CHAPTER – V
9 JAKHOO HILL: A DILEMMA OF CONFLICTING VALUES

9 Jakhoo Hill is a purposive play written with a specific intent to document the tremendous progress made by mankind with the passage of time. The progress is more in terms of destruction- a decline in moral and social values. In “Introduction” to the edition, he makes clear:

The most striking feature of contemporary India is the rise of a confident middle class, which is full of energy and drive and is making things happen. That it goes about it in an uninhibited and amoral fashion is also true... The new class is street smart: it has had to fight to rise from the bottom and it has learnt to manoeuver the system. It is easy to despair over its vulgarity, its new rich mentality and its lack of education. But whether India can deliver the goods depends a great deal on it.

(Three English Plays, 17)

Since the start of 1960, India has been experiencing a stern conflict in the socio-economic values. Equal overt manifestation can be seen in the clash between the capitalistic values of the old conventional order and the parochial values of the traditional middle classes. Dr. Randeep Rana in his essay “Thematic Reflections in Gurcharan Das's “9 Jakhoo Hill” paints the existing clash as...

…the development of the modern outlook due to its collision with the west, the impact of liberal education on the society apart from the new spirit of intellectual protest
propagated the rejection of conventional norms and value based on ‘Varna’ system. The new emerging trends in the ideologies and values in society and culture signified a revolt against the dominating upper middle class. The old and the unhealthy traditions of the social, economic and political exploitation of the uneducated and ignorant people were decried.

*(Galaxy, 1)*.

Changes in the economic and social structure have affected the whole fabric of Indian Society. Migration from villages to the town and from towns to metropolitan cities and finally from one country to another has also become a powerful factor in the shaping of the present social structure. Resent E.L. Faris points this social change as:

In modern industrial civilization a set of social trends that constitute virtually and slow social as well as industrial revolution has had fundamental effects on the complete set-up of the country. The transformation to a complex factory and commercial system, the migrations and vertical mobility of populations, the loss of continuity with the past many years, the detachment from community life, and the invention of many labor saving devices for the household - these and other developments have altered the family from large, settled traditions and sacred institution of kinship to a small isolated, secular niche.

*(Social Disorganization, 432)*
Impact of western culture and media in the later half of the both century brought about revolutionary changes in the concept of family in India. Money and market perpetuated a lot of stress on socio-economic and cultural structure. The economic pressure shortage of living space, overall fall in emotional attachments led the society to a path of great fragmentation. This change is also marked with emancipation of women, growth of modern technology, political consciousness, westernization and gradual modernization Andre Betille proposes that Indian family is today the crucial site for the reproduction of socio-cultural inequality. He says...

It is now the family, in effect the nuclear family, neither than the caste or sub-caste, which actually ensures the transmission of social status from one generation to the next. This is affected through the development of three types of capital, using the word in a very broad sense

1. Material capital or wealth.

2. Social capital, meaning a person’s set of social contacts and connections.

3. Cultural capital referring to the cultural resources of declining importance in Indian society.

(Family, Kinship and Marriage in India, 385)

In short the increasing importance of money-power has transformed the value structure of the society. This ultimately has a bearing upon the family structure and relationships also. A spirit of individualism is a big
'high' resulting in increasing nuclearity. Such ideological influences affecting the contemporary family is, depicted in *9 Jakhoo Hill*.

Being a play, written on contemporary concerns, Das tries to explain how economy reflects in human relationships and thus constitutes the prominent theme. The play reminds of the economic and political strategy to eradicate poverty through economic reforms more commonly borrowed from the west. Consequently there was a rise of new middle class which introduced a materialistic mind-set which in turn affected the human relationships. Now what constitutes the relations is not love and affection but money and what makes the thing happen in the modern world is all money. Owing to steep rise in selfishness, emotions and human bonds are missing in the human relationship.

*9 Jakhoo Hill* present the most tumultuous period in the Indian context due to demoralizing Indo-China war. Referring to the context of the play, *The Hindu* stated:

> The political turmoil and disillusionment of the outside world, India's demoralizing war with China, the gradual decline of Nehruvian Ideals and optimism is echoed in the sitting room of *9 Jakhoo Hill* where once well to do family watches in comprehension as its genteel world disintegrates in the face of a brash new social climbing middle class.

(“Treasures from Magic Forest” 14 Feb. 2005)

That the play is an expose of socio-cultural behavioral patterns of the then Indian society is also asserted in the ‘Introduction’:
We are Macaulay's children, not Manu's...we have one foot in India, the other in the west, and we belong to neither culture... our life appears to be fragmented and affected by rapidly changing social and economical order. Societal changes, intensifying debauchery. The ideals of universal brotherhood, sorority and forbearance have been substituted by voracity, profligacy, narcissism and corruption resulting in creation of estranged and alienated individuals all over the country.

(Three English Plays, 18-19).

9 Jakhoo Hill is Das' clever representation of the rising new middle class that is much affected by modern materialism. Chitra as money monger who warns his son, Deepak not to marry Ansuya because her family has recently lost the age old prosperity and privilege:

Chitra: Stop it? All these years I have been teaching you; don't marry beauty, don't marry for love; marry a rich girl.

Deepak: Yes, Ma, I heard you... marry money, But on the train up here you said yourself that you wanted me to think of marrying Ansuya.

Chitra: That was before I found out that they had become poor. (IV. 191)

Chitra's lust for money makes her blind to her son's genuine feeling of love and passion. Here Das hints that now marriage and engagement are
decided by the earning capacity and economic status of family and also broken off by it. Chitra in her desire to secure more money and property is willing to throw her son in the throes of arranged marriage and does not allow her son to live for himself and enjoy life. Das holds the belief that conjugal love and parental love tend to be linked; the parental love adds elements of tenderness, nurturance and responsibility to the relationship. On the other hand conjugal love constructs mutual compatibility, Personal enrichment and balance of dependence and support. Proper and honest worth of marriage allows the couple to approach marriage with a firmer sense of reality.

9 Jakhoor Hill, in addition, is also about parenthood. With the rise of co-parenting in the 20th century there has been an award of autonomy to mothering. Psychological discipline, especially reasoning is now emphasized as the best way to rear a child. The precise dimension of competent parenting are:

1. Authoritarian Parenting: is a restrictive style in which parents exhort the child to follow their directions. Such parenting begets children who are unhappy and anxious about comparing themselves with others. Firm limits and controls are placed on the child, and little verbal exchange is allowed. This style is associated with socially incompetent behaviour.

2. Authoritative parenting encourages parents to be warm and nurturant towards their child. This begets children who are authoritative, cheerful, self-controlled, self-reliant and achievement oriented. This style is associated with children's socially competent behaviour.
3. Neglectful parenting signifies uninvolved parenting resulting in a child’s low self-esteem, social incompetence and a lack of self-control. In adolescence, such children show patterns of truancy and delinquency.

4. Indulgent parenting suggests high level involvement with children with very few demands or control on them. As a result the children might be domineering, egocentric, and noncompliant and have difficulties in peer relations.

Good parenting is the bedrock of normative culture to promote harmony and prosperity. It is to be taken into consideration that society satisfies the cultural need of a societal member. For this the creation of literature need to be a pro-pos with needs of the society. In addition to providing entertainment and edification, society expects literature to strengthen its value system. The inherited and indigenous customs, and traditions and beliefs of the society are further communicated through a writer’s contribution. A writer with a pathological insight may necessarily be reformer than a rebel. Thus the writer is a wise and impartial painter who is committed to better his society. Hence drama in writing is not concerned with the world of ‘lets’ pretend. Chitra is representative of the first type - Authoritarian parenting dictating her son Deepak to chase her goal and material dreams. As an existential character holds a value system being continually defined by her own character. Ironically Gurcharan, an ardent advocate of progress as corporate Guru, does not think that industrial global culture is necessarily the alternative to dogmatic tradition. Chitra poses the question – “Can contemporary society redefine parameters of self-determination, self-esteem, self-fulfillment or self-actualization?” John
Huntington in “Olaf Stapledan and the Novel about the Future” says – “If our great revolution is to succeed it must consist not merely of an economic change, through this is indeed necessary, but also widespread deepening of our consciousness of ourselves and one another. And unless that deepening consciousness, controls the economic revolution, all will be in vain (Contemporaryliterature, 356).

Authoritarian parenting is also debated by Dattani in plays like Dance like a Man. Here Jairaj and Ratna illustrate the truth about Indian society and nation, by partial turning away from their past and by establishing the yet to be tested knowledge. The play is a painful remembering on putting together of the dismembered past- the conventional roles, to make sense of the trauma of the past. The characters as a result gain pity and respect not by simple negation of traditional Indian society but by representing a hybridized past. Consequently Dattani's plays do not idealize the existing world. They seek to realize it and if possible ‘better’ it through reformation. That is why they are contemporary life situation of middle and lower middle classes. His object is to

...focus on cultural emphasis and how all characters are at conflict with that. The parents, the grandfather, the neighbor- they are all in that sense in tension with their own sensibilities, as opposed to cultural sensibility they have knowingly and unknowingly subscribed to.

(Muffle Voices:Women in Modern Indian Theatre, 134)

Dattani's plays become a strong witness of the double- culture of our society. Though the middle and the upper middle class who are now English
speaking people profess an allegiance to the secular, the westernized aspect of global culture yet have restricted themselves by traditional role expectations. This hypocritical urban modern society is detailed by Asha Kuthari Chaudhari in *Mahesh Dattani* as:

The fissure between the conventional and current cultures has thrown up a new landscape. The play races towards a brave culminating, laying bare the gruesome truths that lie behind the pretence of conservation Indian mortality (32).

In all societies, there exists some form of stratification or the other. Stratification is a geological metaphor that describes the structure of inequality in a society. When people are placed in a ranked order on the basis of their inequalities it takes, the form of ‘social stratification’. There are four basic types of stratification- caste, class, slavery and estates. Slavery is ancient and extreme form of stratification... In most countries it has now been eliminated. The 'Estate system of Stratification existed in Feudal Europe. In medieval Europe the three estates were the ‘Nobility’, the ‘clergy’ and the ‘commoners’. The caste- system in India is a theoretical scheme on an existential level- the society is divided into localized groups of people called, ‘Jati’,on ground, there one thousands of Jati which belongs to four varnas - the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. Hence there are two different stratification within the caste system. Puneetinder Walia in *Concept of Social Stratification and Social Exclusion* says:

The rights and duties of each varna as defined as per the Brahminical traditions and are strictly adhered to by all
Brahmin castes. But all Brahmin castes maintain their social difference and inequality in status at the local level. In India there is a coexistence of both class as well as caste-based. The so-called lower castes also happen to be the most deprived sections of the society and also the most excluded ones.

(books google.co.in/books?fid9GFMH_SQC)

In the contemporary society, class is the dominant form of stratification in all modern societies. Schiffman defines classes as:

...the division of members of a society into a hierarchy of distinct status classes, so that members of each class have relatively the same status and members of all other classes have either more or less status.

Broadly speaking stratification rests on

1. Wealth

2. Power and

3. Prestige or recognition level

Unlike India the contemporary British society has 7 (Seven) social classes as Britain can no longer be boxed to the traditional “upper”, “middle” and “working classes”. The categories in between are now established middle class, technical middle class, new affluent workers, traditional and emergent service class. Professor Fiona Devine of the University of Manchester upholds the view that “There’s more fuzzy area
between the traditional working class and traditional middle class. ([http://www.independat.co.uk/news/home-news/-1](http://www.independat.co.uk/news/home-news/-1)). English society is thereby structured as -

1. **Precariat**: The most deprived class whose everyday life is precarious marked with low level of economic, cultural and social capital.

2. **Traditional working class** - This performs the age old tasks received through inheritance and is primarily older in age-group.

3. **Emergent service class** - Localized to urban areas this group has high levels of emerging cultural capital and high social capital.

4. **Technical middle class**. With high economic capital, it is cocooned to a few social contacts due to less social dynamism.

5. **New affluent workers**: This is characterized by higher levels of cultural and social capital.

6. **Established middle class**: Identified as a gregarious and culturally engaged class.

7. **Elite**: The most privileged with highest amount of economic capital

9 *Jakhoo Hill* is purely a class based play. The functionality of the class disparity focused here adds much to social stratification. Class system in India had a much late birth. The crystallization of the classes of society appeared in later Vedic times. According to Eminent Historian Romila Thapar, India had a rigid ordering of society with Brahmins at the acme and ‘knowledge-churning’ as their prestigious work-glory. They were the law-makers and the preserver of the caste-system in India. To a large extent
exploitation of the untouchables was merely due to their superiority complex. They lived in the outskirts as an alienated class with no sense self-worth and self-esteem. Of the society family was the life giving unit. ‘Family’ as a social unit determining intrinsic changes is also a field of contemplation in 9 Jakhoo Hill, Chitra's family is set against that of Amrita’s to underline their functional and objective differences. Because ‘family’ gives the earliest and the most fundamental lessons in socialization, it is defined in Encyclopedia Britannica as:

...the most familiar of social institutions which seems to be most stable, enduring and universal. (Vol. IX 59)

R.M. Maciver and Charles H. Page in their book Society. An Introductory Analysis details it as – “The family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children (238). The two families as oppositional units mark the change in the Indian family with the western education, emancipation of woman, growth of modern technology, social mobility, and migration towards industrial settings, political consciousness and lust for glamorous living. In the prevailing era, most of the educated as well as illiterate do not want to live in rural areas. They want to go to the cities and earn a lot of money for enjoying the luxuries of global culture. D Lerner points out in his book Thepassing of Traditional Society,-“Globalization also implies social mobility, the term is thus more pervasive. A global society has to encourage rationally from the calculus of choice. It shapes individual behaviour and conditions its rewards (45). The structural change that has occurred in recent years is mostly from the large joint structure to the small joint household, and less to the nuclear family of the western type.
This structure of family defines the type of family. Ralph Linton speaks of two types of family- ‘consanguinal’ which consists of parents, children, grand children, surrounded by a fringe of spouses. He contrasts with conjugal family consisting of husband, wife and their offspring surrounded by a fringe of loosely attached and intermittently operative relatives. According to the theory of Purusarthas, there are four aims of family life-

Moksa represents the end of life, the realizations of an inner spirituality in man. Artha refers to the acquisitive instinct in man and signifies his acquisitions, enjoyment of wealth and all that it connotes. Karma refers to the instinctive and emotional life of a man and provides for satisfaction of his sex drives and aesthetic urges. They together represent his temporal interests, the activities and pursuits of life in this world. Dharma provides a link between the two, the animal and the God in man. The fourfold aims thus seek to co-ordinate the activities of man for the realization of his spirituality.

(Marriage and Family, 25)

The theory of Purusharthas is given concrete expression in the Hindu scheme of ashramas according to which life is divided into four stages- brahmacharya, grhastha, vanaprastha and samnyasa with respective duties and functions. The institution of asramas is connected with “the theory of three debts”:
Each man is born with three debts (rna) namely (a) the debt of the ancestors (b) the debt to the sages or to the teachers (c) the debts of the Gods. The first debt is paid by giving food offerings to the ancestors and ensuring the continuity of the offerings through begetting sons; the debt to the Gods is paid by daily worship and if possible, performance of sacrifices; the debt to the sages is paid by living the life of a pupil and learning the traditional love.

*(Marriage and Family in India, 25).*

The disintegration of ancient family structure is strikingly projected through the Amrita-Ansuya-Karan family. The play underlines the economic pressure, and overall fall in the emotional attachments leads the Amrita family to further fragmentation at the hour of denouncement. Karan ashamed of his incestuous thoughts leave the family, and thereby makes no return due to the development of detachment where Ansuya deserted by Deepak leaves for Bombay under Economic pressure.

This refuge outside the family shelter in case of Karan and Ansuya hints at the fact that traditional is passing through severe stresses and strains. With the disintegration of joint family, the typology of family form branded extensively. Chitra and Amrita's family can be categorized within the eleven family types categorised by Pauline Kolanda.

...Nuclear, supplemented nuclear, Sub-nuclear, Single person, supplemented sub-nuclear, collateral joint, supplemented collateral joint lineal joint, supplemented
lineal joint, lined collateral joint, and supplemented lineal collateral joint

*(Family, Kinship and Marriage in India, 385)*

Das also hints at the fact that the institution of the Indian family is today the crucial site for the reproduction of social inequality. Ansuya, in spite of her brains and beauty is rejected by Chitra as her daughter-in-law because she does not have an uncle of the administrative calibre of Rai Saheb to pass unhesitatingly the licence much needed for Deepak’s company. Rai Saheb’s niece is Chitra’s choice as a part of the bargain settled to promote Deepak’s career.

Chitra: …I thought you would be jumping. Think of your future son. When they find out about her in your company, you will probably get a double promotion.

Deepak: (Barking) To hell with my promotion. Ma, I want Ansuya.

Chitra: Yeh phir shuru ho gaya!

Deepak: It’s my one chance for an honest life. She is a 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...
The hardship of the competitive capitalist world has brought all human values to decay. R.S. Mann in *Social Change in Indian Society* points the basic causes of family disintegration and degradation:

1. Economic self-sufficiency, through employment, permits a higher degree of economic individualism which is not comparable with the interests of the joint family.

2. Quarrels among the women are another factor which has tended to the establishment of the individual families.

3. The general increase in the members of the family is another cause of separation... In this process the members in the Joint family get separated without developing any bad feeling among themselves.

4. When the head's authority is challenged by any member of the family...

5. ...People forgetting the spirit of tolerance and disinterested service (30).

Das in *9 Jakhoo Hill* adds new factors that are encouraging the growth of smaller units of family households like heightened ambitions, opportunity for higher education, increased occupational mobility, desire for higher standard of living, greater individuality and more independence and opportunities for self- worth amongst the otherwise marginalised gender.
The plays also bring on surface the ‘sour’ message streaked with painful reality that all familial relations are based on money and wealth. Now marriage and engagement are decided by the earning capacity and economic status of family and also broken off by it. This makes the play a harrowing tale of blunted human relationships. Deepak's marriage to Rai Saheb's niece for an affluent dowry questions the strength of emotional bond in a contemporary Indian family. Deepak's emotional hiccups do not move the affluence-obsessed mother who in negation bemoans her starved life at Lahore in the pre-partition days.

Chitra: Oh-oh, we always need more money. There's never enough. Oh tu kya janta hai what it is like to grow up poor? What do you know what it was like to be the tenants of these people in Lahore? Kisi ke tukdon par palna, tu kya jaanta hai? After partition, what do you know what it was like to be a petty kiranawalla's wife in Ghatkopar.

\[(IV, 191)\]

In material aspirations, Gurcharan Das shows how Chitra exceeds the ethical boundaries. Here profligacy is not a bone rather a boon passport for success. She willfully agrees for sexual relations with Rai Saheb to procure the much cherished license for her son's company:

Chitra: (Her eyes light up) Son, it is done. Your future is pucca, and your license meri mutthi mein hai !...Rai Saheb ke saath gai zaroor thi. But
not the club. To his house. Ek ghanta unke saath bita kar aa rahi hoon! Samjhe? (IV, 193)

The degradation of middle class value system is the subject of Gurcharan Das’ intense speculation in his prose writing *The Difficulty of Being Good*. He believes that the ferocious competition of interests and passions can be corrosive to our mental and public health. Chitra and Rai Saheb are lives of human imperfections trapped in compromising web of materialism and “Since it is man’s nature to want more, one learns to live with ideological incompetency. (*The Difficulty of Being Good*, 38)

If Chitra - Rai Saheb project the ugly phase Ansuya presents the positive as Das upholds-

Karma has its optimistic side in a human being’s ability to act with freedom and be responsible for this act. Its pessimistic side is a feeling that we cannot escape from out past.

(*The Difficulty of Being Good*, 209)

In interpreting the metaphysics of artha’ Das questions the limit of greed for wealth and success. Deepak’s Character baffles a sensitive reader in search of a tenable answer to the question held on a placard. If Deepak with a handsome salary agrees to buy more forsaking his eligibility as honest love in the institution called marriage, the lust for ‘more money’ has much more to damage, much more to ruin. This portrayal reminds one of another intriguing question-
I had met Raju 10 years earlier. I had looked him in the eye and I had seen sincerity. Competence and great purpose... why should a person of palpable achievement, who lacked nothing in life turn to crime?

*(The Difficulty of Being good, 1)*

Materialism is not a travel disease of the west. In the history of Indian culture, materialism occupied a special place and played a significant rule. Written sources have preserved the names of number of schools of materialist philosophy of which “Lokayata” is one. Etymologically, it means “attached to the earthly world” or “related to the people” or “found among the people” and referentially, appeared first in the *Upishads*. This doctrine states out from the thesis that sense perception is the only source of real knowledge about the world. To same extent it finds parallel thought in Epicurean philosophy.

9 Jakhoo Hill believes that when affluence is idolized, it enslaves the individual and lures him away from the meaning and purpose of life. Wealth, pursued for its own sake, is the God of materialism. Through Chitra’s subservience to non–human, profit supersedes the happiness of Deepak. The generation of wealth is a goal higher than the promotion of human welfare. Paul Tourneir laments at this moral erosion as:

The more obsessed one gets with “having”, the less capable or keen he gets of “being”... in that event the wealthier a person gets materially, the poorer he gets, humanly. When personality is reduced to a materialistic
concept, we get stuffed shirts where we expect great men and women.

(Cultural Materialism, 3)

The degradation of human worth into “having” and the corresponding erosion of human dignity together constitutes the perverse logic of corruption. The craving to hog social limelight is an irresistible corollary both in Chitra and Amrita. The irony is that they intend to purchase public respect at the cost of self–respect. Indeed too big a price to pay for a spirit of covetousness.

Relationships suffer in a culture of superficiality. Ansuya–Deepak relationship and Ansuya–Karan bristle with anxiety and mistrust when animated by the mindset of materialism which Amrita, Chitra and Rai Sahab embody. Rai Saheb reflects the ugly belief that a man is a cherished treasure as long as he is ensconced in the seat of power. His demand for scotch alone is symbolic of a man’s social worth measured wholly by the consumables he can afford. This includes everything related to prestige like exotic cuisine, expensive wardrobe, expensive medical treatment, exclusive education, elite residential locality and such other catalysts of social envy. But then the question that continues to lurk is – “Is this a projection of middle class?.. Sociologist Dipankar Gupta, who authored a book on Middle class called Mistakan Modernity (2000) believes that:

Identifying the middle class only by looking at what and how much they consume is problematic. In most modern societies, the middle class is not about acquisitions, but
the extent to which the ethic of modernity is internalized … in India we confuse modernity with things or habits…

(‘The New Middle Class’ Eye – Sunday Express, 10)

9 Jakhoo Hill is more contemporary in its preoccupations. The dramatic world is peopled by men of gentle grace and idealism who are eager to prioritise their needs and high-blown desires for any cost. The narrator is an elderly ex-academic Karan Chand who alongwith telling the story unbares his private skeletons. The high point of this play is ‘Truth or Dare’ a game which unbares the shrewd intents to reveal the ‘real self’ wrapped under the guise of ‘glorified self’ Further “the contrasting tales of decline and ascent rooted in the larger tragedy of partition, give the play dynamic tension and quality. (Engaging in Theatre, 62)

For all such reasons 9 Jakhoo Hill is different … it is perhaps the most complex and the most accomplished of the three as well as the most popular” (The Book Review, 62)