

HOMO AND HETEROSEXUALS: ANALYZING THE ALTERNATE SEX CONFLICT IN MAHESH DATTANI'S BRAVELY FOUGHT THE QUEEN

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Abstract

The “conflict” between “homo” and “heterosexuals” is elaborated in Dattani’s *Bravely Fought the Queen* as a major problem. The drama *Bravely Fought the Queen* is the first in the history of Indian English Drama to openly examine the conflict between “homo” and “hetero.” It highlights the challenges of a gay person’s lifestyle and their non-traditional society. It is a call to action for gay people to come out of the closet and persuade heteronormatives that they are unique individuals who deserve advantages like marriage, love, and the family they long for. This research article traces the alternate sex conflict faced by the characters in Mahesh Dattan’s *Bravely fought the Queen*.

Keywords: Homo, Hetero, Conflict, Gay, Lifestyle.

The term ‘homosexual’ is derived from the Greek ‘hom’ meaning ‘the same’ and it has numerous synonyms. Ancient Indian mythology make reference of androgyny, transvestism, transexuality, eunuchism, homosexuality, narcissistic self-love, and homoerotic slavery. Contrary to popular belief, homosexuality is not a Western import. In ancient literature, homosexuality is a common theme. LGBT is another phrase, which is a “acronym” for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. These people form a community and cooperate to fight discrimination. The term “homophobia,” which denotes a dread of homosexuals, is the source of much of this discrimination. However, it is not how the word is always used. Many homophobes despise LGBT individuals.

Homosexuality is always present within the construction of heterosexuality itself and unless the notion of self is spelt out, there can be no ‘heterosexual’ at all. Homosexuality is a state of mind where individual asserts to protest against secbinary existing in the social order. In heterosexual relations on several occasions, there is a tendency towards the domination, torture and empowerment of ‘other’. (Handibag 160)

Dattani’s 1991 drama *Bravely Fought the Queen* is the first to explicitly address the subject of homosexuality. The drama discusses infidelity, drunkenness, and alternative sexuality. In the play, Nitin, Praful, and the auto rickshaw driver all address the subject of homosexuality. The playwright shows empathy for Nitin, who may be the first homosexual character in an Indian English drama. He is wed to Alka and Jiten Trivedi’s younger brother. Dolly, Jiten Trivedi’s wife, is Alka’s older sister. The tension between the homos and heteros in the Trivedi family is projected during the play’s performance. Being gay, Nitin’s clash with Alka and his lover, Praful, raises questions about his true sexual orientation. Behind the fake marriage to Alka, he hides his homosexuality. Alka blames her mother-in-law, Baa, even though she was unaware of Nitin’s sexual orientation. She believes that Baa prevents Nitin from completing their marriage. She believes that Baa was opposed to his marriage. Alka blames Baa for the fact that she is still childless despite being married for a number of years. Thus, Alka and Baa’s conversation sheds insight on the issue.

ALKA: You know why I can’t have children. You won’t let me. That’s why! BAA: What are you saying?

ALKA: You won’t let us!

BAA: You are mad, mad, mad!

ALKA: you won’t let us! You want him to hate me!

BAA: Go away! Away! ALKA: He needs your permission to have children and by God, you won’t give it him! (CP I 284)

Baa and Alka’s dialogue above make it abundantly evident that Alka knows nothing about Nitin’s homosexuality. Her attempts to blame Baa are therefore fruitless. She ought to have held Nitin accountable for his non-binary sexual orientation. The play’s structure occasionally makes mention of Nitin’s homosexuality. They were in the centre of the town when Jiten began speeding the car. An auto-rickshaw that was parked close to the

road was knocked over by their car. They ran into a light post. The rickshaw driver yelled at them as he fled from a tea store. He commanded them to exit the vehicle. Jiten was seized by him via the window. He encircled Jiten's neck with his forearm. Nitin was watching the rickshaw driver itself all the time. That's how he describes the driver.

He was really...(drags out the word, perhaps sensually) violent-looking. He... he was a powerful man. I can still remember that strong black arm. (Pause. observes Sridhar, who is perhaps puzzled by this description) Jitu managed to start the car. He reversed and started to speed. The driver still hung on! Jitu braked suddenly, hoping to dislodge the man. I was fascinated. That arm didn't lose its grip. Jitu put the car in first gear and . . . sped. The driver wouldn't let go. (A faint stutter.) He was being d-dragged by the s-speed of the car but... he wouldn't let go. (CP I 281)

Nitin gives a really sensual description of the car driver. It demonstrates his interest in the driving. After the episode, Nitin found a way to get in touch with the auto driver and start a connection with him physically. He took adequate precautions to keep it a secret from others. Sridhar, a staff member in Nitin's add office, once seen the same rickshaw driver inside the building. On another occasion, even Sridhar's wife Lalitha witnesses the rickshaw stopped outside Nitin's home and its driver scaling the house's compound wall. It reaffirms Nitin's friendship with the auto rickshaw driver. Alka eventually came to the conclusion that Nitin is impotent. In order to protect Nitin's homosexual relationship with him, Praful was able to marry her to him. So Alka blames Praful for his deceptive nature. She expresses her doubt and dissatisfaction to Dolly.

DOLLY: And then you say some nonsense. What was it you said to Baa? In that deliberate slur! 'Your sons are so different from one another. They are both pretty like you, but otherwise...' And then you wink at her and ask, 'Do they have different fathers?'

ALKA: I didn't mean that...

DOLLY: I know you didn't, but to say...

ALKA: And I didn't plan it, for God's sake! I saw . . . I saw them staring at each other at the table. (pause). I can't forget what they did to me! Our brother is a cheat! He lied about our father to them. And he lied to me! He lied to me by not telling me ... (CP I 256)

Praful, Alka's brother, and her husband Nitin are both lying to her. She believes that she could not have married Nitin if Praful had revealed to her that he was gay. Although she was unaware of their relationship at the time, she was aware that Nitin and Praful had been close friends since their college days. She can only confirm it after getting married. She started drinking when she realised how incompetent her husband Nitin was. Praful wrecks her marriage through Nitin. She never discusses Nitin's homosexuality in public. She sets boundaries and alludes inexplicably to "their relationship." Nitin holds Praful accountable for lying to Alka, just as Nitin does.

He says: "He (Praful) tricked you too, didn't he? How can you still love your brother after what he did to you...? That's right. Don't answer. Just sleep. (laughs) You always were a heavy sleeper. Thank God." (CP I 314)

By the play's conclusion, Nitin admits to having a gay connection with Praful. He blatantly describes how they both engage in sexual activity at night in the house while everyone—including Alka is seen to be sleeping peacefully.

Those times when I used to spend the night at your place, I used to sleep on his cot. And he would sleep on a mattress on the floor, beside me... When all the lights were out, I would lie on the cot. Waiting, for least an hour.... I would get up and quietly walk to your room . . . Your's, your sister's and your mother's.

To make sure . . . That's right. Don't wake up. Just sleep. And I would go back to Praful's room... and kneel... At times he would wake up immediately. At times he would wake up immediately. At other times I would learn forward to look at him. Close enough for my breath to fall gently on his face. And he would open his eyes... I loved him too. He is... was attractive. And he responded. Oh! But how ashamed he made me feel after! He made me cry each time! That was a game he played. And I-I was caught in it... (CP I 314)

Being gay, Nitin also likes rickshaw drivers' companionship, whether it is at his office after hours or in his outdoor restroom. Alka, who falls asleep after drinking, is not stopped by him. Then he has ample time and space to appreciate the rickshaw driver's company. He does it on a regular basis now. He conveys his deep desire for sexual gratification with the rickshaw driver, a man with strong arms. Alka, however, you must now go to bed.

You mustn't wake up, while I...while I... I mustn't keep him waiting... (He moves towards the kitchen.) The office is not good idea... Too many people passing by... But here---the outhouse.

Perfect. Yes. Don't wake up. Stay drunk. You mustn't watch...those powerful arms... (exits to the kitchen.) (CPI 315)

The fact that Nitin admitted to having sex with other men even after getting married to Alka shows that homo cannot make him change his sexual orientation. Men like Nitin suffocate under the weight of old hetero normative society. Despite heteronormative standards, they are unable to be stopped from acting in an impulsive manner. The fear of social rejection prevents gays from publicly "coming out." Coming out entails civil rights violations and social isolation. Due to the guarantee of normality that heterosexuality provides, the majority of these "queer persons" claim to be heterosexual. To avoid facing public ridicule, Nitin also weds and leads a second life. It is also a life of falsehoods. It is always regrettable that women like "Alka" must endure suffering because they are forced to live a miserable existence, stifling their sexual urges, and drowning in wine. As a result, Nitin and Praful ruin her life. She can no longer escape the impending disaster since it is too late. Dattani might believe that "homo" is "homo," and that he cannot possibly be "hetero." In one of his conversations with Bijay Kumar Das, Dattani brought up the topic of homosexuality. He stated, "It is natural, even though it is not the norm in any of the species. Like being left-handed in a society where most people are right-handed. (12 Parmar) Overall, the two plays' characters openly portray a binary conflict between human nature and culture.

Love and individual choices are hampered by the rule that nature and culture must coexist. The voice of "nature" will not be quieted for a very long time by "culture." There will be a call for revolution soon. The natural world will prevail over civilization in the era of globalisation. High Court had issued a ruling in favour of gays, but Supreme Court again overturned it. Once again, homosexuality is viewed as a crime in India. Gay nightlife is thriving in major cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Bangalore despite being illegal. With their urban mentality and acceptance of homosexuality, these large cities have emerged as the centre of the new Indian gay culture. There are a few premium straight bars and clubs in these locations that regularly dedicate a night of the week specifically for homosexual patrons, despite the fact that there are not many exclusive gay clubs and bars. The acceptance of homosexuality has been pushed for by numerous social and human rights groups. There are growing numbers of LGBT support groups across the country. The time will soon come when homosexuality will also be legalised. Future events have their shadows predicted well in advance. Mahesh Dattani, a playwright, is correct in urging heterosexuals to pay attention to LGBTQI people's sincere pleas for acceptance of who they are as they are.

Thus, the conflict between the husbands and wives in the Trivedi family is described in Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen*. Jiten, Nitin, and their spouses Dolly and Alka are at odds with one another. Conflict between Praful and Alka is made more intense by their homosexual relationship. It is the first drama to address the homosexuality issue. The drama also addresses adultery and alcoholism. Nitin, Praful, and the rickshaw driver have all addressed the subject of homosexuality. Perhaps the first openly gay character in Indian English drama is Nitin. Behind the fake marriage to Alka, he hides his homosexuality. He may be the spokesman Dattani is using to claim that "homo" is homo and that he cannot possibly be "hetero."

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