

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GURCHARAN DAS' PLAY 9 JAKHOO HILLS

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Abstract

Indian English drama has seen tremendous change after post independence phase. Drama as a genre has developed a lot after 1970s. There are number of major playwrights like Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani, Geive Patel and Gurcharan Das. Gurcharan Das is famous for his writings like A Fine Family, a book of essays, The Elephant Paradigm, and anthology, Three English Plays including 9 Jakhoo Hill which shows that Gurcharan Das is a profound playwright who has a great concern for the socio-political changes which occur in post independent India. This paper deals with Gurcharan Das' play 9 Jakhoo Hill. The play 9 Jakhoo Hill basically talks about the changing order in the society, where the old middle class giving away to the new middle class. There are various themes of the play apart from changing order. It also talks about the hold of Indian mothers on their sons, about incestuous obsessions of ageing uncles. But the main theme is betrayal of sexual love. Indians have always regarded sexual passion as a relatively trivial matter. As a result the higher value is upon filial rather than marital love. Thus, the modern Indian men, however is caught in a dilemma whether to value his traditional duty towards his mother or his modern duty towards his wife. In nutshell, this paper attempts to study Gurcharan Das's play 9 Jakhoo Hill, in the light of socio-political changes that occurred during the post independent era.

Key Words: Indian English, Drama, Independent India, socio-political changes, Marriage, Love and social constrain.

The play *9 Jakhoo Hill* by Gurcharan Das is all about the changing order in post colonial Indian middle class, the old middle class giving away to the new middle class. It's the story about Ansuya and her family who belong to the old middle class and Deepak and Chitra who belong to the new middle class. The most striking feature of contemporary India is the rise of a confident new middle class, which is full of energy and drive and is making tilings happen. The play has multiple themes apart from the changing order; it also talks about the downward trends of moral ethics of the new middle class, the wishful nature of the new middle class, and the hold of Indian mothers on their sons, about a fading class clinging foolishly to spent dreams, about the incestuous obsession of ageing uncles.

But the main theme is the betrayal of sexual love. Traditional Indian social life is fundamentally incomprehensible to the west largely because we Indians have always regarded sexual passion as a relatively trivial matter. These result into higher value upon filial rather than marital love.

The play begins two days before Diwali in 1962 in an upper middle class house at 9 Jakhoo Hills in Simla, when the country was at war with china. The play is divided in to four acts. Karan Chand is the narrator of the play. He introduces the two families around which the whole play is woven. The whole play revolves around the two families of Lahore and what happens to them after independence. One of the family is a conventional middle class family consisting of Amrita, her brother Karan Chand (Mamu) and Amrita's young daughter Ansuya. Karan Chand discloses, "Amrita, over there, was born into a distinguished family, into a world of grace, refinement and good taste"(144). Ansuya, twenty six years old is an impulsive but intelligent girl who, " was not born to lead a staid , conventional life. Lonely, withdrawn, but with an almost fierce vitality, she wants to live fully and passionately" (144).

Amrita's husband died during the riots; they lost all their wealth they had in Lahore and came to Delhi where they had a couple of mills and a big sprawling house in the Civil Lines. Due to lack of business shrewdness in Amrita and Karan Chand they were all at sea. They were forced to sell their mills and their house, as they

suffered heavy losses in their business. Finally they moved to Shimla, to their summer house, 9 Jakhoo Hill. This was all they had been left with, alongwith a trivial income from bonds and shares, too insufficient for their kind of life. The other family comprises, Deepak, twenty seven years old young man and a successful business executive settled in Bombay. He, "...is full of energy and ambition... .talented and smooth, but is also under the excessive influence of his mother. Having had to come up the hard way, he has cultivated the social graces—He has already done well for himself, he has a composed voice, shinning eyes and a bright smile.

He is self-possessed and good natured" (155). His mother, Chitra enduring terrors of partition, moved to Mumbai, where with an obsessive devotion ensured that her son got the best education and then a good job in a good company. Chitra, "has a husband, but he doesn't count. ...is a survivor: street smart, calculating and unconcerned about her ways" (143). The play highlights the changing socio-economical and political situation of Indian society in the 1960s and also presents the changing patterns of Indian English Drama.

Ansuya was realistic in nature and her mother Amrita was always lost in her past richness. Karan Chand is a conventional man who does not want to embrace the outside world and has a grunt of satisfaction in his home which retells him of his past life. In this stagnant passage of his life, he falls in the sinful aspiration of incestuous love with her niece Ansuya who later snubs him. Ansuya wanted to go away from this static, decaying mental existence and incestuous social life of Simla and wanted to settle down in Bombay, where she could work and live with Deepak. "She felt stifled by her closed life and the incestuous elite that makes up Simla's society" (20). She yearns for the city life where people do things but her mother Amrita who was lost in her nostalgia could never understand the condition of her daughter. Though they were turning poorer day by day, Amrita was still clinging to her old times. Due to her aristocratic nature slowly and gradually all the antique in the house was sold out. Ansuya was aware of this but her mother was not ready to accept the true.

Ansuya longed for a companion. In the first act we come to know that Deepak is coming to Simla and Ansuya finds hope in Deepak. She thinks that Deepak is coming to meet her but when she comes to know that Deepak came to Shimla for business purpose, she became angry but later on is convinced by Deepak. The character of Deepak presents the plight of Indian sons who are just like a puppet in their mothers' hand. Deepak loves Ansuya, he also accepts " it in front of everyone while playing the game of truth or dare. But he cannot go against the wish of his mother Chitra who is a materialistic woman. Deepak tries to convince his mother for Ansuya by saying: It's my one chance for an honest life. She is fine person, with ideals. Ma. Chitra: Oh-ho, that girl is only after your position and your job. She has trapped you, you simpleton. Deepak, think of your future. She doesn't have a naya paisa to her name. You're on the way up, son. Your star is going to rise. You need a rich girl to help you climb up. Her family is on the way down. She should be satisfied with a municipal clerk (192). But Chitra does not accept Ansuya. She wants her son to go after money and power which is with Rai Sahed. And so she does not find it shameful to spend time with Rai Saheb, the IAS Secretary of Government of India for her son's company license. Finally materialistic world wins over emotional love. Deepak is married to Rai Saheb's niece and he also gets the license for his company and on the other hand Ansuya is left alone, but she does not get demotivated. She follows Deepak's plan for '9 Jakhoo Hill' to convert it into a hotel so that they can make best use of it in their critical financial condition by enabling Ansuya to be confident and self-reliant. He tells Ansuya "Deepak: (Speaking like a professional manager). Why not convert it into an exclusive season hotel?...Give it to a professional company to manage it... .And, I tell you, in two years, you could pay back all your debts and keep the house, too."(161). Ansuya, taking note of to liis advice is able to restart and lead a comfortable life. She converts her 9 Jakhoo Hill in to a hotel and they shift from Simla to Delhi.

In nutshell, *9 Jakhoo Hill* highlights a number of socio- economical and political issues of post independent India. It also focuses on the changing value system of society. It depicts, the new middle class, who wants to become rich by any cost and the old middle class, who are still clinging to their ethical values. The play gives us an insight into the post independent Indian aristocratic society, where emotion does not have any value. Money plays a very important role in the life of people. Das' plays have contemporary themes, it influence every walk of life. His play does not follow the conventional model but it allows the audience to think more rationally and critically.

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