

How is the theme of conflict dramatised in act two scene 2

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

'East is East' is the first play written by professional actor Ayub Khan Din. In writing this he hoped to achieve many things, one of them being to open peoples eyes to the different conflicts presented in inter racial marriages in a way which includes humour and gets the point across. This play was first preformed in 1996 at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

'East is East' is about a family of eight living in a small house in Salford in 1970, after the war between India and Pakistan had broken out. The Khans are an anglo-Pakistani family, who have six children, five boys and one girl. The father George is trying to teach his family how to be a 'proper Muslim family', whom in his eyes are that they listen to everything he says and there are no arguments about what he says. But the only drawback is that they live in a community full of white people.

The children are too westernised, in the sense that they know nothing about their culture, except Maneer. The whole play is about the children namely Tariq trying to hide who he is, and hates his dad too much to even bother to give the Muslim culture a go. When their dad introduces the idea of the two oldest sons getting married, all the problems and tension start building up. They build up to a certain point where they all come out and the family have one big fight, everyone against George. Which leaves the children more confused then when they started and the family feeling closer than before.

The scene opens with a reference to a previous cultural conflict, about Sajits delayed circumcision. " it only took you five minutes to draw a nob and foreskin last week" (page-44). Circumcision in a Muslim boys life is very important, as they believe the foreskin is dirty and shouldn't be there. This

was dramatised with a minor argument between Ella and George, about how important and necessary the circumcision was.

It is then followed by another cultural conflict, this time all the children are involved. They are confused about who they are and they do not know what to call themselves, as they are all different and have different feelings towards being Pakistani.

Saleem: I thought we were Anglo-Indian

Meenah: We're Eurasian

Saleem: sounds more romantic than Paki I suppose

Tariq: We're English!

Maneer: Were not Anglo-Indian, not Eurasian and not English.

This scene is dramatised through an argument between the siblings, Tariq doesn't want to be associated with being anything but English, whereas on the other hand Maneer feels more Pakistani than the rest of the group.

However humour is added to lighten the mood, when Saleem comments on the word 'Eurasian' being more romantic than Paki. This makes the argument less serious but still as effective and dramatic.

Shortly after this during the same argument a social conflict arises. Maneer brings up a point that no one was prepared for " No one round here thinks we're English, we're the Paki family who run the chippy"(page-45) He assumes that the rest of the community is white and that they are racist.

This is dramatised through the argument at which point Tariq retorts with his view about Maneer and his Dad, " And you're well in with me dad on that one aren't you?" When Tariq and Maneer are arguing this shows conflicts between the two brothers and shows the audience how something as simple as views and beliefs can separate siblings.

After the argument Sajit makes a reference to a previous family conflict about Tariq and Abdul getting married. " he isn't gonna marry a Paki"(page-45). Tariq is set against marrying a Pakistani as he feels he isn't one so why should he marry one " I'm not gonna marry a Paki." (Act 1 Scene 4) The audience is shown a religious conflict between Tariq and Pakistanis. We are shown that Tariq detests his religion because he keeps referring to anyone from it a 'Paki', which is rude, shows he doesn't care and he looks down on his religion.

The children are shown to have effects from all the conflicts around them. Sajit describes his parka as being a sanctuary to him. He is feeling the strain of the arguments. " when its all done up... I don't have to listen to anyone arguing and shouting at me..." (Page-46). This scene is dramatised as a sensitive part of the play, Sajit is opening up to his older brother, Abdul, and Abdul is seeing Sajit in a light he never saw before. Sajit to him was always the rude ignorant mischievous child who never wanted to take his parka off and who always seemed a bit dotty. After their talk Abdul wishes he had a parka to get away from it all, " I wish I had a parka." (Page-47) all the conflicts, living up to his father's expectations and his complicated life.

Another family conflict is shown when Abdul tries to explain to Tariq why he has never defied his father and let his father beat him. " I want him to treat me like a proper son. I want him to trust me. I don't want him to feel as if I'm some investment for his future." (Page-47) This is dramatised as a would be sensitive part, Abdul is trying to explain to Tariq why he listens to his father and tries to respect him.

The world conflict in this scene forms a backdrop in the play. George feels strongly about Pakistan and the war as he has family near the borderline. Ella on the other hand can't seem to see the importance of the war, which ultimately angers George.

" Radio: There have been further reports of the indiscriminate destruction of buildings and summary executions by the west Pakistani army in Dacca, capital of East Pakistan. Eyewitness accounts claim the university had been attacked, and many students killed. In India a statement has been issued condemning the attacks, and has called for negotiations to take place. The Indian army has been put on full alert all along the border." (Page-48)

Ella and Georges argument starts off with Ella talking to Annie about the situation in Azad Kashmir. George doesn't like what Ella is saying to Annie, and tries to justify his point " These bastards, I tell you they want to do this. No help East Pakistan, wanting bloody Azad Kashmir." (Page 49), Ella just brushes off Georges feeble attempt to justify his point and carries on her conversation with Annie.

Cultural conflicts are brought into the argument when Ella retorts to George "I thought you were all supposed to be brothers, isn't that what Islam teaches you?" (Page-50) This comment angers George and it is dramatised with George getting frustrated because his point has been proven wrong and with the truth. Realising he cannot win this battle he changes the topic to Ella being a bad wife.

This is where the argument escalates to include martial conflicts. George complains to Ella that she is a bad 'Muslim' wife and doesn't want to understand his point of view, this is where it is Ella's turn to be irritated. "I'm a Muslim wife when it suits you. I'll stop being a Muslim wife at 5:30 when the shop wants opening, or one of your relatives wants help at the Home Office." (Page-50) This shows the audience Ella's resentment towards how she is treated in the marriage. This is dramatised with George and Ella's voices becoming louder and their words more truthful and hurtful towards each other.

The argument escalates further when George and Ella become taps, their unspoken feelings towards each other pouring out, and becoming harsher by the word. George getting angrier by the minute with Ella shouting at him about how he never listens to his children and crushes their confidence, and lives. "I'm not gonna stand by and let you crush them one by one because your pig bloody ignorance" (page-51) At which point George snaps because pig in the Muslim religion is not a very nice thing. This part of the argument is dramatised with George and Ella screaming at each other at the tops of

their voices, hoping the louder they get the more the other person would understand.

The argument escalates so far that it ends in physical abuse. It is dramatised by " George grabs Ella violently by her hair and pulls her to the ground. He kicks and beats her." (Page-51). This form of dramatisation is very extreme and powerful in the sense that it makes the audience feel for the victim character, Ella, and it is a very dramatic end to a scene. It gives the play a pre climax before the end, which keeps the audience entertained and engaged. Outside the shop window Sajit is watching and crying, this argument between George and Ella fits in with him wearing the parka to escape the shouting and fighting.