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WOMEN AS PARAAKRAMI IN THE PLAYS OF MAHESH DATTANI

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ABSTRACT



In comparison to several modern-day Indian dramatists who venture Indian women as receptive fatalities of phallic dominance alive like jiffy category citizens, Dattani tries to see them like persons of fortitude. Moreover, a strength of character of their individuality enables them keep going with their identity and distinctiveness in spite of numerous impediments and obstructions that they face in their ontogeny and spirit. As the playwright he himself diagrammatically expounds, that they are like bonsai plants that have been trimmed and clipped, their personalities chopped off to androgynous intent and delight and made to party to their strains. Dattani brings out an unwanted and weird feature of Indian women as to how they are competent to uphold themselves and often triumph over unfavorable conditions revealing the core of the whims and fancies of being in them who never give up but visage for options. It is this new-sprung conception that this paper spotlights the show of Dattani.

Keywords: *Dattani's Women Fictional characters, New Perspectives, Patricentric Society, and Radical Conceptualization*

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The dramatic works of Mahesh Dattani are best-known for their novelty, vigor and radical approach towards analytic thinking and firmness of Indian cultural problems. As Dattani himself acknowledges in one of his interrogations, his intention as a playwright is to daze and startle his audience from their cognizance of satisfaction that all is well with the universe and there is nothing to vex about. He is a reformist and ameliorates for gregarious justness using the plays to advance higher cultural consciousness among his audience. One specialty of Dattani is that he not only chooses uncommon and unusual themes for dramatic presentation but also never repeats his themes twice, vindicating his enormous creative potential and catholicity of outlook on society. More than anything else, it is the condition and status of Indian women from girlhood to ripe old age that draws the special attention of Dattani.

In almost every drama he reckons one vital woman character, who is vigorous in spirit and individualistic in outlook to project that in a dominantly patriarchal society where women are permanently relegated to second class citizen status, women are not passive playthings in the hands of men but resist and question whenever their individuality is being invaded or suppressed. They suffer but do not surrender. It is in the sufferance that their strength lies. On the other hand, they are smart, resourceful, and quick to adapt and respond to any exigency that may arise. It is this new facet of Indian women, fighting the ethos of oppression and subordination that Dattani highlights in his plays. In almost all the plays women indicate their spirit of individuality. This paper presents Dattani's internal

representation of Indian women as fauna of spirit whom hundreds of indoctrination did not entirely succeed in snuff-brown out the spirit of questioning again and again till their rights and freedom are congregated.

WHERE THERE IS A WILL

In the very first debutante play, that he wrote produced an awe-inspiring womanhood fictional character 'Kiran Jhaveri', who is astute, smart, and adjustive. She is the mistress of an industrialist Hasmukh Mehta who is impressed by her competency and intelligence and confides her as a managing director to his whole properties in his will, as he does not trust his daughter-in-law and has a hapless perspective of his wife and son. Kiran proves to be not only high-octane, but also sincere and wins the love and grace of the family by her honesty and closeness. She is the dramatist's idea of an ultramodern, literate Indian woman who can clench herself in any organization, and has the magnanimity and mental endurance of conventional Indian women, who can reap the moral excellence of both Indian family and western society. He proves that, given an opportunity, Indian women are in no way inferior to men, and it is the only social group with its male-dominated social order that deprived women of their lawful part in society, restricting them to their residences and disabling their abilities. Kiran is everything that modern society demands, its member to be educated, smart, intelligent, honest, and impartial and having the strength to take on the re flux and fluctuations of life with equal composure. She is the idealistic woman of Dattani.



DANCE LIKE A MAN

In the second play Dattani presents a knotty woman personality 'Ratna', who is smart and decent to accomplish what she wants in life, in spite of ponderous betting odds against her by the opposition of her father-in-law who is of the firm belief that dancing is a profligate form of occupation meant only for devadasis. He objects to her rehearsal and so his son involves in while practicing dance. He venerates that it is sissy act and not right to a teen coming from a reputable family.

After much controversy and argument, he accepts to let his daughter-in-law, to rehearse dancing, ply she helps him to make a man out of his son. Towards the end of the play, Ratna wins in achieving what she wants through careful planning and outwitting both her husband and father-in-law though without committing any harm to the family. Ratna is a high-octane and colorful character who highlights the capacity of women for independent thinking and capacity for negotiation through all obstacles of life.

BRAVELY FOUGHT THE QUEEN

In the next play, Dattani presents the self-reliant spirit of women and their denial to surrender to the cause of conditions. When things do not go smoothly and well, particularly for women, a kin frame becomes a trap, suffocating their individuality and choking their identity. The dramatist depicts such a situation in the home when Dolly the housewife is troubled and oppressed by both husband and mother-in-law for no fault of her own but has to bear the brunt of wrath of the misdeeds of her father. As women in family circuits are easygoing marks for men to expose their anger and chafe,

Dattani inclination and actively supports the cause of family women who are quite vulnerable and defenseless against the hegemony of men, Dolly, in the play, fights to the end to defend her individuality and autonomy of mind and suffers silently for the crassness of her husband. She fights bravely her maltreatment though she knows that she is on the losing side as society is in favor of men. The play is quite popular with the audience for the exposition of the family politics and how women are permanently placed on the margins of power to be at the beck and call of men.

FINAL SOLUTION

The Sahitya academy winner, **Final Solution** is a play that deals with a perennial undetermined problem of post independent India, the trauma between Hindus and Muslims. No individual or movement was able to ameliorate the split as no final solution has been discovered yet, but which reveals the role can be played by women in the healing process.

Dattani spotlights that women are more flexible in the attitude and mindset and are tractable to reason but due to the traumatic events of segmentation their minds were permanently marred for one generation. Even though the bifocal subject matter is not related to the issue of women, the dramatist caters more space for women to play their role in bringing the society back to normality. The play presents the attitudes of three generations of women, Hardika, Rama, and Smita and how generation change is brought about and also the role of education in bringing about additive changes.

TARA



Dattani's career as a playwright with social concern reached apex with enactment in his play. The play highlights the conditions of Indian girls as second-class citizens and less coveted human beings. The play deals with Siamese twins with contrary gender with three legs between them. The blood supply to the third leg goes from the girl's body but due to the chauvinism against the girls. There cannot be a more barefaced prejudice against girls other than refusing and grudging an appendage given by nature due to hard bound bigotry of society. The play sent alarm impressions into the readers, researcher scholars, and spectators as it highlights the lucid gender split in Indian society and how parents reveal clear fondness to boys at the cost of girl's well-being. The gripe of the writer is that women are the not fit for being victims of male domination which has become caked into the Indian value system. By this shocking play, Dattani was able to draw attention to how unfair and slanted the gender value system is and how it is time to bring back hale and hearty gender stability if society is to progress.

THIRTY DAYS IN SEPTEMBER

Dattani is like a social scientist who is not scared of bringing out the concealed mess of society and how reputable people pander to in heinous behavior. In the play, Mala, the major character, suffers from long-drawn-out psychological trauma bent by the sexual abuse by her uncle from childhood to the extent that she seeks psychological counseling to recoup her ordinary state of mind after his death. The play shocked the viewers by its cruelty and the playwright confessed that not merely was he ruthlessly disturbed while writing the play but later was met by many women

in private who narrated similar torture in their childhood. It is not a play of weird imagination but concealed fact of family life, where girls are subjected to silent tortures by beastly men glutted with lust. At the end, Mala recovers her mental equilibrium showing the inner resilience and spirit of Indian women whose will and strength protect them during their psychological crisis. The play is an eye-opener for both readers and audience of what happens within the families and how it is concealed by family members. The sufferings and trauma of partition which is a catastrophe in the history of Indian nation did not escape the meticulous attention of the dramatist. More than men, it is women who suffered more during partition, often committing suicide to save their honour, and being rejected by their families after being kidnapped and dishonored by brutal men.

WHERE DID I LEAVE MY PURDAH:?

Dattani highlights the life of one such artist 'Nazia' in the play, who was raped by Hindu fanatics but survives the ordeal for the love of her art as an actor. She undergoes several traumas in her life but rugged enough in spirit to overcome all of them, till pursuing her art at the ripe age of eighty. In her, the dramatist creates a woman of passion, vitality, commitment, and Joie de Vivre. Age does not tone down her spirit. It is a common observation that women are more practical in their approach towards resolving life problems, uncluttered by sentiments or ideals and Dattani creates one such character 'Niharika' in one of his latest play, The Big Fat City. Even though the tone and tenor of the play is humorous, the dramatist succeeds in outlining the pragmatic mentality of women and how smart plans and



schemes to procure at least one-bedroom flat in a highly populated city like Mumbai where living space is scarce and precious, go awry.

A BRIEF CANDLE

In the latest play, Dattani underscores the sufferings of a woman 'Unni Krishnan' suffering from breast cancer and the misery and agony of 'death in life'. Family being the core of Indian society, woman as a wife, mother and daughter form the matrix of relationships. At the same time, woman as a sensitive and caring human being is not given the care and respect that she deserves but treated as a chattel and unpaid servant. Due to lack of any support, the position of the Indian woman has become vulnerable and prone to attack from many sides. This is the stark reality of Indian family system and family relationships as portrayed in Dattani's plays. To read his plays and watch the characters enacting their roles is to transport the audience to the everyday world that one encounters in society. Therein lies Dattani's strength as a dramatist. Dattani extends his observations to the nature and functionality of the Indian family system where the partners feel trapped and suffocated instead of feeling fulfilled in their relationships. In this context, the following comment by Erin Mee is worth quoting:

Mahesh Dattani frequently takes as his subject the complicated dynamics of the modern urban family. His characters struggle for some kind freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender, and repressed desire. Their dramas are played out on multi-level sets where interior and exterior become one, and geographical locations are collapsed in

short, his settings are as fragmented as the families who inhabit them (Erin B. Mee). The creativity and dynamic imagination of Dattani lies in revealing in multiple facets of Indian women and how in spite of bearing the yoke of male domination were able to assert their individuality and desires of the heart. Unlike the popular stereotype, Indian women are not weakling's servile and submissive to men, but smart enough to overcome the structural hurdles and after overcoming them to achieve what they want, or at least tenaciously pursue their goals in spite of frequent failures. He pays homage to Indian women through his plays by highlighting their capacity for survival in an oppressive environment stunting their growth and aspirations whose condition he compares with bonsai's plants. To Dattani, drama is a means of social awakening in the Shavian tradition and by projecting on the stage, problems and issues which are either swept aside or taken for granted, he renders a useful social service of "educating the educated" who have to shed and discard much of their antediluvian mind set and reform themselves in consonance with the world of gender justice and gender balance.

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