

A Portrayal of Domestic Violence in the plays of Mahesh Dattani

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ABSTRACT

A celebrated contemporary Indian English dramatist Mahesh Dattani, achieved a reputation as a first playwright in Indian drama in English won a Sahitya Akademi Award. He penned on the contemporary issues in his works.

Mahesh Dattani's plays highlight the themes of human-relationship, gender issues, homosexuality, disharmony in marital relationship. The main objective is to explore the confrontation of women in patriarchal society and the domestic violence over women by their husband in the play Tara and Bravely Fought the Queen.

Keywords: Cruelty, Patriarchy, injustice, domestic violence, homosexuality

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Introduction to the emergence of Indian English drama

Indian Drama encompasses the concepts of Indian myths, and culture. Drama in Indian comprises a great tradition from Vedic era through the book of Bharat Muni's Natyashastra. Indian English drama was established by British and western patterns of drama. Pre-Independence and post-Independence Indian English drama was astonishing in both quality and quantity. Indian drama in English reflects the genuine feeling and cultural notions even though it was a mere imitation of British dramas. The contemporary playwrights like Mahesh Dttani, Manjula Padmanaban and Girish Karnad are achieving a great success in Indian theatre along with the possibilities of Indian theatre and also with world theatre. Indian English drama was introduced after the entrant of British in India. This stimulates Indian people to learn a new language, English and helps to get the ideology of western world and literature. Indian drama in English gained a new strength through this new perception. The effect of western civilization on Indian life paved a way for the birth of renaissance in Indian arts including drama. Indian Drama in English took a century and a quarter for its growth and to achieve a standard position like other kinds of literature like poetry and fiction. In 1871, Micheal Madhusudan Dutt was

written the first play in English under the title 'Is This Civilization?'. With the introduction of first play in English title inspires many writers to written in English

In the pre – Independence era, most of the Indian English playwrights were influenced by the tradition of Elizabethan drama in general and very particular on Shakespeare. By the final stage of 19th century, the pioneer's efforts were employed through contemporary dramatists such as Rabindaranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Harindaranath Chattopadhyaya, T.P. Kailasam, Lobo Prabhu, Bharathi Sarabhai and others contribute for the growth of Indian drama in English. These writers tried different forms of drama like opera, romance, farce, tragedy, comedy, myth, melodrama and historical plays.

The Indian drama in English of post-Independence period flourishes with 'poetic drama' trend by emulating the traditional western poetic drama and also tradition of 'The Tagore- Aurobindo-Kailasam'. The followers of these tradition evolved with a slight difference through the dramatists like Manjeri Isvaran, G.V. Desani, Lakhan Deb, Gurucharan Das, Pratap Sharma, Asif Currimbhoy, Gieve Patel. The contemporary dramatist of Indian drama in English not only written in their regional language like Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Kannada and other languages but also in Pan Indian level.

Recently the dramas in Indian English achieved its pinnacle of success by the two brilliant extraordinary writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanaban. Both the dramatists uplift the Indian English drama for Indian theatre as well as world theatre with high quality and thematic presentation. The first Indian playwright, who received a international reputation for the play *Harvest* by Manjula Padmanaban. The play *Harvest* fabricates the story of a poor family residing in a single room in a Chawlof Bombay and the issues of hunger, underemployed, the chief character decides to sell his organs. The writer Manjula Padmanaban plays are intellectual but not employed for the stage performance and Mahesh Dattani's plays are welcomed and achieved triumph on the stage.

Mahesh Dattani's works and achievements

The Indian English dramatist, Mahesh Dattani is a prolific theatre artist, director, dramatist and a well known dancer. In the last decade of twentieth century, Dattani's plays are registered as fresh arrival in Indian drama in English. In 1998, he received a Sathiyakademi Award for his play *Final Solution* and celebrated as a only dramatists who won this Award. His plays revolves around issues like gender discrimination in *Tara*, and *On Muggy Night in Mumbai* reflects the community of hay, theme of eunuch in *Seven Steps Around the Fire* and communalism in *Final Solution*. He also deals with theme of homosexuality, child sexual abuse.

Mahesh Dattani was born in Bangalore on August, 7, 1958. He got admission in Baldwin Senior high school and St. Joseph college of Arts and Science, Bangalore. He is a graduate in History, Economics and Political Science. He is a

Postgraduate in Marketing and Advertising Management. Before he took part in his family business, he worked as a copy writer in advertising concern. In 1984, Dattani theatre group-play pen was formed. He has directed many plays from the classical Greek to contemporary works. For 25 years Dattani has written radio plays for BBC and film script of *EkAagMousam*

The International Herald Tribune praising Mahesh Dattani praised him as one of Indian best and most serious contemporary playwrights writing in English. Important Plays of Mahesh Dattani includes (i) *Tara* (ii) *On the Muggy Night in Mumbai* (iii) *When There's a Will* (iv) *Dance like a Man* (v) *Bravely Fought the Queen* (vi) *Final solutions*

Victimized woman Bharathi in *Tara*

Mahesh Dattani's third play *Tara*, a three – act stage play by Mahesh Dattani. The play fabricates a story of a Siamese twins named Tara and Chandan, an offspring of Mr. Patel and Bharathi. The twins are not resembles like each other. The relationship between these twins is very profound. The circumstances demanded them to get separated within the three months of their birth. The Siamese twins are conjoined from the chest and born with three legs. The chances of having two legs is for Tara, but granted for Chandan. Bharathi and his rigid parents ,especially her father decides to separate Chandan with two legs and left Tara with a single leg.

Mrs. Bharathi accepts her father's decision but inwardly she too prioritizes Chandan than Tara, like her parents and especially social set up over women. The tragedy of gender discrimination makes Tara crippled. As a mother of a physically challenged child Tara, Bharathi regrets of her decision which causes her child to become.

Mr. Patel, a native of Gujarat, who feels insecure after his marriage with Bharathi, a Kannadiga. The alliance between Mr. Patel and Bharathi was not accepted by his parents and the circumstances enforce Mr. Patel to leave his parents. When Bharathi's parents accepted their marriage and their support reasons Patel to become feel much more insecure. His insecure conscious makes him alienate himself and stimulates him to torture Bharathi.

Mr. Patel turns into sadist. He enjoys the suffering of Bharathi. The more she suffers of her guilt, the more he enjoys. The injustice he experienced by his parents directs him to do injustice to Bharathi and he even fails to be a perfect parenthood. In order to relieve herself from the guilty conscious, Bharathi decides to donate her kidneys to Tara. He denies her to donate her kidneys to Tara. Bharathi tries to find solace in donating her organs but her decision get rejects which worries her and Patel to enjoy. According to Mr. Patel, Bharathi is the cause for alienation from his parents and he safeguards his ego by torturing Bharathi. The insecure sense of Patel makes him violent on his wife and doing injustice to his daughter, Tara a physically challenged child.

Domestic Violence in Bravelly Fought the Queen

The play *Bravelly Fought the Queen* was first performed in Mumbai on 2nd of August, 1991 at the Sophia Bhabha Hall. The plays constructs about the life of three generations and the issues of ill treatment over women belongs to same three generations. The play had divided into three acts and each has its separate title named by Dattani.

Mahesh Dattani's play *Bravelly Fought the Queen*, deals with the story of a household in which, the Trivedi brothers Jiten and Nitin, the co-owners for an advertising agency. They married a sisters Dolly and Alka. Baa, mother-in-law to these sisters and Baa is taken care in turns by her daughter-in-law, Dolly and Alka. The elder son of Trivedi family Jiten married Dolly and Nitin married Alka. Mahesh Dattani portrayed these three characters, Dolly, Alka and their mother-in-law- Baa are the victims of domestic violence by the hands of their husband. They exemplify the sufferings of brutality and merciless ill treatment in their married life.

Plight of women in Trivedi family

The elder son of Trivedi family is Jiten who married Dolly. Jiten echoes the brutality of his father, a violent and drunkard. The elder son of Trivedi family too ill-treated his wife Dolly like his father. He kicked Dolly dreadfully when she was at the final stage of pregnancy. The consequences of his ferocious attitude over pregnant woman which results the premature birth of spastic girl baby Daksha. The domestic violence over Dolly leads her to deliver a spastic daughter Daksha, studying in spastic school and aims to become a dancer. The reason behind Jiten's terrible attitude on his wife Dolly is the belief that Dolly's mother was not married legally and instigates by his mother Baa.

The play *Bravelly Fought the Queen* testimonies the violence over women by men through the characters Alka, who is ill-treated by her Nitin. In addition to her struggle, her brother Praful also victimized her. Alka was severely affected by her sibling Praful, tormented her tremendously by dashed her into the kitchen and showed her face on the burning stove and to the extreme, he burnt Alka's hair over the fire. She also evidences brutality by her husband Nitin, who drives his wife out of the house. The sufferer Alka became totally scorned when she finds that her husband Nitin and her brother Praful turns out to be gay. The trauma in the life of Alka exhibits that she is harmed, injured by her husband and her brother. The domestic violence over Alka drives her to become alcoholic.

Another woman in the play who suffered by domestic violence by her husband is Baa, a widowed woman, mother of Trivedi brothers and mother-in-law to Dolly and Alka, now aged and invalid. She too was tortured by her husband in front of her two sons. The cause of the frightful experienced by the violence, Baa misleads her sons to ill-treat their wives.

As the tittle *Bravelly Fought the Queen*, the characters Alka and Dolly fought against discrimination, injustice, domestic violence. At first Alka voices out against the brutality and followed by her sister Dolly.

In both the plays *Tara* and *Bravely Fought the Queen* vividly demonstrates the plight of women. In the play *Tara* portrays the struggle of the character Bharathi by her husband Mr. Patel because of sadist attitude. He enjoys the miseries of his wife Bharathi as in the play *Bravely Fought the Queen*, the wives of Trivedi family, Alka, Dolly and Baa are the victims of brutality of their husband. The play also witnesses the domestic violence over women through three generations.

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