



Exploring The Human Condition In Mahesh Dattan's Works

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ABSTRACT

Mahesh Dattani is a celebrated modern Indian dramatist. His writing style is quite different from his contemporary writers. He has got a worldwide fame due to the popularity of his plays. He always highlights the social and contemporary issues of Indian society. Gender discrimination, Sexual marginalization, familial discord, Communalism, Identity crisis, is a few of his themes which he always use to deal. In the present research also we are trying to portray the thematic dealing of Mahesh Dattani. The methodology adopted is descriptive, and analytical. It will highlight the depth and richness of themes in his work.

Keywords: Human condition, Suffering, Love, Enjoyment.

Mahesh Dattani is one of the most celebrated authors of modern age. His plays are gaining worldwide popularity due to his selection of wide range of themes. He has written many plays like: *Tara*, *Final Solutions*, *The big fat city*, *Dance like a man*, *where there's a will, bravely fought the queen*, *On a muggy night in Mumbai*, *The murder that never was*, *Brief Candle* etc. It was told that Dattani developed an interest in writing after reading the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee's. Most of his plays display the themes like gender discrimination, Sexual marginalization, Familial discord, Communalism, Identity Crisis, homosexual issues etc. His selection of such themes makes him different from other authors of his time. Mahesh Dattani has tried to give us the real picture of the Indian society. Dattani has tried to highlight the social evils of Indian society. In Indian society women's were not treated as equals with man, they were always kept under a male's control. His Play *Tara* also pin points a male dominated society. The story says that although we have adopted the modern ways of living and liberal thoughts but still in our modern times also women's were treated as inferior creatures. *Tara* is a sad story of an Indian girl who was born conjoined as one body with her brother Chandan. By presenting the horrible thinking of her parents Mahesh Dattani has portrays an incident from her childhood. She was born conjoined with his brother, the babies got only three legs, and they need to be separated from each other through operation. Blood supply was coming from Tara's body but when the doctor asked his parents to decide they favor their male child and both the legs were given to their male child Chandan. Tara was left cripple and her life now was in danger. Under the instruction of the parents Tara's leg is cut from Tara's body and given to Chandan the male child. By portraying this incident in *Tara*, Mahesh Dattani has tried to expose the thinking of a male dominated society. In Indian society whenever a choice has to be made between choosing a male or female, it is male who is chosen. The discrimination which started during Tara's birth continues throughout her life. In her school also the other children use to tease her due to her artificial legs. Afterwards her parents use to give all their property to their son Chandan and Tara was not given any portion of their property. Her neighbors also use to torture her. Tara was clever than her brother Chandan but still she receives a discrimination from her parents and teachers. When Tara becomes ill her mother Bharti decides to donate her kidney to her daughter but it was too late. When she came to know about the decision of her mother and grandfather during her birth, she was almost shattered. She was filled with grief and after a few days she died. When Tara dies her brother Chandan was filled with grief and he kept himself responsible for Tara's death. He moved towards London and changes his names as Dan. The main theme as displayed by Mahesh Dattani in *Tara* is gender discrimination. In his next play that is *Final Solutions* Mahesh Dattani has presented the social and political condition prevalent in India. Many riots were taking place at that time. And in the name of dharma and karma, the leaders of Hindu and Muslim communities were trying to sow the seed of hatred in the heart of the Indians. It the story of newlywed girl named Daksha also named as Hardika. She has written a journal and has recorded all her life's experience after her marriage. She

has presented negative views about her in-laws. She has expressed that although India got its freedom still the females were confined within the four walls of their houses and they have also confined themselves inside them. Zarinaa a Muslim girl was her friend. An incident is mentioned by Mahesh Dattani that, in a town of Gujrat A Hindu God's idol is broken by someone. According to the mean minded Hindus, it was the act of some Muslims. So mob processions started between the two communities. They all started clashing with each other. In other parts also people started quarrelling with one another on these useless topics. They started attacking each other by throwing stones. Mahesh Dattani has tried to present the harsh realities of India in this play. In India religion had its great impact on the minds of the Indian people, and if the religious leaders act falsely and misguide their community, the condition of the country is not save there will be confusion and riots everywhere. Mahesh Dattani wants to unite the whole Indian society by providing a final solution to the problem. He has presented some of the central issues like: gender discrimination, alternate sexuality, communal violence, etc and he wants to end the man made separation. By writing these types of plays Mahesh Dattani has played the role of a reformist. Mahesh Dattani has showed the evil side of Indian society. Mahesh Dattani says that when the whole world is facing so many global issues, it is not the right time for us to create communal riots in the name of religion. There were two groups of people introduced in the play one is the Hindu community in which Hardika, Ramnik Gandhi, his wife and daughter Samhita and the other is the Muslim community including the characters bobby, Javed and their family members. Mahesh Dattani has tried to give us the changing attitude of all these persons before riot and after riot.

His play *The big fat city* is term by the audience as 'Black Comedy'. In this play Mahesh Dattani has highlighted the themes like: shattered relationships, the harsh effect of technology on the people and emotional trauma faced by the people. This plays pictures the metropolitan city Mumbai and its dark realities. In this play Mahesh Dattani has tried to give us an ugly picture of the city of Mumbai where a lot of bad things happens like murder, looting, bribery, drugs, violence, and corruption. Most of the people living in Mumbai lead an artificial life and mostly they were the culprits of some bad acts. Nobody was fair and just in the city of Mumbai. Mahesh Dattani has dealt with all these horrible issues in a light humorous way and that's why he was able to provide us a perfect humorous play displaying the oddities of modern life at Mumbai. The play talks about the life of two individuals names Niharika and Murli who were living in a posh area at Mumbai. The story says Murli was working in a cosmetic company of Lutus India as a managing director but he was fired from his job. Murli and Niharika has brought a flat of one bedroom in a posh area of Mumbai and when Murli lost his job they were unable to pay the house EMI on time. To fix the issue and to borrow some money from an old friend of Murli Sailesh, Niharika arranges a dinner party. She called Lalita a television actress to impress Sailesh. All these incidents mentioned by Mahesh Dattani shows that these characters were all emotionless and they all had nothing to do with anybody's personal issues, they only think about their own profits. This play of Mahesh Dattani shows the derioation of the moral values and human relations. He has tried to portray the artificiality of the modern life at Mumbai. When Niharika arranges a party to impress Sailesh, she asks Murli to wear his silk kurta at this Murli's reaction is also of confused type:

Murli: Can't I wear my regular shirt, please?

Niharika: Stop Fidgetting with that Kurti. You willtear it. No. You can't.

Niharika: It's torn! (Most upset) One chance! We have this one chance and you want to ruin it ?

All these dialogues between Murli and Niharika create laughter and also show their artificiality. Mahesh Dattani has tried to reveal most of the population living in Mumbai by presenting these types of couples. Even these people do anything just to maintain their showy life. The play also shows the Murder of Kailash. And this incident shows that the characters were even laughing at some one's death, death is also not a serious issue for them. Dattani's another play *Brief Candle* shows the uncertainty of human life the title also suggest that one day human beings die after facing the good and bad realities of their life. As the candle burns itself and disappears one day, the same happens with the human beings also. Mahesh Dattani has portrayed the themes like suffering and frustration in his play *Brief candle*. In this play Mahesh Dattani has dealt with the themes like: Death, sex, suffering, and love. As the play tells us that Vikas and Deepika were both studying in medical college, and they fell in love. Vikas was a careless person and deepika was an intelligent girl who always takes the right decision in her life. Afterwards due to some mischievous activity Vikas was thrown out off the medical college but Deepika continued to study there and become a doctor. Dattani has mainly highlighted the theme of death in this play. He has shown Vikas as a dead person who wants a reunion with Deepika with the help of a comedy written by him. He loves Deepika very much and wants to stay in her heart and in the hearts of his friends after his death also. The theme of sex is also shown by Dattani his character Vikas himself was involved with many girls and at the end he becomes affected with AIDS. Mahesh has also presented the suffering of many characters that have made their life colorless due to their wrong deeds. With the artistic use of Stream of consciousness technique Dattani has perfectly made us travel into the lives of his characters. Among all his contemporary writers Mahesh Dattani enjoys a reputed place. In his play *Brief Candle* he has also used the technique of a play within a play. He has divided his play in some major and minor parts. The scene was laid in two places one is the Cancer research hospital and the other scene was mentioned at Hotel Stay-longer. The play which was displayed in the cancer hospital shows the grief, suffering and longing of the characters while the play displayed in the Hotel Stay-longer shows a life full of fun and entertainment. Mahesh has tried to show the suffering and wishes of the real sufferers the cancer patients. Mahesh Dattani is the only contemporary

writer who has tried to display the suffering and lives enjoyment in a single slice of his play. He has tried to display both the sides of human life. He has at once given us the dark and shinny phases of our life. He wants to give a message that every person who has entered this earth has to die and leave this abode one day, and he has to face each and every moment given by life, there is no escape. We don't have to live in the darkness forever in fact we need to develop a positive approach towards life.

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