

Study of Characters: 9 Jakhoo Hills, A Play by Gurcharan Das

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Gurcharan Das is an Indian author and a public intellectual. He wrote several famous books named *a fine famil(1990)*, *India Unbound(2000)*, *the Elephant paradigm(2002)* and *Three English Plays(2001)*. Gurcharan Das's play "9 Jakhoo Hill" is a modern Indian play in Indian English. The plot of the play is placed in Jakhoo hill, Shimla in 1962, when china invaded India and shattered the dream of first Prime minister and an intellectual, shri Jawahar lal Nehru. During partition of India, two families- one house owner and the other tenant migrated to India. The house owner family consisted of Amrita, her younger brother Karanchand(mamu) and her daughter Ansuya, unfortunately Ansuya's father was killed during riots. The family had some mills and a bungalow at Delhi and other one at Simla. The brother and sister were no good managers and soon they had to sell their property at Delhi and shifted to Jakhoo hills, bungalow. For a play the two important aspects are Plot and Characters or actor. Das in his play gives equal importance to his characters. The play consists of four acts and there are six main characters, Ansuya, Amrita, Karanchand, Deepak and Chitra. One of the other major character is Rai Saheb(I.A.S) a secretary of government of india. These various characters reflect different social status and values of the contemporary society. According to E.M Forster there are two types of characters, namely, "Flat" and "Round" characters. Flat characters, he says, sometimes called types sometimes caricatures. In the play Chitra, Amrita, mamu and Rai sahib are flat, and Ansuya and Deepak are Round characters. They are developed by what happens to them. According to Muriel spark, the minor characters are one dimensional or Flat but major figures are conceived in a round, as if engaged in a movement.

The action of the play covers three days round Diwali festival in October 1962, when the humiliating Indo-Chinese war of India was going on. Amrita invited from Bombay her friend and old neighbor Chitra and her young son Deepak to Shimla for celebrating Diwali. Each character in the play is symbolic of different aspects. Rai sahib represents western outlook, culture and speech. He retains old Beaurocratic loyalty to British colonial rulers. He is a vulnerable Indian sahib, who is ready to flirt with middle aged Chitra. Rai sahib is English in thought and taste but Indian in color, a perfect member of the Indian class that Macaulay intended to create. He is a typical colonial surrogate, consistent throughout the play. He reflects the worse political system. Deepak and Ansuya are the protagonists of the play. The two form romantic pair in the play. There is a conflict between the upper and the middle class, artistically reflected through the characters of Rai sahib and Chitra on one hand and Amrita and Ansuya on the other. Chitra, as said earlier is a consistent character throughout the play. Her main purpose for coming to Jakhoo hill is political and business is clear when she says to Amrita: *"We rushed here didi, here because Deepak's company is building for a licence, and a big 'ufsar' living in Shimla."*

She is representative of mothers having hold of their sons. Her only objective is to raise her son to the heights. She has no moral qualms to fulfill her ambition. This contrast between upper and middle class is also prominent in the characters of Amrita and Chitra. An ambitious lady chitra believes that nothing is bad to gain success. Her friend Amrita is a graceful woman of taste and belongs to a rich aristocratic family. But now she is in a poor state for nobody could handle her ancestral wealth and fortunes. The whole story revolves around Ansuya and Deepak. There is a transformation in both the characters. They were in love with each other when they were just 10years in age. The influence of the mother in the play and consciousness of Deepak for his future shatters his romantic vision of happy life with Ansuya. She gives us a hint that Deepak came here for license and not for love. He curtly denies in diplomatic ways by saying: *"I came to shimla to see you Anu, but then I discovered that rai sahib was also up here, and I told maa, why not combine business with pleasure."* Ansuya represents a new upcoming generation. Deepak could not break through the love and domination of his mother and sacrifices his love and happiness. Love is vulnerable and its loss is a terrible thing. Ansuyas' mamu has a strange attachment towards her. He is not happy with Deepak and ansuyas' relation and tells ansu that:

"I don't like him...He is selfish...I am afraid you'll get hurt."

Karan is an intelligent and interesting old man and contrary to the wishes of his family, he becomes a teacher in the university. He is an idealist and joins teaching profession to influence young men to pursue ideals. He doesn't marry and in grown up age, to get rid of solitude and loneliness, he started having cats. The very first

scene marks the loneliness of narrator, sitting alone, playing chess with himself. Mamus' loneliness and frustration resulting from idealist approach in youth finds escape in strange attachments to his niece. His elder sister curses him over his affection for cats:

"It is unnatural to be so fond of cats."

Karan cannot isolate his twin roles, as a narrator and as mamu, character. It is very similar to what W.H Auden says "people are so much indulged in oneself that they forget the happening in the world." Karan, Amrita and Ansuya are frustrated with little hope for a bright future. Their helplessness unites them in a strange and natural bond of unity. The play, in the game of "truth and dare", reaches a climax, in the mess that ends the game exposing major characters real self. It is here when Ansuya declares her love with Deepak. In Act four, narrator sums up by saying:

"It is a dangerous game these girls play in boarding schools...I next time...I wouldn't play this game". Playing games sometimes have dangers players cannot tolerate. By showing its pros and cons Gurcharan Das depicts the real picture of the contemporary society. Martin Esslin says:

"Characters are most important in a drama to interpret the mere text into life."

REFERENCES

- [1] Das, Gurcharan. Three plays: Larin sahib, Meera and 9 Jakhoo Hill. 2001. Print.
[2] Esslin, Martin. The theatre of Absurd. Mathuen drama, 1961. Print.