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GENDER TROUBLES IN MAHESH DATTANI'S WRITINGS

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Abstract

Gender has been a problem since humans came into existence. Mahesh Dattani is one of the key writers who has influenced by such sort of ideology. Everything in the universe exists for a purpose. There is nothing taboo in the creation of nature. Dattani makes these vivid concepts as the primary theme of his writing. This paper is a study of gender troubles not only in India but globally.

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Key words: Queer, Gender, Bias, Dattani.

Introduction

Famous Indian playwright, actor, and director Mahesh Dattani was born in Bangalore, India, in 1958. *Final Solutions*, *Dance Like a Man*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Tara*, and other notable works are among his best-known compositions. The majority of his works address topics such as sexuality, feminism, identity crises, patriarchy, and the oppression of women, among many other social stigmas. The Sahitya Akademi Award for *Final Solutions and Other Plays* was given to Dattani in 1998. He is a well-known actor in Indian theater. Using Indian families as his medium, he conveys the contradictory nature of contemporary Indian society.

In India, feminism refers to a collection of movements that work toward giving Indian women equal opportunities and rights in the political, economic, and social spheres. It is the fight for women's rights in Indian society. There have been three distinct phases to the history of feminism in India: the first started in the middle of the 1800s when male European colonists started speaking out against the social evils of Sati; the second began in 1915 and continued until Indian independence, when Gandhi included women's movements into the Quit India movement and autonomous women's organizations started to form; and the third, post-independence, has concentrated on equal treatment of women at home after marriage, in the workforce, and in their right to political parity.

Gendered Themes in the Writings of Dattani

Mahesh Dattani selects topics pertaining to gender and sexuality. His characters stand in for members of modern society that writers and dramatists typically dismiss as deviant. He questions the heterosexual norm, which is regarded as fundamental to our society. This center is a cultural construct built upon the erasure from popular theater and literature of homoerotic relationships. In the radio play *Seven Steps Arowd Fire*, which aired on BBC Radio on January 9, 1999, the so-called perverse 'hijras' are highlighted, and the cultural tools that have subverted their identity are examined. In his debut radio play, *Do the Needful* (which aired on BBC Radio 4 on August 14, 1997), a homosexual man is compelled to wed a woman who refuses to follow the customs of traditional marriage.

The drama *Dance Like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani paints a vivid picture of the difficulties in reversing gender roles. The play is set in a large house in the middle of a city. The play primarily focuses on the lives of two Bharatanatyam dancers, Jairaj and his wife Ratna. Jairaj's father Amritlal initially supported his teenage passion for dancing because he thought it was just a passing fad that would eventually fade. However, Jairaj views dancing as a serious career and keeps up his practice despite being aware of his father's displeasure.

Amritlal feels that dancing is a feminine activity and that Jairaj's Guruji, who even walks like a woman and has long hair, is inappropriate for a man. "Normal men don't keep their hair so long," he claims (Dattani 417). Amritlal is a self-described liberal who, while fighting for freedom and even approving his son's marriage to a woman from a different community, cannot see his son as a Bharatanatyam dancer. He stands for a patriarchal culture that harbors the worst notions of discrimination against women. Amritlal says that "A woman in man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in woman's world is pathetic," which is a pseudo-

progressive view of gender roles. Male characteristics such as “Strength, authoritativeness, emotionlessness, practicality and opposite to all these are considered as feminine” (quid. in Ajmi) are used to define masculinity in a patriarchal society.

In the annals of Indian drama in English, *Tara* is a significant work. It is the tragic story of a strong-willed girl who becomes a victim of the gender inequality that exists in Indian society and then has to prove herself in a world where men rule. The Siamese twins Tara and Chandan, their parents Bharati and Patel, and Tara's neighborhood friend Roopa are the main characters in the play. Mrs. Bharati gives birth to twins, a girl and a son who are surgically separated after being joined at the hip and having three legs each.

According to a scan, the girl supplied a significant portion of the third leg's blood supply, increasing the leg's likelihood of survival on the girl. However, the boy was given two legs by surgeon Dr. Thakkar due to a decision made by Mrs. Patel and her powerful father in politics. This was an unethical act, and the conspiracy was masterminded by Bharati's father, who, in addition to being wealthy and powerful in society, desperately needed an heir. Since he was without a son, his grandson was the next in line, so he made every effort to see his heir standing on two natural legs. However, the leg failed to draw blood from his body, so Chandan was left with two days of life, after which it was amputated, leaving the twins dependent on one artificial leg each.

Chandan then relocates to London and modifies his name. He flees there primarily in order to put his past behind him. Far from home, in this strange new environment, he tries to suppress the guilt. Home is still there even though he left it. He is unable to move on from Tara

on an emotional, psychological, or even physical level. She seems to be dormant in the recesses of Chandan's mind, where she will never awaken. This brings to mind Tars's claim from the play: "And me, maybe we still are. Like we've always been. Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb. Till we..." (325)

The play reveals trauma, anguish and frustration caused to Dan by past events. He tries to write a play *Twinkle Tara* on the life of his twin sister but fails to write anything as he is not properly charged to recall the past incidents and removes the sheet from the type writer. Dan accepts that Tara deserves something better in life. Tara is one of Mahesh Dattani's ideal characters, and both readers and the audience have praised her greatly. In a world dominated by men, Dattani has attempted to portray the feminine side that must constantly reconcile with a society that only values male viewpoints. Identity crises are a result of the gender crisis, especially for women. Tara, despite her physical deformity, possesses a strong sense of moral strength and requires the support of her parents and brother. She becomes disinterested in life when she believes that she is not receiving moral support.

The play makes enough of the male chauvinism that permeates the male-dominated society, which presents itself as progressive and liberal in both thought and deed. The Patel household's actual nature is exposed. An image typical of India, where women stay at home and men go to work. It emerges when one follows traditions and takes care of the home. Dattani fully utilizes this scene to draw attention to the discrimination against women in Indian society. As the husband and wife argue, he angrily claims that Bharati has always been stronger than him because of her father's wealth. As Patel gets ready for work, he suggests that Chandan accompany him to the office so that both of them can experience it. Tara appears a little offended,

and Chandan advises him to take Tara with him, but Patel rarely heeds his son's counsel. Roopa walks in the middle of the conversation, seen listening at the door. Tara remarks that the men in the house were deciding on whether they were going to go hunting while women looked after the cave.

Throughout the play, Dattani illustrates to his audience the distinction between gender and sex, implying that women lack social standing and identity. The play successfully refutes all forms of propaganda that promote gender equality. The play closes with Dan having a vision in which Tara and Chandan's spirits embrace each other firmly and appear without limping, implying that as long as they were both allowed to live in society, they had to be paralyzed. The dramatist wishes to convey the idea that gender discrimination is unnatural and that, as long as it persists, our lives are meaningless, leading to nothing but feelings of restlessness and uselessness. The play attempts to shake Indian society out of its habitual ways of thinking by holding up a mirror to reveal its true nature.

Conclusion

Men who either treat their wives harshly or view female sex in general, or who accuse their wives of being both 'gay' and 'bisexual,' are exposed by Dattani for their hypocrisy. Dattani has the guts to accurately and impartially point out the innate flaws in human nature. Since the plays portray actual events, his characters are realistic rather than exaggerated. The best way to characterize his plays is as middle-class dramas set in kitchen sinks. His plays blatantly depict discrimination against women and female children. He is not biased by gender or community. In *Tara*, the mother of the girl child discriminates against her. *Dance Like a Man* and *Tara* argue

throughout these plays, but the audience never seems to find the answers (Sharma and Sharma). Dattani looks over the issues and finds them challenging, but he doesn't avoid them. Dattani has both virtues and vices and is described as 'warm' and 'human.' They relate to us in our own circumstances and make us feel sympathetic.

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