

WOMEN LIBERATION AND VERBALISM IN MAHESH DATTANI'S TARA AND SEVEN STEPS AROUND THE FIRE

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Abstract

Sanskrit play and its folk performance heritage are the foundations of Indian theater. In India, modern theater is not a rural phenomenon. Indian theater, which is notoriously intricate and difficult to comprehend, has featured many forms of folk culture, traditional music, instruments, puppet performances, and Indian mythology. Given this circumstance, a student of western literature will find it difficult to fit this convergence into tidy categories of western theater and performance, yet it is conceivable to establish functioning categories within its own socio-historical and political scope within its own heritage. Mahesh Dattani has recounted several plays from both the inside and the outside world. He discusses society's mental space and mental flashbacks. He has also highlighted modern society's ardent love. Most of Dattani's characters are homosexuals, either gay or lesbian. In the play, he discusses several urban and rural themes. His hidden themes include homosexuality, euthanasia, child sexual abuse, gender discrimination, societal indifference, and massage parlor treatment of the underprivileged, among others. In his plays, he portrays a lovely blend of country and urban life. It's important to notice that Mahesh Dattani's plays frequently address postmodern concerns. Although modern theater in India has gone a long way, Indian culture continues to spotlight many sorts of films via radical departures, diverse or homogeneous, there are three forms of theater in our country: There are three types of theater: professional, amateur, and experimental.

Keywords: Rural and urban issues, Gender discrimination, Homosexual, Child sexual abuse, Eunuch.

Mahesh Dattani is a skilled Indian English playwright who uses experimental unfinished sets in his theater to speak for underprivileged victims. The majority of his plays accurately depict his era, locality, and social standing. The Sahitya Akademi praised his plays when he earned the Sahitya Akademi prize for the "Final Solutions and Other Plays".

"probe tangled attitude in contemporary India towards communal differences, consumerism and gender... a brilliant contribution to Indian Drama in English" (Mangayarkarasi 222)

The plays of Dattani are postmodern attempts to map the cultural transitions taking place in metropolitan India. "A society and... chooses expressionism to illustrate the continuous struggle of urban Indian in a familial, social, and cultural modernist artist who in such a critical cultural situation selects different forms other than realism to depict the spheres to treat his identity," Sudha Rani wrote in her analysis of Mahesh Dattani (Rani). Dattani, India's voice, is a modern-day social reformer. He has worked with a wide range of topics. As a dancer, director, playwright, audience member, and pundit, he is a force to be reckoned with. He is a pioneer in the application of theatrical tactics. He has steered the course of new drama, which aims to blur the lines between page and stage. The fight between the individual and society is a recurring theme throughout Dattani's plays. He believes that social customs and human dignity awareness should be coordinated. To save humanity, he believes that social myths must be reexamined. His characters are mouthpieces for the voice of the average man, crushed beneath the wheels of aristocratic exploitation.

Gender theories and post-structuralist viewpoints can be used to study Dattani's plays. As a result, the gender schema technique, which arose from the mid-80's sex-role theories, was chosen to investigate the primary characters in Mahesh Dattani's Tara, which reflects gender issues as social trauma. The gender issue handled as content is likewise multi-layered, as Tara is a theatrical play with multilevel sets. Sandra Lipsitz Bern, a Cornell University, a cognitive psychologist who popularized

the gender schema theory, says,

"the process by which a society transmutes male and female into masculine and feminine is known as the process of sex typing" (Bern 354).

From this perspective, the author tries to explain how Tara and Chandan, born as conjoined twins, represent both the female and male, how males have greater privileges than females in all civilizations, and how this sex type is firmly embedded in the man-woman psyche of Indian cultures. Tara, the play's eponymous heroine, will be examined as a victim of this collective societal awareness.

Dattani has highlighted the truth of the women playing second fiddle to the men. The drama Tara starts with Chandan reworking Dan so that he can relieve himself of his sister's guilt. He is the only one who is subjected to his grandfather's fury. He is remorseful for the death of his sister. In this play, Dattani performs with the concept of woman infanticide, that's not unusual amongst Gujratis, in addition to Patel's hegemonic patriarchy, as he insists on accurate gender division. Tara offers us a window into present-day civilization, which professes to be open and innovative in its questioning and behavior. In a society that says its moms are educated, "Devis" ' together with Saraswati, Durga, Lakshmi, Kali, and others, to whom now no longer simplest ladies however additionally men pay homage, distinguishing among a male and a woman kid. All the propaganda about male and woman equality, in addition to identical probabilities for ladies in all disciplines, is false. Dattani's fascination with gender issues comes to a conclusion with the idea of a dual side to one's self—pretty much encapsulated in a single body—and then broken down into two. In his discussion with Lakshmi Subramanyam, Dattani commented:

"I see Tara as a play about the male self and female self. The male self is being preferred in all cultures. The play is about the separation of self and the resultant angst." (Subramanyam 134).

In the play's note, Erin Mee writes:

"Tara centers on the emotional separation that grows between two conjoined twins following the discovery that their physical separation was manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favor the boy [Chandan] over the girl [Tara]. Tara, a feisty girl who isn't given the opportunities given to her brother [although she may be smarter] eventually wastes away and dies. Chandan escapes to London, changes his name to Dan, and attempts to repress the guilt he feels over his sister's death by living without personal history, woven into the play are issues of class and community, and the clash between traditional and modern lifestyles and values." (Mee 320)

Tara is a play about a female seen through the eyes of a male, with the irony that both are born as conjoined twins, medically known as conjoined twins.

'Siamese twins' but they were miraculously separated to survive. The physical separation was made through the surgery. As Dan recollects: "as we've always been Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body in one comfortable womb. Till we were forced out - and separated" (Dattani 325).

The plot indicates that when Chandan and Tara reach the age of fifteen, they begin to recognize adulthood as man and woman imposed on them by their parents, Patel and Bharati, who are both educated, but the social thrust of the sex-typing phenomenon forces them to choose between their children, favoring the male child. Bharati's father is also a factor in this criminal activity. The twins were linked from the chest down, but no important organs were shared. The conjoined twins were on the verge of being split, but there was a snag: there were three legs. Mr Patel and his daughter have bribed the doctor with three acres of prime land in Bangalore's heart so that Chandan would have two legs and the weaker third leg would live on the girl. Chandan's body, however, rejected the second leg, which had to be removed later. Dattani correctly observes that the physiologically conjoined twins do not exhibit nature or sex bias, but rather socially cultivated gender favoritism. The male's mother, father, and surgeon worked together to give him a better chance. They mirror the male-dominated social environment.

Bern's gender schema theory elucidates the complexities of patriarchal society, in which both sexes are cognitively schematic to convince any human to favor one gender over the other, masculine. The participation of mother, father, grandpa, and the male doctor, Thakkar, in favoring the boy, Chandan, over the girl, Tara, is an example where the system sees Tara as a second-class citizen. Bern

claims:

"A schema is a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual perception...Schematic processing is thus highly selective and enables the individual to impose structure and meaning onto the vast array of incoming stimuli." (Bern 355).

She further views it as a "constructive process wherein what is perceived is a product of the interaction between the incoming information and the perceiver's preexisting schema" (Bern 228).

This view would aid in understanding the complexities of the gender construct that transpired among Patel's family members, as well as society at large.

Bharati tries to absolve herself of her wrongdoing by expressing her love and care for her daughter, as well as proving that she is morally better to her husband. Bharti tries to relieve her tensions by giving her kidney to Tara, but it proves futile. According to Dattani, patriarchal demands eventually affect the mother-daughter relationship. All cultures and countries prescribe unequal tactics for success by defining values, roles, and gender perspectives. Dr. Thakkar occupies the highest level during the play. Chandan and Tara are identical Siamese twins who must be separated in order to live. The difference between the two 'gendered' identities is discovered, and surgery is employed to physically separate them.

"Like we've always been inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body in one comfortable womb. Till we were forced out –And separated." (dattani 325)

Mr. Patel, an emblem of male chauvinism, is in charge of all family choices. Bharati is a victim of patriarchal oppression. For Tara's sake, not Tara's sake, but for her own, she was very anxious about her safety. Chandan and Tara were so connected that they could not be separated by fate. Tara was demoted to the rank of the subaltern, but Chandan was given more priority. The procedure that was utilized to separate them left Tara paralyzed for the rest of her life. Tara and Chandan's suffering is a metaphor for the concept that the beauty of the link rests in their movement incoordination or interdependence rather than their separateness.

Erin Mee writes: "Dattani sees Tara as a play about the gendered self, about coming to terms with the feminine side of oneself in a world that always favors what is 'male', but many people in India see it as a play about the girl child." (Mee 320)

Tara was a bit more animated, jovial, and vibrant. She had lofty goals that she couldn't achieve due to her disability, whereas the youngster was content with his crippled life and had accepted it. Why was Tara denied the use of the healthy limb in the first place? Why? Is it because she is a woman? Is it a curse to be a female in today's society? Why is there so much discrimination and bias against women in a country with such a rich history and where women are traditionally seen as the center of attention? Dr. Thakkar betrayed his divine profession as he was allured by her father into becoming a co-conspirator in the odd act of amputation. He should have upheld his profession by criticizing the choice from the start, however by severing Tara's leg, he effectively killed her. Tara may have had a safe, secure, and complete existence if he had made the right option. Meanwhile, Patel appears to be under siege:

"Yes, call me a liar, a wife-beater, a child abuser. It's what you want me to be! And you . You want them to believe you love them very much" (Dattani 354) Again, he tells Tara: *"Tara, please believe me when I say that I love you very much and I have never in all my life loved you less or more than I have loved your brother. But your mother....." (Dattani 354)*

This explains Tara's death-like response when she discovers the truth: she was discriminated against because of her gender, but not by her father; it was Bharati's decision that denied her the one thing she most desired in the world: a second leg. After the death of Bharati's father, he gave all of his belongings to Chandan only, reinforcing his preference for male grandchildren. Patel's demeanor has been unfavorable as well. It's difficult to dispute that he holds his wife and father-in-law responsible for the devastation they have caused.

Patel's plans for his son's education and job demonstrate that males are always given the upper hand. There was no regard for her sentiments at all! Tara is an innocent victim of the entire societal structure.

Mr. Patel, the father of Tara, is much like his wife, although Bharati has done something far worse

to Tara. He regularly and strongly supports Chandan when it comes to providing him with more schooling and a profession.

Patel: You are turning them against the whole world,

Bharati: I am doing that.

Patel: Yes! Look at the way you treat Tara. As if she is made of glass. You coddle her, you pet her, you spoil her, She's grown up feeling she doesn't need anyone but you.! (Dattani 352)

Tara, on the other hand, might have carved out a niche for herself via her defiance, strength, and struggle against society. Regardless of her feelings about the circumstances, Tara is publicly disheartened, although she is highly educated, brilliant, and witty, and would perform well if given opportunities in life. Economic and cultural circumstances have fueled antipathy for the girl child's inferiorization. All of these factors combine to create the social environment in which the girl child must live and die. The society system, which has perfect control over people's ideas and behaviors, assassinates Tara. The misery of discovering her mother's role in her life, as well as the discrimination, proved too much for her to bear.

Tara: Oh! What a waste! A waste of money. Why did they spend all the money to keep me alive? It cannot matter whether I live or die. There are thousands of poor sick people on the roads who could be given care and attention, and I think I know what I will make of myself. I will be a crer for those people. I I will spend the rest of my life feeding and clothing those.....starving naked millions everywhere is talking about. (Dattani 370)

Tara depicts herself as a powerful lady capable of conquering any hurdles, as seen by the above remark. She is also sympathetic to the oppressed. She was a lively, vivacious young lady who possessed all of the characteristics of a typical young lady. She might have shone like a star if her parents had given her moral support, as her name suggests. Her existence on this planet was a hardship. She became disinterested in life as a result of this. She also refuses to attend physiotherapy sessions or complete college applications.

Tara: How do you expect me to feel anything for anyone if they don't give me any feeling to begin with? Why is it wrong for me to be without feeling? Why are you asking me to do something that nobody has done for me?.(Dattani 380)

Tara was a bright and dazzling light that brought the entire family joy and happiness. She might have accomplished things that her brother Chandan couldn't since she had lived a complete life. On the altar of gender equality, Tara's skills and strengths have been sacrificed. When the topic of selecting between male and female arises, a female's identity dilemma becomes a shackle.

Tara's fundamental thesis is that society can accept and tolerate a physically challenged male and that when Tara reaches the age of fifteen, she becomes a victim of a gender biased system established by male dominating generations. The sadness is that she didn't make it. The play finishes on a note of Dan's failure, with him saying:

"I move. I move, without meaning. I forget Tara. I forget that I had a sister - with whom I had shared a body, In one comfortable womb, till we were forced out - and separated."(Dattani 381)

But, as Dorothy Parker has observed, Dattani appears to be unsatisfied with such a remark that male ego is much privileged over female self, and hence he just idealistically aims to foresee a greater understanding between the gendered sexes based on humanist vision.

"my idea is that all of us men as well as women, should be regarded as human beings" (Beauvoir 280-285).

Finally, the play broadens a little to demonstrate

, *"Tara walks into the spot without limping. Dan also appears without limp"* (Dattani 354) and

Dan speaks to Tara,

"Forgive me for making it my tragedy. Tara embraces Dan... they hug each other tightly."(Dattani 380)

This fantasy scene suggests that Dattani's creative awareness yearns for the unification of all sexes at a single point of humanism. Gender research could be fruitful if it goes beyond feminist

consciousness to express the socialist necessity for humanism. For this gender study to inspire humanist concern among individuals of both sexes, it must transcend all sexual and cultural politics.

Seven Steps Around the Fire, a polemical piece by Dattani, sheds light on the cruel upper-class attitude and the mystery produced in the lives of the downtrodden for the purpose of social reputation. Elitists will go to any length to gain power. They turn diabolical to maintain their dominance. As a result, they complicate the lives of the marginalized, and they are unconcerned about it. They treat oppressed groups as if they were puppets. In the play, there is a lot of mystery. From the beginning to the end, there are mysteries concerning Kamala's murderer, a eunuch, the eunuch's relationship with one another, and the tumultuous relationship between high-class people. The drama explores unsolved social myths that lead to the inexplicable existence of marginals. In Seven Steps Around the Fire, Dattani tackles a topic that goes beyond social norms. Dattani has attempted to investigate the eunuch group and their existence in India's strange social milieu.

Seven Steps Around the Fire is a play about the third gender, the eunuch community, and their existence on the outskirts of Indian society. The major subject of the murder of a transgendered person is only one of the themes conveyed by this play. Transgendered are portrayed as victims of a culture that has preconceived beliefs about their social standing. The transgendered singing and dancing at a wedding for blessing a newly married pair are thought to ensure the couple's parenthood, which is a paradoxical circumstance. As a result, they are not completely excluded from society's circle. Their presence is not an embarrassment or a catastrophe. They are, however, limited in their social functions. As a result, they are viewed with suspicion, scorn, and disdain. They are social outcasts who only exist on the outskirts of society. When asked if he saw himself as a lone voice on gender issues in the present Indian dramatic landscape, he said:

"I wish more people would explore aspects of sexuality rather than just sex, to that extent, I'm alone." (Phatarphekar, 25)

Uma, a sociology Ph.D. student, the wife of the Superintendent of Police Suresh Rao, and the daughter of a vice-chancellor, is investigating the eunuch society and the death of a beautiful eunuch named Kamala. Constable Munswamy supports her, having been assigned the duty by his supervisor to keep her out of trouble throughout her investigation. The eunuch group, which lives in small parts of Indian cities, treads places that are normally swept aside to the periphery, as it were, of society. In many ways, this is a no man's land and no woman's land. Another of Dattani's pet worries is the correlation between these gray zones.

Before considering the class gender-based power implications, a quick comment on widespread beliefs about the hijras' origins is in order. Of fact, the name hijra is Urdu in origin, a mix of Hindi, Persian, and Arabic that means "neither male nor female." According to another version, god Rama was about to cross the river and be exiled to the wilderness. Everyone in the city desired to follow him. "Men and women, turn back," he said. Some of his male supporters were at a loss for what to do. They were unable to disobey him. So they gave up their manhood and followed him into the wilderness, becoming neither men nor women. Rama praised their loyalty and bestowed blessings on them. Transsexuals can be found all across the world, including in India. The goal of this case study is to demonstrate their social status. They desire family and love, despite their status as the lowest of the low. Marriage and birth are the two ceremonies in mainstream Hindu society when their presence is tolerated, which, strangely, are the same advantages that man and nature deny them. The play begins with Sanskrit marriage mantras being spoken, then fades out to the sound of a fire rustling and hissing. The action begins after a significant pause. Uma is in the police station to see Anarkali, a hijra - an accused person whom she is to question. Munswamy is amused by Uma's mention to Anarkali, as he prefers the neuter version. From the second line of the play, Dattani has quickly delved into issues of gender assignment. Munswamy piously believes that a woman with Uma's past should consider more suitable cases.

Madam, if you don't mind me saying, why is a lady from a respectable family like yourself...? There are so many cases. All murder cases. Man killing wife, a wife killing man's lover, brother killing brother. And that shelf is full of dowry cases. Shall I ask the peon to dust all these files? (Dattani SSAF 7)

Even when it comes to crime, the group Uma investigates has built strong and impenetrable walls of unintelligible mythology and superstition around itself to exist in isolation. Uma would be better off studying mainstream crime, as Munswamy points out, because it would be easier and more respectable. Even Munswamy despises being referred to as "brother" by Anarkali.

Anarkali: We make our relations with our eyes. With our love. I look at him, he looks at me, and he is my brother. I look at you, you look at me, and we are mother and daughter. Oh, brother, give me a cigarette, na.

Munswamy: Shut up. And don't call me brother. (Dattani SSAF 11)

Anarkali's desire for varied relationships, such as brother, sister, mother, and father, suggests that they both want to keep personal ties safe. When Uma asks Anarkali if she'd want to be her sister, she's overjoyed yet worried about the repercussions.

"Oh! You are only being kind - Don't hurt my heart" (Dattani SSAF 13).

"She is torn between the fear of social code and legal provisions but finds consolation in the love and sympathy of Uma "But I will tell you because you are my sister., " (Dattani SSAF 13).

Anarkali's response, even though her neutral ground has taught her to be careful of these same elements. She becomes defensive and unavailable almost immediately, screaming vitriol and hates and exposing several unsavory realities in the process.

Then Anarkali shifts gears and decides to take advantage of the operating power scenario by manipulating Uma to gain her freedom, money, and even cigarettes. Uma's chats with Anarkali disclose many of the hidden facts that lie beneath numerous layers of myths and traditional beliefs, while also questioning relationships within established standards. Jeremy Mortimer observes in the note about the play:

Mahesh's plays often feature characters who are questioning their identity, and who feel isolated in her marriage, and this sense of isolation makes her empathize with Anarkali, the hijra she befriends. (Mortimer 4)

The drama takes the shape of a case inquiry. Uma travels to Shivaji Nagar to see Anarkali's friend Champa. Uma offers Champa the bail money in exchange for Anarkali's freedom. Uma first assumes that the murder was motivated by Kamala and Anarkali's rivalry.

Champa: Oh, may you have a hundred children! I knew that you are a social worker.

Uma: You will bail her out?

Champa: What a question to ask!

Uma: She-she didn't really kill Kamala, did she?

Champa: What difference does it make whether she did or no?

Uma: I certainly don't want to help anyone who is a murderer!

Champa: Yes, yes. That won't suit you. No. She did not kill Kamla. They were sisters.

Uma: If I give you the money, will you go to the court and get her release orders?

Champa: Did I come begging you-please give me money to save my daughter? Huh? (Dattani SSAF 24-25)

The drama is complicated by Salim's interference in quest of a certain image. Uma maintains the elegance of an innately nice human being in her endeavor to solve the mystery of Kamala's murder.

Anarkali: Would you have believed me? Anyway, what is the use of all that? What does it matter who killed Kamla? She is dead-So many times I warned her. First I thought Salim was taking her for his pleasure. When she told me about Subbu, madam, I tried to stop her. I fought with her. I scratched her face, hoping she will become ugly and Subbu will forget her. He wanted to marry her. ... I was there at their wedding.. .she gave me a picture to show to Champa. I saw the men coming for her. I told her to run ... [cries for a while] Here, madam, take this. (Dattani SSAF 41)

Uma inquires about Salim's identity and the secret of his relationship with Kamala at Mr. Sharma's residence. The presence of Subbu, the minister's son, who appears for the first time at the end of the play, adds to the drama's difficulty. Anarkali was bailed out in the meantime. On the occasion of the Chief Minister's son Subbu's wedding, she was asked to wear a special ghangra. Mr. Sharma is constantly worried about the truth being revealed. As a result, Mr. Sharma opposes the hijras' admission.

Uma: Mr. Sharma, what have you got to lose? The marriage ceremonies are done. You should be happy. Just let them dance a little. Is that asking for too much?

Mr. Sharma: Er .. maybe I overacted. After all, their presence is expected. I will give them some money ...

Champa: Thank you, sir, but we must sing and dance to bless this house and the handsome couple.

Mr. Sharma: Well, all right. Just one number and you will get your baksheesh.

Anarkali: Where are the newly married? They must be here.

Mr. Sharma: Oh! (Dattani SSAF 39)

Subbu approaches them, his gaze fixed on them. The vision of dead Kamala begins to plague his thoughts while he dances with Anarkali. The drama concludes with Subbu's suicide, which he commits with the use of Suresh's revolver and the hijras' last disclosure.

Uma: Of course, Mr. Sharma couldn't have it - totally unacceptable. So he arranged to have Kamla burned to death. But Salim had to tell him about the picture. Mr. Sharma simply had to have that picture. He sent Salim to threaten Anarkali and Champa - He did get the picture eventually - after losing his son. What a price to pay! And now he will be arrested and tried for murder. (Dattani SSAF 41)

Finally, there is the distinct connotation of what it means to be a eunuch in Indian culture, as well as the distinct identifying characteristics displayed in how they speak, walk, clap, or sing. These are clear signs that the eunuch uses to create a distinct identity that distinguishes them as a community in India and allows Indians to easily recognize them. As his female protagonist Uma Rao begins her investigation into the community, Dattani's focus on the unseen, unheard, and even silent character of such identities, on concerns that are thrown under the rug and assumed to be non-existent by the majority, begins to function in tandem with phenomenological absence.

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