



Themes and Techniques in the Plays of Mahesh Dattani

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ABSTRACT

Indian drama has a very large and elaborate history. The oldest text on the theory of drama is the Natyasastra. In India, the dramatic form has evolved via several traditions, including epic, folk, mythical, realistic, and so on. Individual abilities can be seen throughout Indian English Drama's history. Mahesh Dattani is the first Indian to win the Sahitya Academy Award for English Drama. He is a playwright and director from Bangalore. Mahesh Dattani's plays have received national and international acclaim. His plays have become a postcolonial concern in India. His plays are a reflection of contemporary Indian society's major socioeconomic challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The plays of Dattani have a wide allure. They could be set up anyplace on the earth and would order the consideration of the group. Dattani's plays communicate beyond phonological and cultural barriers. Dattani draws on Indian culture, rites, and customs, as well as current challenges that plague India. He elevates these topics, however, by contacting the human harmonies that emanate love, pleasure, sexual satisfaction, and personality issues. He expounds on the entire country of India, as well as the entire world he lives in, even though he resides in Karnataka. We should try to judge the playwright's current concerns as well as his inquiry and experimenting with stages in the wellness of things. He deals with various subjects like homosexuality, sex segregation, communalism, and child sexual maltreatment in a large number of his plays. – “The passion for my life is drama, and I need to produce more plays,” Dattani said in a meeting - Individual Plan distributed in Branch on Walk 21, 2004. His most distinguishing feature is the wide range of topics he covers in his writings. Dattani's plays are written specifically for the stage. Dattani manipulates his subject in such a way that it is both effective and interesting. Alyque Padamsee aided Mahesh Dattani in gaining confidence and assuring him of a regular audience for his plays. “Alyaque had faith in my work long before I had faith in it myself,” as Mahesh Dattani points out in his introduction. He gave me the confidence to think of myself as a master author and director.

The constant adaptations and concessions people make for a dignified place in society, against all odds, is a recurring theme in all of Dattani's plays. Dattani has been quite successful in exposing the flaws in our nation's social structure and dealing with issues that many people still believe are foreign to our country. We should not expect such heinous intentions in the cheery cities of the nation, especially in a well-educated family, yet this is one of the horrible realities brought out in Dattani's plays.

Dattani is a contemporary writer who wrote in an era when people were regarded well educated and women were well treated, but what has been considered a rare incidence is the true picture of the society, which depicted the wretched situation of women in society. Dattani expertly conveyed all of these errors in his plays, leaving us to wonder if we are talking about and reading about the same society. Underneath all the progress, there is a melancholy that has escaped the grasp of knowledge and awareness. Dattani has also attempted to convey the prejudicial attitudes of those who are still hardhearted and unsympathetic towards transgender and gay, as well as those who believe that individuals of another religion are "terrorists," through his plays. People's reluctance to accept unusual things produces an unfavourable condition in our society.

Themes in Mahesh Dattani's works

The plays of Mahesh Dattani cover a wide range of themes, including previous revelations, identity and sexuality, religious tensions and gender issues, human bonding and alienation. His plays are concerned with human connections as well as personal and moral decisions, which are central to all great works of writing. He is an artist who is socially conscious. He writes about Indian society as it is in actual life. His plays are all about various social issues. His plays are a perfect example of how Indian and Western cultures and concerns may be combined artistically. Dattani's dramatic works reflect a variety of mental states, emotions, and ideas, as well as goals and aspirations, strengths and flaws, moral and social concerns, and personal predicaments. They also give a multi-layered, intriguing picture of contemporary social, political, economic, and cultural life. Where There's a Will (1988), Dance Like A Man (1989), Tara (1990), Bravely Fought The Queen (1991), Final Solutions (1993), Do The Needful (1997), On A Muggy Night in Mumbai (1998), Seven Steps Around The Fire (1999), and Thirty Days in September (2001) are magnificent works that would credit any literature.



In his plays, Mahesh Dattani explores a number of themes:

1. Male-dominated society
2. Traditional living
3. Male-female differences
4. Lesbian and gay romance
5. Hizra's miserable existence
6. Women's plight
7. Hizra's plight
8. Violent crime
9. Relationships with women Discrimination based on gender.

He is quite good at putting his ideas into action. Dattani's pet worry about gender is addressed in *Dance Like a Man* through one of his main loves, dance. When gender is mentioned as a major problem, the investigation will focus on women's issues. He had something to say about the play:

—I wrote the play when I was learning Bharatanatayam in my mid twenties' a play about a young man wanting to be a dancer, growing up in a world that believes dance is for women (Ayyar 67).

According to him, there has been no shift in the status of women in Indian society, who have always been regarded marginalised. By examining patriarchal dominance in their works, he suggests that women's real status in society has not improved. She used to help around the house. Both the husband and wife are Jairaj and Ratna. Amritlal Parekh is Jairaj's father and Ratna's father-in-law. He draws a line in the sand for their actions. Dance, he believes, is a prostitute's occupation. It's beyond his wildest dreams. He bans her from going to the old devadasi who teaches her Bharatnatyam dance. This is a play about domestic strife.

Amritlal Parekh is a social reformer who disapproves of his daughter-in-law Ratna's involvement with a 'Devdasi' and her study of the art of dance at her home. He fears that the dance will tarnish his family's reputation. The play emphasises the shame that comes with being a 'Devdasi.' He reflects that allowing them to pursue their art and supporting them is an indirect stimulus for open prostitution. Jairaj, on the other hand, holds them in great regard and admires their work. He, on the other hand, maintains a radically different viewpoint, claiming that the majority of them are uninterested in their craft and are instead involved in the exchange of blood and flesh. As a result, they are unsuitable for temples. Indians are traditionalists who are resistant to new ideas and concepts. According to Indian folklore, dance is the domain of the lowest castes, particularly the acrobat or Dombari. Women's lives, they believe, are contained behind four walls. They are bound by a slew of constraints. Males set the limits for their lives and oppose their personal lives. They forbid activities that take place outside the home. They believe that devdasi's profession is dancing. People today have a negative opinion toward dance as well. There are many female dancers in traditional families, but many are unable to exhibit their talent owing to social constraints.

Another recurring issue in Mahesh Dattani's plays is gender identity. In *Dance Like a Guy*, the propriety of a man who creates hurdles in Bharatnatyam dance is questioned. He despises women's dancing, despite the fact that it is a means of expressing her identity. The play emphasises men's social prejudice against the art of dance. The play's protagonist, Jairaj, does not agree with his father's viewpoints. Naturally, after his father's death, he destroys all of his father's possessions. He even disregards the rose garden.

As a result, Dattani is concerned not just with the issue of gender discrimination in Indian society, but also with the role of women in this imbalance. Despite the fact that women are no longer treated as commodities in a modern educated society and that man and women have equal opportunities in all areas, the advancement of modern science has revealed ways to deprive women of their rights, and women themselves are frequently involved in crimes against women. This is due to biases that are difficult to dislodge from the minds of educated people. When science wasn't as advanced as it is now, infant girls were slain shortly after birth. Tara's Bombay neighbour, Roopa, explained to Tara how the Patel family would immerse their new born girl child in milk bowls. The undesirable daughter is best slain in her mother's womb, where she has little chance of seeing the light of day. Tara's fate is unquestionably better than that of an unborn child, yet she is denied the right to have two legs of her own since medical science allowed her guardians to deny her fundamental rights. Her mother's involvement in the plot against her is shocking, and it's possible that this information contributed to her death. Her grandfather hands over his entire estate to Chandan, and her father is always focused with his job, thus she has already been converted to feminism. Her chat with him reveals her anguish as she realises her helplessness in a male-dominated society. When asked why gender issues were more essential in his play than class, caste, religion, or science, Dattani responded that gender discrimination is the most visible kind of discrimination in India. This, he believes, is a fabricated distinction. He also introduces other incidents of gender prejudice in the play, in addition to Tara's. As a result, Chandan and Roopa discuss the film *Sophie's Choice*, in which Sophie, a Polish



immigrant, is forced to choose between her two children, a boy and a girl. Gender discrimination is thus introduced as a casual conversation between a boy and a girl, and this conversation supports the play's core thesis that there can be no discrimination other than biological prejudice.

He uses the mirror image to reveal his feminist mindset; Tara, Chandan, and Roopa discuss the film, and the mirror cracks after seeing it on video in the Patel's living room. A common feminine image is the woman holding the mirror to her face. A woman's attractiveness and sex appeal are appreciated in a male-dominated culture. The patriarchal voice of judgement rules a woman's self-evaluation; the woman internalises the male voice: her voice exists in her own mirror, her own thoughts. Dattani's intersexual reference to the mirror emphasises the subject of gender inequality, which is portrayed as Tara's main theme.

The gender issue has resulted in an identity crisis, especially among women. Tara desperately required moral support from her parents and brother, despite her incredible strength of character despite her physical disability. She loses interest in life when she believes she is being denied moral support. She is suffering from an identity crisis and is looking for a positive role in life. Tara possesses a level of potentiality that he lacks. Chandan is not ready to start college without Tara because she is clever, enthusiastic, and fearless. She is not emotional at all, but she tells him straight out that he can't do anything on his own and is consequently terrified. He admits angrily that no one is supposed to have her strength. When such a girl does nothing positive and it is discovered that she is being denied her right to stand on her own two feet only because she is a girl, Dattani accomplishes her goal of demonstrating how her potential was sacrificed on the altar of gender. His goal is not only to highlight the tragedy of gender discrimination in Indian society, but also to instil the belief that a perfect human being must possess both masculine and feminine characteristics. The Siamese twins, who are one girl and one boy fused together, serve as a metaphor of such a union. Nature has bound Tara and Chandan together, and it is society's interference that has forced them to be separated in such a way that is devastating for Tara.

His plays are known for their social realism, and one such stinging fact about Indian society depicted in the play is that a woman is always inferior to a man, and despite all claims to modernity, she is still a second-class citizen. Several recent Indian women fiction writers have focused on this subaltern image of woman, but Dattani is the first dramatist to address the subject in his play Tara. In this play, he depicts the suppression and priority that is given to the male child in the life of an Indian girl. Tara appears to be a narrative about conjoined twins Tara and Chandan, who have been surgically separated yet remain twisted. However, as the storey progresses, the play becomes less about the twins' proximity and more about people and personalities.

In modern society, there is a strong sense of identity crisis. Because they are girls, Tara and Uma are sacrificed because they have no right to a better life than their brother. However, their sacrifice continues to shine. Bharati uses her love for Tara as both a weapon against Patel and an indication of her wish to make amends to Tara. Indian society is dominated by men. All rules and restrictions are established by the family's senior male member. All rules and regulations must be followed by all members of the family. Nobody can stand up to him. Dattani's play Tara also depicts a realistic image of our society. Her father is the most senior of the three, a strong and wealthy politician who plans the procedure in which Chandan receives the limb instead of Tara. He summons a team of doctors from Bangalore for the operation, and the team of doctors arrives. Doctors are regarded as divine messengers because they save lives on this planet. When regular people fall, doctors are often the ones who point them in the right direction. Dr. Thakkar assures Tara's family that the leg will be quite adjustable in Tara's body, but that it is not certain that it will fit his body. But, as doctor Thakkar had stated, fate plays its hand, and his body does not favour him with the leg. They are separated, but they must both rely on one natural and one artificial leg to survive. They are so inextricably linked in their hearts that they cannot live without one another. Tara is distraught when she learns of her father, mother, and grandfather's role in depriving her a full and happy existence, and he is overwhelmed with self-guilt. Chandan feels embarrassed by his parents' and grandfather's treatment of Tara. Both turn to each other for support, and by the end of the play, they are clinging to each other. This theme depicts our Indian society's reliance on others.

In his play, patriarchal society plays important role. In *Dance Like a Man*, Amritlal tries to control the movement and manners of Ratna. In this way, the clashes between the tradition and the modernity are highlighted through the conflict between Amritlal and Ratna. He knows that she is going to visit a devdasi instead of going to temple. But she calls her dancing as a divine activity. He prohibits him to mix with other dancers and imitating the manners of his Guruji. He asks him not to invite him at their house because he strongly dislikes his ways and manners. Jairaj is also adamant in his decision. He does not behave according to his father's fancy. Always there is the quarrel between father and son; these clashes force them to leave the house. They leave the house as they protest against traditional notions and restrictions forced upon them by him. He becomes highly excited and disturbed. He does not want to stay even a minute further. He resolves never to come back in the house again. She requests him to leave the house next day because they could take their belongings with them but he is not ready to listen. At last they go away from their house. The clash between the father and the son symbolizes the clash between tradition and modernity. It is a battle between



traditional and conservative father and a son with modern outlook. They go away, throwing old restrictions to the wind. He makes himself free from the authority of tyrannical father and also unwritten laws of family conduct. This is the climax of the play. But the spectators feel a sense of pity and sympathy for them. They come back after two days and realize that the house of their autocratic father is better than the world that exists outside. This suggests that they have been exposed to the hostile surroundings that make them feel frustrated and tired. Actually, the hostile surroundings are the very root cause of the frustration. It seems that traditionalism or conservatism is winning over modernity. Modernity tastes the fruit of defeat. He compromises with his rebellious spirit and yields to his old father's whims and fancy. A patriarchal society is perfectly presented in Tara where the important family decisions are taken by its male members. In a patriarchal society, a woman's identity is defined by others in terms of her relationship with men. Patel, the representative of the male-controlled authority in the play clearly discriminates the role of his son from that of his daughter, certain gendered roles are accepted in the society as natural and hardly does anyone bother to go beyond those accepted rules. Thus it is intolerable for Patel to bear with the scene that Chandan is helping Bharati to sort out her mistake in her knitting. It is relevant here to quote Mandal,

—Male domination is so rooted in our collective unconscious that we no longer see it. It is so in tune with our expectations that it becomes hard to challenge it. (12)

In a patriarchal society like India, family decisions are made by the male members of the family. People's negative attitudes toward women or female children are constant; their function is that of a slave; they have no personal sentiments or lives; they must execute their daily duties and domestic activities. Females now work alongside men in every field in urban areas, and they are often more sincere than men. In the educational field, girls outperform boys in every exam, yet in rural areas, the mentality is negative, requiring change and improvement. Communal violence is a major theme in his works. When India declared independence from the United Kingdom in 1947, the subcontinent was split into two nations: India, the Hindu homeland, and Pakistan, the Muslim homeland. Millions of people were compelled to relocate as a result, and the mass movement quickly devolved into a slaughter. Many people were slaughtered, and those that survived became refugees, losing their wealth and houses, and dying from starvation and disease. Countless women were raped, and their husbands and families punished them. They rejected them because they were contaminated. Much of the carnage and sorrow occurred on Indian land, which was previously home to the Birds of Gold.

The split that occurred in 1947 at the behest of the outgoing British monarchy and the selfish short sighted goals of a few individuals, resulting in the establishment of the Muslim Homeland, was not merely a transfer of nearly six million people between the two countries. The ensuing massacre claimed the lives of almost two million people. Furthermore, it left the survivors in an everlasting state of anguish, suffering, and shame. Working on a historical theme is undoubtedly the most appealing subject for the majority of literary artists. For example, Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) tells the heartbreaking storey of India and Pakistan's partition and the events that followed, which will be remembered as one of the darkest chapters in human history; similarly, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* captures the true images of thievery, robbery, and murder during the partition. He does the same drama, but in a different way. The fiction genre is best suited to such a broad base. As a result, it is to his credit as a playwright who not only depicts the true picture of the period but also seeks to provide final answers for this problem in the very special form of a drama, the outcome of which is *Final Solutions*, which won the dramatist the Sahitya Akademi Award. The sectarian enmity between Hindus and Muslims has turned into a lethal disease that is slowly but steadily corroding the fabric of peace and security in the Indian subcontinent, with no apparent remedy in sight. Girish Karnad, an Indian dramatist, has brilliantly depicted this predicament in his work *Tughlaq*.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, Mahesh Dattani's plays emerged as a "new arrival" in the sphere of Indian English drama. His plays are set in the present day. They are contemporary plays that are sometimes so real that they provoke controversy, but they are also plays that encapsulate many of the common fears of world drama. His plays have a wide audience appeal. They could be presented anywhere in the world and would command the complete attention of the audience. He presents his topic in a way that is both intriguing and attractive to the eye. His plays transcend linguistic and cultural barriers. He makes extensive use of Indian folklore, ceremonies, and traditions, as well as modern issues confronting India, but he elevates these themes to a higher plane, touching the human chords that stem from love, happiness, sexual satisfaction, and the dilemma of individuality. Despite the fact that he lives in Karnataka, he writes about India as a whole, as well as the rest of the world. We must strive to examine the play's thematic issues as well as his research of, and testing with stage in the fitness of things.

Mahesh Dattani's Dramatic Art:

The relevance of Mahesh Dattani's contributions is highlighted in a study of stagecraft in Indian theatre. The original Indian theatre was a small platform erected in a palace or temple courtyard for the purpose, with a painted curtain as a backdrop. The playwright did not provide any stage directions, enabling the director to use his or her imagination. Mahesh Dattani's stage-settings are considerably more intricate. The audience can see the entire interior of the house



thanks to multiple sets. In *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, he achieves new heights by constructing mental spaces, which are gloomy, wide locations where the protagonists are left alone with their innermost thoughts.

Dattani's usage of multilayer setups for flashbacks in *Final Solutions* is much more inventive. Because both the exterior and the interior are displayed on the stage, the stage arrangement is significantly more intricate. The majority of the action of the *Mob/Chorus* takes place on a crescent-shaped ramp with the ends dropping to the stage level. Within the constraints of the ramp is a structure that resembles the Gandhis' home, with the living room on the same level. The kitchen and puja room have been meticulously detailed on the elevation. Another room on the second level has a desk and an oil light that has been converted to an electric lamp, evoking the 1940s. This belongs to Daksha, who is the grandmother Hardika, who is often depicted as a fifteen-year-old girl. 'Hardika should be positioned and lighted in such a way that the entire action of the play is viewed via her eyes,' according to the stage directions. The vantage point is Hardika's point of view, and the necessity to demonstrate how and why she formed a hatred for the Muslim population brings in the young Daksha, who is Hardika herself. Hardika, the grandmother, and Daksha, the young bride, are on the same level in various situations, despite the fact that they are the same person. This ruse successfully demonstrates how the past shapes the present, as well as how the present reinterprets the past.

Bravely Fought the Queen is a play in which much of the action takes place in Dolly and Jiten Trivedi's living room in a wealthy Bangalore neighbourhood. This is a play about hypocrisy and acting. As a result, the living room is where today's so-called moderns live an imaginary life, sometimes merely to wow the unsuspecting visitor. It reminds us of Karnad's statement that the living room is the "made-up face" presented to strangers. Reality may be discovered in the kitchen's inner rooms, which has witnessed both imagined and genuine scandals, and upstage in Baa's bedroom, where Baa herself is a living representation of the past, carrying her own burden of guilt.

Tara again has a multi-level set. But the only realistic level is the bedsitter of the older Chandan – Dan - in a suburb of London. It is he who is writing the story of Tara from his memory. The Patel's house on the lowest level occupies a major portion of the stage. But it is not real. It is seen only in memory and is therefore meant to be kept as stark as possible. So much of thought has gone into the stage-settings, every small detail is defined. There is something Shavian about his detailed stage directions and also about his choice of themes. His attempt is to place the India of today in the fore. The themes are picked up from contemporary issues but are invested with universality so that in the ultimate analysis his plays qualify as genuine human dramas. Some of his favourite themes are: sexuality, communal tension, society versus individual, gender issues, consumerism, etc. Dattani is not interested in revealing where his sympathies lie but society versus individual is a theme to which he goes back again in *Dance Like a Man*. Here it is the family - family as the microcosm of society - that lays down its unwritten rules. Amritlal Parekh is disappointed because his son's ideas of happiness do not fit in with his. He says:

I have always allowed you to do what you have wanted to do. But there comes a time when you have to do what is expected of you. Why must you dance? (Dattani: 2000, 415).

All his life he has tried to achieve perfection but has always made mistakes. It is only after their death that he and Ratna, free from the demands of family and society.

In *Bravely Fought the Queen* Baa is a living embodiment of the past carrying her own burden of guilt. Her granddaughter Daksha was born a spastic because of her. She had provoked her son Jiten to beat his wife Dolly because her mother was her father's mistress. The guilt hangs heavy on Baa once she realizes her fault. But the damage is done. She tries to make up for it by giving away her house to Daksha and making Praful the trustee. Nothing, however, can alter the fact that Daksha is not a normal child.

The tragedy is writ large in the scene where Dolly reveals that her child was seriously disabled at birth by Jiten's violence. She begins to dance as Daksha would dance - a disjointed movement that a spastic would make. There is no atonement for this crime: the guilt must live on. Michael Walling, the producer of this play in London, gives the greatest tribute to the playwright. This theme of carrying guilt comes up again with some variation in *Final Solutions*. Ramnik Gandhi - there's lots in a name, it's not for nothing that Ramnik has been given the surname Gandhi carries the guilt of the wrongs committed by his father and grandfather. They had got Zarine's shop - Zarine was a friend of Hardika - burnt up in the name of communal hatred and later bought it at half its value. Hardika does not know the whole truth. She was given to understand that they were asking for a price much higher than what they deserved. As a result Hardika spends all her life hating them and their community. She does not appreciate Ramnik's liberal attitude towards the two Muslim boys who have taken shelter in their home during the riots.

But Ramnik has been living with this shame all these years. He has nothing against his wife personally but he cannot stand her rigidity in religious matters because it reminds him of his father's sin. To make up for the wrong committed by his father, he offers Javed a job at the shop. He wants to set things right but it does not happen that way. The boys



leave and Ramnik and Hardika are left behind to live on with their shame. Much as Ramnik may want, he fails to find a final solution to his problem.

In Tara the context is different, the issue in question is different, but the guilt is very much the same - the ramifications are different. The play deals with the cultural constructions of gender that always gives preference to the male over the female. Tara and Chandan are conjoined twins whose physical separation is manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favour the boy over the girl. The twins had three legs between them. The tests showed that the girl provided a major part of the blood supply to the third leg. Chances were that it would survive on the girl. But the mother had a private meeting with the doctor and bribed him to agree to give both the legs to the boy. The whole effort went in vain because the leg very soon became a lump of dead flesh on Chandan and had to be amputated. To think that it would have been part of Tara! The mother, however, becomes a psychological case. Her guilt eats her up from within and she does not live long. It is Chandan who lives with the shame of it all. He escapes to London, changes his name to Dan, and tries to repress the guilt by living in a strange land. Failing to do so, he tries to get over it by writing the story of Tara but ends up writing the story of his own childhood and discovers:

Locking myself in a bedsitter in a seedy suburb of London, thousands of miles from home hasn't put enough distance between us. . . . (Dattani: 2000, 323-25).

Gender discrimination is a theme that Mahesh Dattani returns to again and again. In *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *Where There's a Will* one of the concerns is the complicated modern urban family where the old patriarchal code finds a formidable foe in the new feminist ideas. In the former play, living a suppressed life drives the women to indulge in fantasies. What they miss out in real life they achieve in their dreams. It requires great courage on the part of the writer to take up such subjects that are taboo in India. While feminism has become acceptable, a middle-class housewife having a sex life or even fantasizing about one is certainly not acceptable. Dolly emerges as a strong and beautiful woman who is a rebel not only in fantasies but also in reality. She bravely holds her ground against her husband Jiten even in front of a stranger. She defends her sister and her brother and makes it clear that she can never forgive her husband for causing the abnormality in their daughter. But the fact remains that even today women are expected to be subordinated to the men. *Where There's a Will* shows what can happen when they are pushed to the edge. However, this play has many interesting facets. It is a very entertaining comedy and a strong comment on the money mindedness of people today - even personal relationships are based on money. Wife, son, daughter-in-law - all are interested only in the huge amount of wealth that garment tycoon Hasmukh Mehta has acquired. The most interesting aspect of this play, however, is the philosophical angle given to it. After his death Hasmukh's ghost stays on in the house observing all that's going on. And now comes the realization that it is not just the members of his family who are to blame. It is as much his fault. Even after his death he tries to rule over them through his will. Kiran, his mistress, who is the trustee of the will for twenty-one years, is right that the only reason he wanted to do this is because his father had ruled over his family. He never really grew out of his father's shadow, never really tried to understand his people and therefore became a victim of his own machinations.

Dattani treats his characters with understanding and sympathy whether they are good or bad, right or wrong. He never pronounces any rewards or punishments, thereby allowing the natural law of justice to prevail. He seems to be a genuine artist in love with his art. His plays are meant to be performed, not just read as literature - a fact corroborated by Erin Mee, a theatre director:

It is important to note that all of Dattani's plays, including *Tara*, are first workshopped with his company Playpen in Bangalore. Dattani puts the finishing touches on his dialogue only when it is spoken aloud by actors in rehearsal—in other words, Dattani writes plays to be seen and heard, not literature to be read (Mee: 2002, 320).

The sad part is that Indian drama in English is yet to gain a sizeable audience in India. There is no wonder that Dattani's plays address the middle-class and only the middle-class people. The reason is not far to seek it is this class that constitutes his audience. The language barrier prevents the lower classes from coming to the Indian English theatre.

Techniques in the Plays of Mahesh Dattani

The playwright employs dramatic techniques to help the audience understand and appreciate the story. The many mechanisms provide suggested meaning, totality to the action, and allow for a "Organic" view of the act or performance on stage. They try to make the audience feel the act as much as possible through sensory methods. The techniques are used differently depending on who you are and what you want to achieve. He has given the theatre a new language, as well as various techniques for the theatricality of the Indian English stage. Dattani experiments with new ideas and successfully incorporates them into his work. He is a very successful dramatist because he works with urban and middle-class themes. He is highly careful about the staging of his first play on stage, and as a result, he makes subtle script modifications based on actual issues. Drama writing, he claims, is a process of writing, editing, and



rewriting. He claims that your first draught will not always be your final draught. It is impossible to write something once and for all. As a result, his work never fails to both challenge and surprise.

In his plays, Dattani employs a variety of techniques: 1. Directions for Speaking, 2. Discussions, 3. Determination, 4. Symbolism, 5. Content Stage, 6. Directions for the stage and stagecraft, 7. Stage Separation, 8. On-stage and off-stage music, 9. Go back in time, 10. Images that recur, 11. Monologue/soliloquy, 12. Use of voice-over, 13. Length and language Characterization, 14. Dramatic irony, 15. Allegory, 16. Laughter, 17. The use of foregrounding, 18. Arrangements lighting.

In his plays, plots play an important role. His plays are true to life. His play *Dance Like a Man* begins in an old house's living room. It's a play set in Chennai where dance is a big aspect of life. Jairaj, Ratna, and their daughter Lata are all dancers in this play. She believes that her daughter would soar to heights that she was unable to achieve due to his father Amritlal's disapproval. She sees herself as a failure, and she blames him for it. In front of his governing father, she vents her wrath on him and accuses him of being a Salve. The decisions of the male, the family's leader, are obligatory in the family, as the author has highlighted in this play. Though nuclear families have become more common in India in recent years, evidence of blended families can still be discovered. The play is Dattani's masterpiece, in which he displays two attitudes. The old traditional attitude of "Dance as a vocation" is not particularly trustworthy, but the new attitude toward it is both liberal and honourable; she is the main character, a dancer, and an art fan, and she is very pleased with him. As they continue to perform on stage year after year, this couple has perfect understanding. His father is opposed to "dance as a vocation" and does not want his daughter-in-law to learn the art of dancing from a prostitute, nor does he want his son to develop long hairs. Ratna is a dancer, and her mother went to great lengths to ensure that she had a chance to make a reputation for herself. She enjoys practising and learning about the art of dancing from Chennai Amma. Dancing breeds suspicion, and suspicion breeds miscommunication in the family. Professionals are suspicious of any breakup of friendships or relationships between spouses. When one is focused on building a reputation and achieving success, love takes a back place. No surprise, husband and wife become competitors, and the "green eyed monster" nibbles away at the marital tie. They are the stereotypical victims of professional jealousy and competition.

The play *Tara* is staged on a multi-level set that includes both inside and outdoor elements. The stage's lowest level took up the majority of the space. It denotes the Patel family's residence. *Tara* is a play that depicts the role of a society that treats children born from the same womb in two ways. His *Tara* is a sorrowful play about a boy and a girl who are united at the hip and must be physically separated, an operation that will result in one of the two dying. The victim's own mother's discrimination, who prefers the male child, makes the play more prominent, implying that women are the ones who continue the discriminating chain. *Tara* is not the narrative of the play's protagonist *Tara*, but of every girl child born in an Indian home, whether urban or rural. Tennessee Williams's play *The Glass Menagerie*, which is based on Tennessee's true experience, appears to have influenced the play. The play also reveals the usual Indian attitude, which has chosen a boy child over a girl child from ancient times. It examines the achievements and failures of an Indian family, which includes a father (Patel), mother (Bharati), and two children (Chandan and *Tara*), all of whom are coping with ill health, as Mahesh Dattani describes in his interview with Lakshmi Subramanyam.

Final Solutions depicts the riots in India and the relegation of women, which has a negative impact on their life. It depicts three women from three different periods in India's history: Daksha/Hardika is from the pre-independence period, Aruna, her daughter-in-law, is from the Independence period, and Smita, Aruna's daughter, is from the post-independence period. The play focuses on the issue of communal conflict in India between Hindus and Muslims, particularly during the post-partition riots. Dattani's investigation into the source of conflict between the two communities is based on the assumption that a study of human psyche can provide legitimate answers for the tendencies and weaknesses of individuals under incidental circumstances. Unacceptability and a lack of tolerance between the two communities breed enmity, which leads to terrorism and anarchy. The play itself raises the question of whether there will ever be a final settlement to this long-standing animosity between the two populations. On a second level of significance, the play argues the deep rooted animosity implanted by our forebears. It deals with communalism, religious passion, and the Hindu-Muslim violence, which is largely supported by selfish politicians. Hatred's demons aren't in the parade or on the street, but they are firmly planted in our hearts. The playwright appears to be hurling mild satire at religious zealots who do not understand the genuine nature of religion and who are primarily herded like livestock by self-centered and selfish politicians.

After the country was partitioned, the mentality that prevailed among Hindus and Muslims in India caused a cascade of neurotic reactions to even the most incense-causes. The characters in the play urge us to believe that furious outbursts trigger chain reactions, and that anger is a negative emotion that can lead to violence and destroy relationships. At every turn, the characters' rage is visible. Members of violent groups are unaware that negative emotions such as anger breed viciousness and degradation. The play is a great example of hatreds that are passed down through generations. Smita criticises her mother for not being able to convey her feelings for Babban. Her mother accuses her of eschewing



religion. The play also demonstrates that love is not bound by religion, caste, or creed. Her love for him, an outsider, demonstrates this. Despite the dialogue, this play has a lot of performances. Except for Kamlesh, there are no scene changes throughout the play. The entire play is comprised on a single scene.

The play is the first in Indian theatre to deal openly with gay themes of love, addressing major "closet" conflicts that are often overlooked. The audience is made up of both gay and "straight" people who are mostly from the middle class. Surprisingly, a play as "daring" as this turns out to be a huge financial success in Mumbai. He strives to talk about taboo subjects like sexuality and gender inequality. It portrays the difficulties, sorrow, fears, and disappointments that exist in the LGBT community's isolated society. The LGBT live in a world of their own, subject to prohibition and isolation, which is incompatible with ideals of shared cultural identity. He follows a group of characters to expose their struggles and oppressions in the context of a society that denies them their autonomy. In a Muggy Night in Mumbai, the issue of homosexuality deserves to touch and be affected by the entire society. It isn't the first play in Indian theatre to deal with the openly gay themes of love, partnership, trust, and betrayal. It's a play about how society shapes behaviour patterns and how simple it is for individuals to fall prey to society's expectations. The play depicts well-to-do homo and lesbians, their evolving mutual affinity, their exposure, self-deception, and self-discovery. Sharad and Deepali are gay characters who are happy with their sexuality and have different methods of being gay.

The play *Seven Steps around the Fire* deals with the deplorable plight of the hizras, their customs of life, their passionate sense of individual identity in a cruel and heartless atmosphere. The play presents the suppression of the marginalized hizra community. It is about the marriage of a beautiful hizra, Kamala with a son of a wealthy government minister named Subbu. This shocking exposure determined into the murder of Kamala. The society admits hizra for dignifying the rituals of marriage and birth but would not permit them to take part in such rituals. The heart-rending story about a hizra, murdered simply because she falls in love with Subbu, a young man having a position and significance in society.

This play is a very modern play about the ancient secret of a whole tribe. Uma Rao writes her thesis on the origin and modern status of the „hizra“ community. The play dwells on the theme of eunuchs, their identity, their constitution and their association. Uma Rao, the sociology scholar, appears as the most central character of the play. This character is the mouth piece of the playwright. She fights to establish the identity of a eunuch, Kamala, during her research on the class and gender-related viciousness and crime, and eunuch, a beautiful one, invitations for wedding and the final heart-rending death occurs.

In *Seven Steps around the Fire*, the technique of "thinking" followed by "voice-over" is used. The play focuses on the plight of hizras in contemporary society. Uma, the researcher, is a reflection of their origins and struggle in society. The play concludes with a "voice-over" of Uma's thoughts. Symbols and images abound in the play. He frequently employs animal pictures to suggest social interaction in both religions. The pictures of "pig," "swine," "mouse," "rat," and other animals allude to social hatred and disdain. The dramatist employs mob as a sign of abhorrence to portray the issue of communal discord in *Final Solutions*. The chorus members' dress is black in colour. It demonstrates impartiality and fairness.

The use of a split stage, which requires a strong dramatic foundation, eliminates the need for time-consuming stage ornamentation. Character groups and factions: psychological revelations are conveyed in a genuine manner. Dattani, Tendulkar, and Elkunchwar may be bracketed in this way to distinguish themselves from Mahesweta Devi, Badal Sircar, and Habib Tanvir. The flashback technique compares distinct moral values separated by time by putting the time-in-clock and the time-in-mind side by side. Because it is only via psychological acts and reactions that various characters reach distinct psychological impasses, different zones and levels on the stage represent different psychological impasses of different characters. Dattani makes the genuine face of society visible to us. As a result of such linguistic networking technology, his "English plays have enjoyed successful runs here and abroad" and have "broken the curse between stage and page" (Das 236). Dattani becomes the moderator and modulator of existing Indian English dramas by maintaining such a fine balance between "stage" and "page."

In the play *Final Solutions*, Dattani makes extensive use of chorus. The play's chorus dates back to Greek drama, and the disguises they don are an expressionist device. The choir in the rear welcomes' Hindu disguises at times and Muslim disguises at other times. The chorus's concentrated remarks are unmistakable markers of the communal struggle and its terrible consequences, which the protagonists in the play will shortly face. The playwright's skillful use of the chorus in the play is a vibrant technique.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Dattani's character names is that they are always the faces of our everyday lives – names that have been utilised by other Indian writers and Dattani himself in their works. Daksha in *Final Solutions* and *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, Aruna in *Final Solutions* and Tendulkar's *Silence* are examples of character names that are repeated. Dolly in *Bravely Fought the Queen* and Doll in Karnard's *Hayavadana*, Umakant Thakkar in *Tara* and



Umakant in Tendulkar's *The Vultures*, Kiran in *Where There's a Will* and Kiran in *On the Muggy Night* in Mumbai, Champa in *Seven Steps Round the Fire* and Champa in Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder*, Kamla in *Seven Steps Round the Fire* and Champa in *Tend Characters named Dara* in Indira Parthasarathi's *Aurangzeb* and Tara in *Tara*, Subbu in *Seven Steps Round the Fire* and Somu in Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*, Bobby in *Final Solutions* and Bunny in *On the Muggy Night* in Mumbai, Nalini in *Tara* and Nandini in *Mother of 1084* should all be noted for their auditory resemblance. Champa and Kamala are figures of servitude in Dattani's play, similar to Tendulkar's depiction. In his plays, Dattani employs a variety of dramatic techniques.

He introduces a new language to the stage and demonstrates a number of techniques for the theatricality of the Indian English stage. His experiment with new ideas and how to properly incorporate them into his art and abilities. He is a very powerful dramatist because he works with urban and middle-class themes. He is quite particular about the performance of his first show on stage, and as a result, he discreetly improves the handwriting from actual issues.

Drama writing, he claims, is a process of writing deleting and rewriting. It is impossible to write something once and for all. As a result, his work never fails to both challenge and surprise. Dattani has a unique approach to theatre. He sees the theatre as a vehicle for expressing the plight of the impoverished in our society. His plays accurately and realistically portray the evils and pent-up feelings of the underclass. In his plays, he travels to a strange land full of homosexuals, HIV-positive persons, eunuchs, physically handicapped people, and so on. He has tremendously expanded new possibilities in Indian English drama by touching on harsh themes such as LGBT themes, child sexual abuse, eunuch, and so on. Dattani has transformed the orthodox paradigm of Indian English Theatre with his imaginative bent, aesthetic sensitivity, and uniqueness of dream. He possesses the ability to synchronise conventional subjects with postmodernist issues. His plays are remarkable not only from a socio political, but also from an emotional and mental standpoint. His contribution to the Indian English Drama tradition is exceptional and unique. As a result, for his *Final Solutions* and *Other Plays*, he has received the highest Sahitya Akademi Award. It acknowledges his contribution to the drama genre as follows: [Dattani's work] enquires into the convoluted views that exist in modern India about communal contributions to Indian drama in English (Sahitya Akademi Award citation).

Dattani conducts an expressive experiment with his dramatic art in order to uncover the hidden recesses of human awareness, and he has achieved universality. In *On a Muggy Night* in Mumbai, he explores the topic of homosexuality and the extent to which it alters a person's identity. Even in 1986, all references to homosexuality as a psychiatric condition were removed from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (D.S.M.)*. Through this play, he expresses his viewpoint on homosexuality as a physiological, moral, and psychological disorder. However, the connections are more than just about gender; they are about desire, assurance, and preference. Homosexuals are always in a state of self-crisis as a result of being ignored and burdened. "...it is a play about how society generates patterns of behaviour and how simple it is for individuals to fall victim to the expectations society imposes," writes John McRae in the play's introduction note.

Dattani has acted in and directed a number of plays. He first performs his play at his theatre group, Playpen. Other artists' plays are also originally performed there, with significant revisions made. Because he is not a student of any art or literature, we are left wondering what motivates him to compose a play. Gujarati plays were once performed in Bangalore by a theatre troupe. In the company of his family, young Dattani would appreciate witnessing these plays.

His perceptive intellect is left with a lasting memory of dramatic performance. For the success of drama, he continued to see Gujarati and Kannada plays for a longer period of time; he admits the importance of performance. He derives greater joy and a sense of completion from directing the play rather than writing it. His theatrical image is a perfect blend of writer and director. His plays have soared in popularity both at home and abroad as a result of this. Dattani's plays are dramatic echoes of the commoners' fears and restrictions. He exaggerates the attempts of ordinary people to gain acceptance and respect in society. In his plays, the background of space is very important. He writes on the society in which he lives and the environment in which he lives. His dramatic art is thus a faithful and true depiction of his firsthand experience and knowledge of the socio-cultural environment in which he and others live.

In today's Indian English dramatic arena, Dattani is the most forceful and robust theatrical voice. With his experiments and creations, he has expanded and embellished the Indian Drama tradition. The situation begins to shift with his arrival on the literary scene. His plays were written in English at the time. He has written a lot of dramas with a wide range of themes, techniques, and devices. Furthermore, his pieces have been well-received on the stage. Mahesh Dattani's plays are notable for their dramatic and thematic inventiveness. He is both an artist and a skilled performer.

He not only has the knowledge, power, and capacity to write a play in text, but he also knows how to stage it properly. While commenting on his plays, John Mc Rae refers to him as "the voice of India" and makes the following observations: They are today's plays, often so current as to provoke controversy, but they are also plays that encapsulate many of the classic concerns for world drama. The numerous themes, the financial success, the international



recognition and the popular "Sahitya Akademi" award, and most significantly, the delight and realisation at the conclusion of the audience are the accomplishments of this multi-talented, multi-dynamic, and smart artist. There are many challenges to overcome and numerous goals to achieve in a country like ours (India). It is imperative that we have such reasonable and sensitive writers who can address the sensitivities inside the audience and not only make them aware, but also compels them to think critically about the subject in order to live in harmony and have a healthy society. He has elevated Indian English drama to a new level; unlike Tendulkar, Aurbindo, and to some extent Karnad, he has turned the Indian audience to the theatres with his theatricality.

The playwright employs dramatic techniques to help the audience grasp the meaning and understanding of the play. The many devices lend evocative significance, totality to the action, and enable the act or performance on stage to be "Organic sensitive." They make it as easy as possible for the audience to feel the act through sensual media. The techniques are used differently depending on who you are and what you want to achieve.

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