Therefore, she induces Jiten to beat her up in the advanced stage of pregnancy of seven months in the thought that the child is not of her son's for she too is being taken as a whore. As a result, Daksha is born prematurely at seventh month. She is deformed and mentally retarded. Thus, Daksha too, is victimised. She has a silent presence in the play and stands as the symbol of Jiten's violence and torture on Dolly. The mother of Dolly and Alka also suffers and she had been betrayed by her second husband by not revealing his identity as an already married man and making her a whore in the eyes of the society. These two women also suffer because of the norms of the patriarchal society of India.

Again, the confrontation of Dolly with Lalitha when she (Lalitha) comes to her home to discuss the ball hints that her husband has no value for her existence in his life and there is no desire in him to tell her anything about him and his office. Thus, in the hands of patriarchy Dolly suffers torture, violence and ill-treatment. Her husband's lack of concern for her and the loveless marriage results her to have some psychic problem. She is let to create an imaginary world and live there with imaginary people providing her what she does not get in reality.

She poses herself very cool and calm and happy in her married life but in her we see the opposite. Jiten has no love for her and Baa is there to aggravate her unhappiness. Praful also deceives her and her sister. That is why she creates her own world to

be happy in which she beautifies herself, takes enormous pleasure in the sweet tune of thumria song from which she gets the ideal love she is longing in her life and Kanhaiya a character the minds of two sisters have created.

So, she suffers not for her own fault but for Praful .She suffers because she is a woman. The husband who himself is a cheater and is disloyal to his wife and who enjoys with whores can not bear his wife's being a whore, that too is only imposed on her by the society. It seems that men can never think women as human as they are and they are always victimising them (women) because they need to show their superiority over them.

Alka

Alka is the younger sister of Dolly and wife of Nitin. She suffers from two different hands one from her brother, Praful and the other from Nitin, her husband. Jiten and Baa are also no less from them in torturing her. Her brother burnt her hair for returning from school with the neighbour's son on his scooter instead of walking with Dolly, and here starts her being victimized.

Praful arranged her marriage to Nitin. She did not know anything about Nitin, but she thought if she readily agreed to marry the person proposed by her brother, she would make up the dissatisfaction she had caused to her brother by the incident of returning from school with the neighbour's son.

But in Praful's arrangement of her marriage to Nitin, we can see that he is only using her to achieve his own end. He is having gay relation with Nitin that he wants her to marry Nitin so that he can continue his affair with Nitin. Thus, he tricks her and uses her as an instrument to maintain his affair with Nitin and she has to suffer her whole life because of it.

So, Nitin is homosexual and losing himself in the strong arms of Praful. Then how can he be a good husband to Alka ? Then, we have Baa who does not like her to be her daughter-in-law because of the same reason as she doubts Dolly to be a whore. In addition to that, she (Alka) had once claimed and hurted the

chastity of Baa by asking her whether she had different fathers of her two sons for they are so different in attitude and behaviour. Nitin is homosexual and further it is under her (Baa's) control to let Nitin have his children or not. Baa does not want him to have children. Thus, she is not made a mother. There is no happiness in the married life of Alka. But she is blamed for being childless that she is not perfect as a woman. We can quote Alka's lament from the play: You (Baa) know why I can't have children. You won't let me. That's why (Dattani 2000: 284).

We are told that Nitin is Baa's favourite. Jiten and Nitin hope that the house will be left to Nitin. But it is not so, it is left to Daksha and Praful is made the trustee. She chooses Daksha because she bears the greatest guilt in making her a handicap. Again, Praful is chosen as trustee because she thinks that it is only Praful who loves Daksha truly. Moreover, she also wants to compensate for the shame she had given to him regarding the two sisters' father. But Jiten and Nitin do not have much idea about these feelings of Baa. So, they think that it is Nitin's marriage with Alka, which shocks Baa and instigates her to leave the house to Daksha with Praful as trustee. Daksha's being the heir to the house does not bother them but they can not bear Praful's being the trustee. Here, we will consider the following words of Nitin to his mother. "Baa, this is important. Will you give me the house if I send her back for good this time?" (Dattani 2000 : 302).

A point that can be considered here is the room given by Nitin to his wife. To him, the house counts more than his own wife. For the sake of the house he is ready to throw her out of the house for she is of no importance to him. To add the ill-treatment of Nitin to Alka, Jiten is there. Regarding the heir to the house, Jiten's treatment towards Alka in Act III is really rude. It is shown that he does not bother what happens to Alka if she is in the way of their having the house. He has taken Alka only as a commodity which can be taken off if it comes out to be an obstacle in his way.

Thus, Alka suffers severely. She is childless, she lacks decency and qualities of an ideal wife. Further, she is an alcoholic

and thus an immoral woman. But it is her brother, her husband, and her brother-in-law who urge her to be such a woman. The faulty and guilty persons are themselves but instead of them Alka suffers. She is victimised upto the extent that she is turned into a totally different facet from herself. Thus, all Trivedy women suffer from male domination. They do not get what they deserve. The exploitation and tyrannical acts towards them are quite intense and it seems that Baa, Dolly and Alka all have some abnormality and deviation from their present life-hovering in reverie, sustained lingering on memory and creating their own imaginary world where they fancy anything they aspire to have in real life. Indeed they are severely victimised.

Lalitha

Lalitha, the outsider and the wife of Sridhar is different from the three Trivedy women and she represents a kind of normality which the three Trivedy women do not possess. Her presence is contrary to the position of Dolly and Alka. She is in a place a bit safer and better than that of Trivedi women and we can say that her position is much higher and free from that of them. Domestic life, where Trivedi women have to live is not the world where she is to confine to. She has a room in the outside world where men run their life. She has her part to decide whether they (she and her husband) should have children or not.

But it is still doubtful whether she is getting enough freedom in our patriarchal society. She does not suffer in the hands of Sridhar, but suffers in the hands of society. She still has something which the society does not provide with for her being a woman and which she tries to seek in her obsessive love for her bonsais. The bonsais' bizarre shape, the grotesque look are the objective representation of the mental conditions of the different female characters in the play who try to escape from the frustration of their claustrophobia. "Alka seeks a consolation in alcohol. Dolly develops a fascination for Kanhaiya, the cook while the obsession of Lalitha transmutes her passion for bonsais" (Agrawal 2008: 73).

She too has something in her as the Trivedy women do. She too longs for something the society does not give. Her passion for growing bonsais symbolically reflects her own mindset. The wiring and trimming she subjects to the growing plants may be the representation of the control and restriction she has done to her own life. The dead shoot means that she has many suppressed or unfulfilled desires and aspirations as a result of the male-dominated society, though not directly.

In the play, not much is dealt with Lalitha, but it is highlighted that she also has areas where she thinks that she is being suppressed, neglected and dominated. She does not suffer to the extent of Trivedy women. But, she too is a victim. Her obsession with the bonsais is the reflection of it. She might have not suffered in the hands of Sridhar but there is the society, the male-tyrannized one which does not even allow her to return home by herself from Dolly's house. Thus, she too suffers and she reflects her sufferings through her creations of the bonsais that she herself is also a bonsai as all Indian women are in the hands of men and their patriarchy.

Thus, 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 or 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 male chauvinistic society.

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