

## **GENDER DIFFERENTIATION AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WITH REFERENCE TO THE PLAYS OF MAHESH DATTANI**

**Madhu**

ORC ID: 0000-0003-0575-3477

Research Scholar, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Fatehgarh, Punjab.

Head Mistress at Air Force School, Vadsar, Kalol, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

### **Abstract:**

Mahesh Dattani is an Indian playwright who has written extensively about the lives of women in India. Dattani's plays often explore the experiences of women in India, and how they are affected by social and cultural norms. This paper tries to discuss and explore the themes of gender discrimination, incest, patriarchy, women subordination, and power. In his plays, women are often shown as victims of patriarchal society. However, they also show how women can fight back against these forces. Dattani's plays show that women are not simply victims of patriarchal society. They are strong and resilient individuals who can fight back against oppression. His plays offer a message of hope to women everywhere. In many of his plays, he explores the ways in which women are subjected to violence and discrimination and how they are fighting back against traumatic situations, such as abuse, incest, gender discrimination, and violence. Dattani's plays are important because they give voice to the experiences of women who are often silenced. He shows that women are capable of overcoming adversity and resilience, and they will not hesitate to fight back for their rights. His plays also challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, and they offer a vision of a more just and equitable society.

**Keywords:** *Gender Differentiation, Incest, Domestic Violence, Women Fight back, women empowerment*

**Introduction:** Mahesh Dattani is best known for his plays that explore themes of sexuality, gender, and social class in contemporary India. His plays have been translated into over 20 languages and have been performed all over the world. Some of his most notable plays include:

*Where There's a Will*– Women Exploitation under patriarchy.

*Tara*– A drama about conjoined twins shows Gender Differentiations

*Bravely Fought the Queen*– A family drama which shows betrayal and violence.

*Thirty days in September*– Female abuse, Traumatic childhood and woman's fight back.

Dattani has won numerous awards for his work, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, the highest literary honor in India. He is also a recipient of the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award in India. Dattani is a pioneer in Indian theater. His plays have helped to break down taboos and to challenge traditional thinking about sexuality, gender, and social class. He is a leading voice in the Indian theater scene and his work continues to be performed and

studied around the world. Dattani's plays often explore the experiences of women in India, and how they are affected by social and cultural norms. His plays explore the themes of gender discrimination, incest, patriarchy, women subordination, and power. In his plays, women are often shown as victims of patriarchal society. However, they also show how women can fight back against these forces. Dattani's plays show that women are not simply victims of patriarchal society. They are strong and resilient individuals who can fight back against oppression. His plays offer a message of hope to women everywhere. In many of his plays, he explores the ways in which women are subjected to violence and discrimination and how they are fighting back against traumatic situations, such as abuse, incest, gender discrimination, and violence. Dattani's plays are important because they give voice to the experiences of women who are often silenced. He shows that women are capable of overcoming adversity and resilience, and they will not hesitate to fight back for their rights. His plays also challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, and they offer a vision of a more just and equitable society.

#### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- To study the female abuse and gender inequality in Mahesh Dattani's selected plays.
- To examine the causes of violence and traumatic experience of female protagonists.
- To study the notions of gender discrimination.
- To study the feminine psychology of characters.
- To study the women, fight back against traumatic conditions.
- Women Empowerment

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Dattani's plays are permeated with socio-political, emotional, physiological, and psychological concerns. Many of his plays deal with family issues in which members of the family are caught in social constraints and struggle to break free from them. The plays of Dattani reveal the violence of our private thoughts as well as the hypocrisy of our public morals. His work expresses his political beliefs without being didactic or revolting, and the themes of recognition and power struggles run throughout all of his plays. The following are the basic methodologies that have been used to fulfill

the aims and objectives of this research paper:

Feminist theory used by researcher is a dynamic and ever-evolving field. This theory examines, critique, and challenge the role of gender in society. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and to develop strategies for its elimination. It is a powerful tool for understanding and challenging the role of gender in society. Researcher used feminist theory to analyze the social and political structures that shape gender relations. For example, in *Tara*, researcher explored the ways in which society discriminates against women with disabilities. The play's protagonist, Tara, was a Siamese twin who was forced to undergo surgery to separate her from her twin brother, Chandan. The surgery was unsuccessful, and Tara died. The play suggested that Tara's death was a result of the patriarchal society's obsession with physical perfection.

Researcher also used Psychoanalytic theory in order to achieve her objectives. Psychoanalytic theory has been used to explore the inner lives of female protagonists of the selected plays. Dattani is particularly interested in the ways in which childhood experiences, repressed memories, conscious and unconscious desires

shape our personalities and behavior. Dattani's plays are not simply psychological case studies. They are also works of art that explore the universal human themes of love, loss, guilt, and redemption. By using psychoanalytic theory, researcher tried to provide a deeper understanding of the inner lives to show how these inner lives are shaped by the events of their childhood and by the unconscious forces that drive them. Researcher used the id, ego, and superego, which are three parts of the personality in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The id is the Impulsive, pleasure-seeking part of the personality. The ego is the rational, reality-oriented part of the personality. The superego is the moralistic, conscience-driven part of the personality.

Here are some of the key concepts of psychoanalytic theory which have been used:

- The I'd: the part of the personality that is driven by basic instincts, such as sex and aggression. For example, sex desire of Mala in *Thirty days in September*.
- The ego: the part of the personality that mediates between the id and the reality

of the world. For example, *Bonsai* made by Lalitha in *Bravely Fought the Queen*.

- The superego: the part of the personality that represents our conscience and our moral values. For example, *Fight back* of female protagonists of selected plays
- Repression: the process by which we push painful memories or thoughts into the unconscious. For example, childhood rape haunted Mala
- Catharsis: the release of pent-up emotions, such as anger or guilt. For example, outburst of women of the Dattani's plays

Another example is the play *Tara*, in which researcher examined the relationship between Dan and his sister Tara, who lost a leg in an accident when she was a child. Dan is haunted by the guilt he feels for causing the accident, and this guilt manifests itself in his inability to be the successful artist. He was unable to fully express himself creatively because he is too busy repressing his memories of the accident.

### **Gender Differentiations and Women Exploitation**

Mahesh Dattani is a contemporary Indian playwright who is known for his exploration of social issues in his work. Gender is one of the central themes in many of his plays, and he

often examines the ways in which gender roles and expectations can be harmful to both men and women in his play *Tara*, for example, Dattani explores the issue of gender discrimination in the context of a family with conjoined twins. The parents, who are both doctors, decide to separate the twins, even though *Tara* has a better chance of survival than Chandan. They do this because they believe that a boy is more valuable than a girl. This decision ultimately leads to *Tara*'s death, and it also causes a great deal of pain and suffering for the entire family.

*Tara* is intelligent in her academics, yet he never asks her about them. Patel compels Chandan to complete the application for college enrollment. Yet he isn't prepared to attend college by himself. *Tara* should also accompany him, he desires. As Patel notices that Chandan is certain about his choice, he asks *Tara* to persuade him to complete the form. In this case, Patel isn't concerned about *Tara*'s academic future; instead, he only exploits her as a means of influencing Chandan to pursue further study.

PATEL. Chandan is going to study further and he will go abroad for his higher Studies.

BHARATI. And *Tara*?

PATEL. When have you even allowed me to make any plans for her?

BHARATI. I'm stopping you from making plans for my daughter? (Dattani, 352)

It is clear that Patel plans for Chandan to pursue further education while completely ignoring *Tara*. As a result, *Tara* faces discrimination about her schooling since she is a girl.

Mr. Patel always assigns the work a category. He requests *Tara* to clean the house and take care of the laundry. But the same person finds Chandan's unusual job, like knitting, to be objectionable. He condemns Bharati for using Chandan for such knitting job and neglecting to look after his schooling for this reason.

PATEL. What are you two doing?

CHANDAN. Mummy's knitting work and I'm helping her sort out her mistake.

PATEL. Let *Tara* do it.

CHANDAN. It's okay.

PATEL. Give it to her.

CHANDAN. Why?

PATEL. Chandan, leave that damn thing alone!

CHANDAN. Daddy, that's unfair. (Dattani, 351)

He asks Chandan to join the office but forbids Tara from doing so, which is another instance of gender discrimination. There is a hiatus before to beginning college. Patel then requests Chandan to join the workplace during this break rather than remain at home. Chandan, however, requests that Tara join him in the office.

PATEL. I was just thinking... it may be a good idea for you to come to the office with Me.

CHANDAN. What for?

PATEL. Just to get a feel of it.

CHANDAN. You can take Tara; she'll make a great business woman....

PATEL (FIRMLY): Chandan, I think I must insist that you come.

CHANDAN: We'll both come with you.

PATEL. No! (Tara looks at Patel slightly hurt) (Dattani, 328)

This episode unequivocally demonstrates Patel's fondness towards his daughter Tara and his preference for Chandan to work at the office.

Economic issue is partly responsible for the hostility against the girl kid. By giving all of his possessions to Chandan after his death and not a single euro to Tara, Bharati's father further demonstrated his indulgence for the male grandchild. He leaves all of his possessions to Chandan alone.

PATEL. He (grandfather) left you a lot of money.

CHANDAN. And Tara?

PATEL. Nothing.

CHANDAN. Why?

PATEL. It was his money. He could do what he wanted with it. (Dattani, 360)

The fact that this chat happened before Tara is the worst aspect of it. Therefore, this is simply another instance of gender discrimination being committed by a guy in a culture that is ruled by men.

The concept of favoring the male and disliking the girl is central to the drama. Tara has some sort of resentment for society throughout the entire play. She seemed to dislike the outer world in some way. Parent discriminates against Tara, the girl kid, and favors the boy. But the same discriminatory act guarantees the utter disintegration of the entire family. The play also makes the point that women are prevented from achieving economic stability by the patriarchal societal structure. Together with the tragic story of gender discrimination, the play's text also contains an awful account of material discrimination against women. Her father left Tara and Chandan his inheritance because Bharati was the only kid he had. Unfortunately, Tara is not included in the grandfather's financial legacy. Chandan receives a sizable inheritance. Separation is a recurring concept that takes many different shapes. Separation generally comes in two flavors. One such separation was the unjustly giving Chandan Chandan's third limb during surgery on Tara and Chandan. The second is the boycott of Mr. Patel by his family. Mr. Patel, a Kannadiga, wed Bharati, a Gujarati. His bond with his family has therefore been severed. Each of these

divisions have societal preconceptions and customs as their primary causes. With his plays, Dattani promotes the dismantling of stereotypes and traditions that fill people's life with suffering and grief.

The drama Tara challenges a culture that views offspring from the same womb in two distinct ways. The play centers on two kids who are linked at the chest. One of them is a boy, the other a female. Only via surgery are they able to be divided. Here is when the prejudice and unfairness begin. It demonstrates how a woman may be her own worst enemy. The inequity is made worse by the mother's preference for the boy. The primary consideration in choosing the son is that he will carry on the family name. She is an unwanted intrusion and the source of grief. As a result, every female born into an Indian home experience some form of exploitation.

In another play, *where there's a will* Dattani explores the issues of women exploitation and subordination under patriarchy. Subordination refers to a situation where one is obligated to follow the orders of another. Female's demotion refers to the societal state in which females are obligated to follow the orders of males. Patriarchy employs the Socialization



process to impose different cultural practices, customs, and social responsibilities so that keep females in men's power. To preserve male domination, patriarchy used a gendered socialization progression to make 'masculine' & 'feminine' traits, as well as private-public areas. Boys and girls are supposed to acquire suitable sex-related behavior throughout childhood, when they are socialized. Family, religion, the overall set of laws, the monetary framework, and the political framework, as well as instructive establishments and the media, are all foundations of a patriarchal system and structure. The phrase "social structure" is crucial because it implies a rejection of biological determinism as well as the thought that each individual person is in a predominant position and each female is subordinate one. "Women's labor power, reproduction, sexuality, mobility, property, and other economic resources are all under patriarchal control under this society".

Women's lives are being used and controlled in this way. Men earn financially from patriarchy; women's subjection provides them with tangible economic rewards. Women are the creating class,

while spouses are the dispossessing class; their extremely difficult, never-ending, also, tedious work isn't viewed as work, and housewives are viewed as subject to their husbands. As a consequence, patriarchy has a strong material underpinning. Males hold the vast larger part of property and other monetary resources, which are handed down from father to son. Even while ladies have the legitimate right to acquire such goods, they are prevented from doing so by a range of customary norms, emotional pressures, social repercussions, and, in extreme circumstances, outright violence.

Indian culture is a patriarchal society with traditional values. It has long been a popular wish to have a boy in the family, since a son is seen to be the family's genuine heir. In India, there is a common occurrence of fathers caring for their sons. Concerned about the family's future, fathers exert dominance over their sons. They make plans for their boys' golden futures and require that their sons follow those plans to the letter. It has become a regular occurrence in the contemporary world. Hasmukh lived his life in exact accordance with his father's instructions. Ajit, his own son, is expected to follow in his footsteps. He has patriarchal power over all of his family members. He expects them to be completely



submissive. He has complete control over his son's movements. He wants to govern his family according to his desires. His family members are not pleased with his behavior. Sonal shows her displeasure in the following way:

SONAL. A smiling face'. Whoever named him that cracked a very bad joke? Have you Ever seen him smile? . . . I don't do this right, I don't have enough brains for that, I can't cook like his mother used to. (Dattani, Mahesh: 474)

### **Women Empowerment**

Mahesh Dattani is a well-known Indian playwright who has written extensively on the subject of women fight back and women empowerment. His plays often explore the challenges that women face in Indian society, such as gender discrimination, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. However, his plays also show how women can overcome these challenges and achieve success.

One of Dattani's most famous plays is "Tara," which tells the story of two conjoined twins, one male and one female. The play explores the different ways in

which the twins are treated by their family and society, based on their gender. The female twin, Tara, is often treated as less important than her brother, Chandan. She is not allowed to go to school or to have any friends. However, Tara eventually finds her voice and fights for her rights. She refuses to be treated as a second-class citizen, and she eventually succeeds in getting her brother to accept her as an equal.

In another play, *Final solution*, his female characters are depicted as rebels against traditional society's rules, which are predominately held by men. Couples are portrayed in his plays as evolving from victims to strong individuals who reinvent themselves and defy social norms. Dattani acknowledges that women have a stronger conscience and a better understanding of their communal and religious identities through the characters of Smita, Hardika, and Aruna. Women are completely different from men. Each of them is distinctive in its own way. Women are capable of thinking about issues like neighborhood health. Women are capable of thinking about issues like the health and welfare of the community in addition to their bodily concerns. In every way, she is more conscious than men are. They remain socially

conscious. They are now acutely conscious of their position, goals, and aspirations. Women are constantly working to elevate their social status. Women are prepared to take on challenges within communities. Smita, a young child, is a symbol of the vitality of the current generation. The play's protagonists' anger is a representation of their freedom of thought.

Dattani's plays have been praised for their realistic portrayal of women's experiences in Indian society. His plays have also been credited with raising awareness of the challenges that women face and with empowering women to fight for their rights.

Here are some of the ways in which Dattani's plays empower women:

- They show women as strong and capable individuals who are capable of overcoming challenges.
- They highlight the importance of education and employment for women.
- They challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes.
- They raise awareness of the issue of violence against women.

- They provide a platform for women to share their stories and experiences.

Dattani's plays have made a significant contribution to the fight for women's empowerment in India. His plays have helped to change the way that society views women and has inspired women to fight for their rights.

### **Women's Fight back**

In all selected plays it is found that women are capable of overcoming adversity and resilience, and they will not hesitate to fight back for their rights.

Where There's a Will is a powerful exploration of the ways in which women are often forced to live their lives according to the expectations of others. The play tells the story of Hasmukh Mehta, a wealthy businessman who is determined to control every aspect of his family's lives, even after his death. His wife, Sonal, and his daughter-in-law, Preeti, are both trapped in unhappy marriages, but they are afraid to stand up to Hasmukh for fear of losing their financial security.

Similarly Play Tara is story of a One-legged girl with strong will power. Tara who is diagnosed with a rare and debilitating disease.

She is forced to give up her dreams of becoming a doctor and instead focus on her health. However, she refuses to give up hope and fights back against the disease with courage and determination. The play is a moving and inspiring story of a woman's strength and resilience. It is a reminder that even in the face of adversity, it is possible to overcome any challenge. Dattani's play is a must-see for anyone who has ever felt like they were fighting an uphill battle. It is a story of hope and triumph that will stay with you long after you have seen it.

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Dattani explores the lives of three generations of women who are all struggling against patriarchal oppression. The play's title character, Alka, is a young woman who is married to a man who is having an affair with another woman. Alka is initially devastated by this betrayal, but she eventually finds the strength to fight back. She confronts her husband about his infidelity and demands a divorce.

The women characters in *Final Solutions* are all strong and independent women who are willing to fight for what they believe in. They are a powerful reminder that women

can be just as strong and courageous as men, and that they can play a vital role in fighting against injustice and violence. In addition to the three main female characters, there are also several other women who play important roles in the play. Zarine, Javed's mother, is a kind and compassionate woman who is determined to protect her son. She is a strong advocate for peace and understanding, and she is a powerful example of the power of love to overcome hatred.

*Thirty Days in September* is a story of Mala and Shanta, who are both victims of child sexual abuse. The play explores the long-term effects of this abuse on the sisters' lives, both physically and emotionally. Mala becomes withdrawn and depressed, while Shanta becomes promiscuous and self-destructive. The play also shows how their trauma is compounded by the stigma that is associated with child sexual abuse.

### **Conclusion**

This research paper focuses on the gender roles, gender differences, women subordination, women fight back and women empowerment. There is a positive relationship between education and woman empowerment. Another important aspect in this regard is that

the issue of Women empowerment has been facing certain serious challenges, which are outcome of some certain evil norms and attitude such as child labor, Child marriage, illiteracy, superstition, partial attitude of the parents, female feticides, etc. and in such a situation women empowerment is an urgent necessity. In all of his plays, Dattani gives voice to the traumatic experiences of women. He shows how these experiences can have a profound impact on women's lives, both physically and emotionally. Dattani's plays are important because they help to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women. They also provide a platform for women to share their stories and to find support from others. In addition to the plays mentioned above, Dattani has also written about the traumatic experiences of women in his essays and interviews. Dattani's work is an important contribution to the conversation about violence against women. His plays and essays give voice to the experiences of women who have been traumatized, and they help to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women. Trauma is a severe disruption in a

person's life that can be caused by a variety of events, including war, natural disasters, accidents, violence, and abuse. Trauma can have a profound impact on a person's physical and mental health, and can lead to a variety of symptoms, including flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety, depression, and difficulty trusting others. The educational and other policies for women empowerment should be implemented in reality for empowering women in the world. The evils of poverty, unemployment and inequality cannot be eradicated by man alone. Equal and active participation of women is obligatory. Unless women are educated, they will not be able to understand about their rights and their importance. Empowerment of women aims at striving towards acquiring higher literacy level and education, better health care for women and their children, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of their rights, improved standard of living and to achieve self-reliance, self-confidence and self-respect among women. While being attracted by modernization and globalization we must be confident to say no to exploitation.

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Received on June 19, 2023

Accepted on July 12, 2023

Published on Oct 01, 2023