

Diving into the Contradictory Motifs incorporated in Laapta Ladies: A realistic delieanation of Society

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 08 May 2024; Received in revised form: 09 Jun 2024; Accepted: 17 Jun 2024; Available online: 24 Jun 2024</p> <p>©2024 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— <i>Lapata Ladies, Kiran Rao, Sneha Desai, Indian Society, Women Empowerment</i></p>	<p><i>Laapta Ladies</i> directed by Kiran Rao, penned by Sneha Desai is the realistic portrayal of Indian Society's shallow traditions, Females' disastrous lives, Male Dominance. Through it's Various characters with contradictory inclinations, convictions Sneha Desai has beautifully endeavoured to convey the themes of Self-realization, Women Empowerment, love, Debilitating consequences of shallow conventional beliefs. It is the story of two brides who got lost during their journeys. However, ended up in finding their identities. <i>Laapta ladies</i> has filmed so many moments which satarizes the society's orthodoxy, it's hypocrisy and how women due to these primitive propositions become dependent upon their male counterparts, unable even to find their way back to home. It has the characters of Phool;the Innocent , naïve, Optimistic, proud of her conventional upbringing, Jaya, Ambitious, Receptive, Audacious, Prudent , Deepak, Phool's Husband; Affectionate, Altruistic, Loyal, Determined, Persistent. Pardip, Jaya's Husband; Cruel, Rapacious, Ostentatious, Impudent. Dadi; Pretentious, Cynic, Independent. Through these Different characters, <i>Laapta ladies</i> unveils the intricate web of circumstances which leads each and every character to their destination of Self Realization. This research paper endeavours to analyse the contradictory motifs found in the characters and how by incorporating the different characters Sneha Desai showcased the society in it's realm and remained succesful in conveying the value of Resilience, inspiring woman to break the societal constraints and paves the path of potent womanhood.</p>

I. INTRODUCTION

It is not for the first time that Bollywood has produced such satirical movie however we have got movies such as Darlings , Queen, English Vinglish, Raising issues for women liberation and emancipation. Though , *Laapta ladies* differs from all these

conventional Bollywood feminist movies,through the incorporation of Contradictory Motifs. . In *Laapta ladies* you will find woman like Phool who is quite contented with her upbringing which has made her only a nincompoop, on the contrary there is a woman like Jaya , who is well aware of her rights, of organic farming or even she knows how to run a computer.

Sneha Desai has authentically portrayed the two male characters contradictory to each other in their behavioural manner, banishing the generalization of male community as a cruel one. Pardip Singh, who after knowing his wife Jaya's loss was quite cool, instead of being penitential about her he was infuriated. Pardip was more conscious about the convenience of Dowry. Deepak, who was perturbed for his lost wife, constant in his effort to find her. Deepak's character renders that not every man is like Pardip. Pardip's family was totally opposite to Deepak's family. Where Pardip's family was apathetic at Jaya's loss, there Deepak's family encumbered with the loss of Phool and was constantly praying for Phool's return. This movie Satires on the tradition of keeping Ghunghat because of which both the heroines lost their way to home. It renders the women's subservient position to men, her being caged in the confines of marriage, her sacrificial tendencies, women's ignorance of their own inferiority and their proclivity to embrace their ignorance. This movie debunks the multitudes of aspects of society including Politics also. How politician uses and molds the people's issues according to their own convenience. Consummately, this Movie has touched every corner of society through its motifs, which makes it an influential Dark Comedy of Today's era. This paper Strives to vindicate the Cinematic grandeur of this movie, the verisimilitude it embodies by delving into the contradictory motifs comprised in Laapta Ladies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As previously stated in the introduction, Bollywood hasn't produced Movie like Laapta Ladies Depreciating the social Norms, for the first time, there are so many other instances of Movies with same thematic concern. Darlings, set in the Chawl of Mumbai is another Black Comedy written by Jasmeet K, portraying the traumatic consequences of Domestic Abuse. It has presented the evil of Domestic Abuse with the touch of dark humour. Story revolves around its protagonist Badrunisa who is married to Hamza Sheikh. Although badrunisa had a love marriage with Hamza yet her married life is not different to any other typical Indian arrange marriage. After her marriage, Hamza behaves like any other Indian frustrated husband who vent his exasperation on his wife.

Badrunisa's mother Shamsu nisa Ansari who had also been the victim of Domestic Abuse asked her daughter to leave her abusive, Cruel husband. However, badru is hopeful for her better married life and like any other Indian wife put the blame on the addiction of Alcohol and even tried to rehabilitate her husband but got beaten by him for this. Her friend Zulfi, complained of badru's beatings by her husband and when Hamza got arrested for this. Badru, too mustered a lot of courage and decided to continue with the complain but got manipulated by her husband's fake promises. After some time, when Hamza became paranoid of badru and zulfi's illegitimate relation he again beat her during her pregnancy and badru had miscarriage. That day proved to be an Epiphany for badru because she had this realization that, that day Hamza was not drunk. So, she can no longer put the blame on alcohol because its not because of alcohol, it is because of his cruel inherent nature her husband beats her. Badru decided to teach Hamza a lesson and she behaved in the same manner as Hamza used to do. At the end, when her mother asked her to kill Hamza she stated:

“Maar dia to hmesha yaad ayega”

And leave him at the train track but Hamza received the corollary of his deeds and died there. Darlings, like Laapta Ladies portrays the society in its authenticity with aestheticism which makes it an exemplary movie of its kind. Darling, Also speaks about the liberation of women from the strains of social norms by portraying Zulfi's love for Badru's mother. This relationship between a young boy and an aged old lady renders love, desires among people irrespective of their ages. Where everybody was suspecting zulfi's love for badru, zulfi by confessing his love for Shamsu dumbstrucked everybody. The kind of love and acceptance badru showed towards her mother's relationship with zulfi was also receptive This movies Inspires every badru of society to fight against the evil of Domestic Abuse and it motivates every Shamsu to let love enter into your life without being in the confines of societal constraints.

Queen is another instance of Bollywood Movie speaking out for women's empowerment and freedom. Queen comes under the category of coming of age, presenting the character development of its protagonist Rani, a simple Delhi Girl from a

conservative family, who got ditched by her faince on the day of her wedding and became disheartened, however her grandma consoled her by narrating the story of her own separation with her lover Faizal in Pakistan and how she met her grandfather at the Refugee camp which proved to be the fruitful relationship for her. Her inspiring words ignited Rani with new Hope:

“ you never know who you meet where”

To palliate her pain her father asks her if she want to go on her honeymoon alone, and Rani nods yes. Rani's decision of going on to her honeymoon alone, is quite different from other conventional feminist movies. A female who is abandoned by her husband, needs a lot of valour to have her honeymoon alone which she was to enjoy with her husband. Her family's supportive reaction is also progressive, inspiring many other girls to enjoy their life even if they are jilted by their male counterparts. This movie scoffs at the traditional conception that a girl's life is ended when her marriage is called off. It beautifully conveys it deep powerful message that women is not an Abla Nari. She can enjoy her life to the fullest and discover her identity without the company of a male. When she landed up in Paris, She met Vijaylakshami , her confidant, who filled her with new spirit and helped her to regain her confidence. Rani undergone a great transformation from a disillusioned, bereaved girl to a vivacious, exuberant, confident girl. By meeting new people and committing the things that Vijay, her fiancé would never have allowed her to do she became a new rani who is more confidant and self sufficient. This movie holds a deep message of self empowerment to every girl and it shatters the unreceptive ideas, customs of society through Rani's bold and confident character.

English Vinglish , directed by Gauri Khan serves as the movie which sheds light on the gender inequality and impacts of societal norms upon the lives of Women. It showcases the struggle a woman has to go through due to her inability to speak English. The writer has beautifully picked up the subject of language superiority to render the deep down message of gender equality. How the family of a woman looked down upon her just because she is unable to speak fluently. This movie , portrays the disparity between the opportunities of education between man and woman. A woman who sacrifices

her desires, dreams for the sake of her family, her husband , that very family make her feel subservient due to her lack of fluency. Shashi Godhbole, a simple woman entrepreneur, who makes snacks is picturised impeccably. Her endeavours to gain fluency In English demonstrates her fight against the gender inequality and to regain her self respect and confidence. Her family, including her husband, her children scoffs at her staggering English skills. To enhance her communication skills and her self esteem, Shashi Godhbole enrolled in English Speaking Course and she ventured fastidiously to become fluent in English. Eventually, Shashi transformed into an enthusiastic, lively woman from a submissive, servile lady. This movie doesn't only speaks out for gender equality however it also Inspires people who feel inferior because of their inefficiency of speaking English. It penetrates a deep message: to be yourself no matter what others think of you to its spectators.

As all these Bollywood movies, Laapta Ladies too differs in it's plot and proves to be a remarkable movie rendering the appalling circumstances of women with slight humour. With profound aptness, Sneha Desai chose the tradition of typical Veil to indicate the patriarchal inclination to hide woman's identity and to induce inferiority in her mind. In the First scene , when movie begins and Phool due to her long hanging Veil stumbled , her mother asked her earnestly :

“ Ek baar Jo Ghunghat le Lia to aage nhi niche dekhne ki adat dal lo”

These words stated by Phool's mother at the time of her marriage portrays the poignancy and the inferior position of a female in the patriarchal society and how this disseminate through generations. Ghonghat or veil is used as a symbolism to shed light on the dogmatic conceptions regarding female and to conceal their identity. Sneha Desai has used tears, faith and humour to portray the struggle of two females towards regaining their identities. This Metaphor used by Sneha Desai prompts the viewers to think about the mercenary tendencies of patriarchy behind compelling the lady to draw veil on her face. She has beautifully rendered the fact that how women themselves are quite complacent with this dominance over them through the above sentence stated by Phool's mother. Her mother, who is also a female is transferring the orthodoxy to her newly wed

daughter. Once a girl is married she has to carry a long Veil and expects to follow the footsteps of her husband. Ghunghat refers to conceal the identity of a female and in that long Veil a female can only see her husband's shoes which indirectly instilling the inferior place she has in society. Phool, like any other typical village girl, venerates this tradition by carrying the long Veil throughout her journey until she gets lost. Deepak took Phool along with him and took the train. The train was rammed with so many newly weds. Deepak somehow arranged a seat for Phool, where already a newly wed couple were sitting. Each and every bride was covered her face with long red Veil like Phool. In the midnight, when train reached to Murti Village, Deepak asked his bride to wake up and took her off the train. On reaching to his village, Surjmukhi, when that bride unveiled herself everybody was dumbfounded because it was not Phool. On the other hand, Phool lost her way to Surjmukhi and was taken by chottu to his residence to help her. This bride who Deepak mistakenly took along with him, told everybody her name Pushpa. Pardip, the husband of Jaya aka Pushpa instead of being anxious about his lost wife, was indignant with her.

Deepak and Pardip serves to be the first contradictory character created by Sneha Desai. Deepak's worry and anxiety about Phool's whereabouts was conspicuous however, Pardip's reaction was hostile and didn't express any concern about Jaya rather he conversated about going to prostitute to complete the ceremony by having his Suhagraat. After knowing about Pushpa, Deepak didn't behave in percipitancy rather he asked her to relax at his home. He treated her Respectfully. Deepak's character depicts an ideal man who worries for his wife and endeavours dilligently to get her back. Pardip's character is painted as a Greedy, altruistic snobbish, pretentious fellow who disrespects women and treats them as an object. Deepak is a progressive, receptive man however Pardip is rooted in conventional patriarchal values. He considered women to be inferior to men and expects them to behave according to the propriety. In the police station, when Pardip came to take Jaya back, he slapped her in front of the cops and even threatened her which renders his brutality. His first wife was burned by him and Jaya was reluctant to go back with him. By making a contrast between

both these males, Sneha Desai has expostulated the Struggle of her characters for dignity and their identities. Laapta ladies has incorporated a number of contrasting males, where we have Pardip and his friends who believes in shattering the female identity, on the contrary we have Deepak and his friends and also the Police officer who helped Jaya to release herself from the grip of Pardip. Feminism doesn't refer to eliminate males from society or to articulate that a woman doesn't need a man however by making the contrast between these male characters, Sneha Desai has fruitfully conveyed the idea that women need men's support for their emancipation. Females requires males like Deepak, chottu, police officer who truly respects them and value their existence, their desires and dreams. It is only with the help of Deepak and the police officer that Jaya got the chance to fulfill her dreams. The conception of Male and Female's respectful union has beautifully conveyed through Sneha desai's contradictory Male Characters.

Second Contradiction comes with the two lead Heroines Phool and Jaya around whom the plot is engirdled. Phool, the naïve, decrepit, soft-spoken is an embodiment of an ideal woman appears in the first scene. She is presented as a girl who is contended with her upbringing that made her entirely a dependent woman as when she lost her way or taken by chottu to the hospital she didn't even know the name of her village. These inclinations are cultivated in the minds of females since their childhood by their own loved ones. On losing her way to sasural, it was incumbent upon her to live at the station with chottu and dadi, waiting for her husband to take her back. She is also the embodiment of hope and faith. When everybody around her behaved cynically, she was smouldered with faith that one day her husband would come back to her. Through Phool's character Sneha Desai has demonstrated the Indian women in general, her ignorance of her own imbecility that society has ingrained in her prompts us to speculate about the women's tragic state. When she herself is not aware of her subservient position in society how can she be uplifted?. When chottu took her to the helping Centre at the railway station, the officer asked Phool the name of her husband, and she was reluctant to tell. On the contrary, Jaya, absolutely opposite to Phool, when asked her husband's name, she without any hesitation told his name. Everybody

around her seemed to be perplexed at her candour . Jaya, is revolutionary in her manners, she knows organic farming , she knows how to operate a computer and she even motivates deepak's bhabhi to continue her painting. Deepak's bhabhi also appears as a simple bahu , who often neglects her skills and take them as a futile activity however, she was inspired by Jaya 's words:

“ you think making art is futile, then everybody would have it . It is a gifted by Goddess Saraswati”

Jaya seems to be the lighthouse of inspiration for every women character in Laapta Ladies. After her inspiring words, bhabhi started practising and she even painted Phool's picture which helped profoundly in discovery Phool . Jaya and Phool both are opposite to each other in their conviction, manners however they are connected with the strings of femininity. Each and every female character in Laapta Ladies seems to be connected with one another. Deepak's mother looms as a sacrificial , conventional lady who seeks for the happiness of her family even though her own happiness is neglected. When Jaya appreciated the vegetable cooked by Deepak's mother, she laughed idiotically and said :

“ Sabzi ki tareef kon karta hai”

This statement of deepak's mother visualizes that how the efforts of women are often ignored by the males and how they are debased by the patriarchy. She treated jaya's compliment superficially because no one has ever appreciated her. She even told Jaya that how in her prenuptial stage she loved the sabzi of Kamal kakri but due to the despise of Deepak and his father has for it she stopped cooking it. Jaya, asked her to cook it if she likes it. She replied : “ Ab kya Aurton ki pasand ka khana bnega”. She through her sentence explains the place a female holds in a family. How she sacrifices her desires, her prediction for the sake of her family. A female don't even eat what she likes it is because since her childhood she is taught to neglect her own self and invariably values her father , brother and her husband. It is how a female's mind is conditioned by the society. Through this conversation between Jaya and deepak's mother and how she reacted to Jaya's importunity Sneha Desai has put the whole society in question. She prompts the female community to contemplate over their place in male centred society. On the other hand, Phool tended to

think like the other female characters of deepak's mother and bhabhi. She was quite ostentatiousness about the way her mother made her however she was questioned by Dadi and that compelled her to ruminate again. When Phool said that her mother taught her everything including cooking, knitting Dadi asked her did she teach her how to find home? Phool was speechless and became numb. Dadi in the beginning was not agreed to let Phool live in her house but later she supported her. Dadi is realistic, cynical lady who realised the worth of a female due to her experiences. She is contradicted to deepak's mother. Dadi instilled the values of self worth, independence in Phool. When Phool asked her in meloncholic way that why female is not given the opportunity to uplift her by the society? Dadi realistically answered that female is self sufficient and she doesn't need the help of a male and patriarchy is scared of this fact and it hinders the women to know her worth. Woman enjoys in her ignorance, she accepts it greatfully and even embrace it like Phool and Deepak's mother however, Dadi and Jaya they are rebellious. Sneha Desai has made an impeccable Contradiction between Phool and Jaya , Dadi and Deepak's mother. Although Dadi and deepak's mother approximately belongs to same generation but they differs in their perceptions and similar is the case of Phool and Jaya. Dadi , illuminated Phool with a new spirit of vivaciousness, confidence. When in the starting Phool appears as a quivering, indecisive, hesitant girl towards the ending she transformed into a confident, intrepid, daring girl who undertook her journey to surjmukhi all alone. When Dadi get the news of phool's succesful arrival to surjmukhi. She tasted that kalakand cooked by Phool, made the viewer cry, and rendering the sweet , enrapturing ending of the battle against the oppressive conventions. At the end, Phool's appearance without any ghoonghat depicts the victory over suppression. Their journey brimmed them with emancipation, self esteem and Inspires them to conquer their dreams. Jaya, began her new journey towards her dream of pursuing course of organic farming in Dehradun. All these contrasting females conveys the message that female needs female to Inspire her and to make her realize her indispensability. Where Jaya motivates the other female members of deepak's family, here Dadi

constantly endeavours to make Phool realize her worth as a female.

III. CONCLUSION

Laapta ladies, as the title suggested is the story of lost women in search of their identities. Phool, exemplifying an ideal woman was in search of her husband, which was her identity, and Jaya, as a rebellious female was in search of her Individuality. Both of them struggled throughout the movie to fulfill their aspirations. Through their heart-rending journey, Sneha Desai put forward the pestilent consequences of dogmatic notions which preclude the females from fulfilling their dreams. She incorporated the contradictory characters which makes it an authentic portrayal of the human society which is the blend of both good and bad. She effectively conveys the pivotal missive of Male Female unity as it has been depicted through the constant endeavours of Deepak and all the supportive male characters, finally Phool and Jaya found their own self. Males like Deepak, Chootu and others are the hope of a world with equality. Although, through Dadi's character, dissatisfaction, frustration for males has been portrayed, still through the contrary characters of Deepak and Pardip Sneha Desai has rendered the new perspective for male community which is not entirely bad. She ascended the message of unity even through the characters of females also. At the beginning, Phool and Jaya were carrying the long Veil hanging on their faces however at the end after their incessant struggles both of them has been shown without the Veil, sabotaging the shallow traditions. In a One scene Dadi even called this ideology of " a respected girl" or an ideal women a fraud. She earnestly said that since centuries women are a being duped by this proclivity to be an ideal women and girls inadvertently trapped in and forget their individuality, their liberation. Phool was unaware of her being betrayed by her own upbringing however in the meantime of her journey she realized her pitiful state. Their journeys prompts the viewer to contemplate over the shallowness of patriarchal conception and how they put the women in cages to yearn forever . Jaya was Longing for her dreams, Phool was Longing for deepak's union. Longing is another aspect of this movie, which delineates the emotional state of the traumatic characters. For the heavenly society of Equality and

freedom, both male and female has to join hands together for this struggle and it has been delineated perfectly through the contradictory motifs. One has to help the other, world can't run neither without men nor without women, both of them are required for an efficient world. Undoubtedly, Laapta ladies, with slight humour presents a very serious theme of equitability and becomes an influential movie of its kind which Inspires us and also obligates us to examine superfluous or pernicious customs and notions.

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