

# Happily Ever Laughter – A Tale Of Two Plays

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, 2016, Aaina Dramatics culminated their three-day theatrical extravaganza, Dramataze, with a set of two plays, titled Happily Ever Laughter. The two irreverent plays poked fun at their subject matter without sacrificing the chance to relentlessly mock what may be interpreted as injustice by the average person. A clearer idea of what the aforementioned sentence espouses may be derived from the basic storyline of each individual play.



The first play, 'A Fair Affair', originally written by Sameer Garud, was a scathing indictment of the assumption that couples in lasting marriages know what they are doing. The cast consisted of four actors, each of whom was integral to the progression of the story. The characters were extremely well defined, with the happily married couple being brought to life by Suryansh and Avni, as Aakash and Avni Kulkarni. The

unhappily married couple was portrayed with great aplomb, the bickering twosome being played by Khushbu as Ketki Mahajan and Sankalp as Sagar Mahajan.

The story unfolds in the Kulkarnis' home, with Ketki and Sagar having come over for dinner. Both Aakash and Reva are portrayed as food lovers, so a wonderful meal is prepared for their new friends. This is where the first twist in the play appears, with Ketki and Sagar revealing to the Kulkarnis that they have, in fact, come over for something more than just dinner. They want someone who doesn't know them to judge their failing marriage, and figure out who is responsible for it going haywire, and leaving their union on the verge of annulment.



While observing and judging, Reva and Aakash start analysing their own marriage, and a cacophony ensues, with the husbands on one side and the wives on the other. The final twist in the play, where Reva's ostensible squeeze calls her, and her husband picks up, made quite a few jaws drop, with gasps aplenty. The roles were played splendidly by all four actors,

the dialogue delivery being snappy, leaving the audience in splits for much of the play. The lighting and set design were up to the mark, but the ambient noise during the play was slightly overwhelming.

✘ As an interlude between the two plays, Aaina had a live music performance, with Akash and Rishabh tweaking the strings and playing some easy listening music to ensure the audience was still engaged. Within about 20 minutes the second play, B.A.M.B (Butter and Mashed Bananas), originally by Ajay Krishnan, was underway. The play was a satirical comedy with piercing views on the meaning of freedom of speech in our country. The play was in the format of a musical, with multiple numbers performed by the cast with the help of the aforementioned live band, much to the delight of those gathered.

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This rollercoaster of a play began with the narrator detailing his life's journey to the audience, right from his mother's womb, where he was an unborn child (Shiven), talking about the difficulty of being born to a right wing conservative father (Pratyush), and a left wing feminist mother (Khushi). The child is understandably reluctant to be born into this cauldron of conflicting ideologies, and is finally tricked into doing so in an amusing manner. Later, the child grows up to become a world famous author (Prakhar), with his book being adapted into a movie, and even winning an Oscar. However, he faces extreme opposition in his home country to anything he says or does. He enters politics as a last resort, starting his own party as a firebrand politician (Anvesh), to fight for his freedom of speech and right to express his views. All his attempts, however, are in vain, crushed by the monolithic system in place in India, with someone always waiting to exclaim, "Don't you dare say that!".



Along the meandering path the play followed, there were multiple numbers sung by the cast, and one spectacular item number performed by Prakhar, gyrating with no regard for his own joints, that had the audience in splits. They added to the message the play was trying to convey, with incisive, almost biting lyrics that mercilessly mocked the censorship taking place due to societal pressures in India. As a final, ridiculous conclusion, to put forth to the audience and make them realise how the sheer travesty that censorship is affects the common man, dictionaries are banned by the Prime Minister (Piyush), and the Leader of the Opposition (Khushi), forever negating all “immoral” thought. Many other actors present had various roles in the play, and also performed as the chorus, including Zubair, Krittika, and Hardik.

One left the theatre with a more nuanced thought process, and the audience learned to always keep expecting the unexpected, as Aaina Dramatics kept everyone on their toes with these two excellently produced plays; ‘A Fair Affair’ being directed by Dhananjay, and ‘B.A.M.B’ being directed by Shiv and Mohit. Those assembled had a grand old time, as evidenced by all the

laughing, and from the general atmosphere of satisfaction, it appeared that everyone felt they'd gotten their money's worth. The fact that Aaina pulled off both plays in the span of a mere two weeks was not lost on the onlookers, who appreciated the effort with hearty applause.